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SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

MARCH/APRIL 2015 VOL. 15 NO. 2



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Spring Rising: An Antiwar Intervention in DC

Rally and March, Saturday, March 21, 2015, 12:00 P.M.

Gather at Lafayette Park across from the White House, Washington, DC.

Confirmed Speakers: Cindy Sheehan, Debra Sweet, David Swanson and Brian Becker.

And in San Francisco:

March and rally in solidarity with the “Spring Rising” intervention at the White House
Saturday, March 21, 12:00 Noon, Powell and Market Streets

- Stop President Obama’s proposed new three-year AUMF (Authorization for Use of Military Force!)
- End U.S. War and Occupation in the Middle East and Central Asia—U.S. Out!
- No to U.S. sanctions or interventions in Iran, Venezuela, Korea, Cuba, Mexico, Russia, Haiti and everywhere
- Free Palestine—End U.S. Aid to Israel!
- Fund People’s Needs, Not Endless War!

More info: 415-821-6545 or visit www.ANSWERSf.org.

To join the Facebook event for Spring Rising:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/430232700485435>

For more information about an action in your area:

<http://nepajac.org/springrising.html>



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Bargaining With the Devil

Anti-austerity reforms “in one country” will not succeed; the movement must be unified worldwide, and anti-capitalist

BY BONNIE WEINSTEIN

From the burgeoning struggle here in the U.S. for the \$15.00 minimum wage (which is just barely enough to stave off starvation) to the Syriza party's election victory January 25, 2015, in Greece and the Podemos movement in Spain, (see the extensive International section in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*) the anti-austerity movement is growing across the globe. The fight against austerity measures that are squeezing the life out of the world's working class could become a grand, unifying movement powerful enough to be victorious over the world's capitalist class—the unified enforcers of austerity everywhere.

But this can happen only if we form a workers' movement, international in scope, anti-capitalist and pro-socialist.

We must ensure that our organizations are democratically organized, on a mass scale, and totally independent of the capitalist class.

In every country, in every community, and in every workplace, we must form the kind of organizations that can actually exercise the power necessary to make real changes. We can begin by democratizing existing unions, and organizing the unemployed and underemployed into them.

We can partner with community organizations formed to fight police violence, defend human rights and improve social and human services and the infrastructure.

Here in the U.S. we must demand free education and healthcare from cradle to grave. And these victories, won in the past in other countries, and which are currently being dismantled, must be defended, preserved and expanded upon. We must begin a massive, cooperative effort across all bor-

ders and in defense of all workers, everywhere.

That means there can be no “partnership” between workers and the capitalist class because the interests of workers are diametrically opposed to the interests of the capitalist class. The capitalists reap the profits and the working class gets paid as little as possible—as little as the capitalists can get away with.

In order to win victories at the bargaining table—for better working conditions or higher pay—workers must come to the table unified, democratically organized and wholly independent of the capitalist bosses.

Neither the struggle for the \$15.00 minimum wage here in the U.S., nor the struggle of the Greek working class against austerity can succeed as long as the workers' movements continue in “partnership” with the bosses because the system of capitalism, by its very nature, is designed to exploit and economically enslave all workers.

The only way out of the slavery of capitalism is to fight for our rights together; to support each other in struggle; to stand as a unified force capable of defeating the capitalist system itself. And we will need our own independent organizations to carry this out. Instead of forming a partnership with the bosses, workers should partner with other workers across the globe in opposition to the capitalists, their wars and their tyranny.

Such powerful democratic workers organizations will be a first step toward the formation of an alternative economic system diametrically opposed to capitalism, *i.e.*, a democratic, socialist economic system where workers, who are the majority, rule.

Pitfalls of “partnerships” with the bourgeoisie

Here are two examples of the impact of austerity, and the pitfalls of the “partnership” between workers and bosses—one here in the U.S., the other in Greece.

U.S. and the fight for the \$15.00 minimum wage

The fight for the \$15.00 minimum wage has spread like wildfire across the country—especially among service workers, traditionally the lowest paid workers. It's almost double the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25-an-hour. But, so far, most service workers are not earning \$15.00-an-hour. They have won gains due to their organizing efforts, but even \$15.00-an-hour is a far cry from a real, living wage. To achieve that, they must organize a much bigger and truly independent fight for a living wage—a fight that will have to challenge the capitalist system itself.

According to an *Oakland Local* February 19, 2015 article titled “RE: The Living Wage Ordinance,” by Ann Nomura and the *Oakland Local* Editorial team,

“On February 10, 2015 Oakland City Council's committee for economic development voted unanimously to waive the Living Wage Ordinance for the Walgreen's being built at the corner of Seminary and Bancroft avenues. If the decision is approved by the city council, Walgreen's, or another large retail company, will be allowed to pay employees the city's \$12.25 minimum wage instead of the \$14.10 living wage.”

So Walgreens—a for-profit, multi-billion-dollar-company—can get away with as little as a \$12.25 minimum wage.

As it turned out, according to an article dated February 13, 2015 by the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy that appeared in *Equal Voice*,

“Just weeks before a new minimum wage starts in Oakland, California, grassroots advocates are celebrating a Wednesday decision by Walgreens to pay its workers at a new store in the city \$14.10-per-hour, which is required by an ordinance, the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE) reported.”

So Walgreens magnanimously gets away with paying \$14.10-an-hour in one of the most expensive parts of the country to live. So, what happened to the \$15.00 minimum wage?

There was a “partnership” between labor (the Service Employees International Union) and the government (the Oakland City Council) in the guise of taking up the cause of Oakland’s minimum-wage workers. But the Oakland City Council’s primary job is to protect the interests of business!

The outcome for all such “partnerships,” if it’s not a total defeat, is certainly a compromise. A compromise simply means that workers compromise their demands to the bosses—hence the \$14.10-per-hour instead of \$15.00 or more.

A living wage varies according to the cost of living where you happen to live, and how many people you house and feed. A minimum wage should be one a family can actually live on.

So, the good cops—the SEIU and the City Council—negotiate with the bad cops—the corporate bosses like Walgreens—to come up with a “compromise” that puts workers at a disadvantage every time!

Greece and the fight against austerity

In Greece, there has been a massive uprising against harsh austerity measures inflicted upon the Greek working class.

According to a February 21, 2015 *New York Times* article by Andrew Higgins titled, “A Deal That Preserves Greece’s Place in Eurozone, and Fiscal Restraints,”

“Greece’s economic suffering... includes a catastrophic 25 percent contraction of the economy since 2010, along with unemployment of 26 percent over all, and above 50 percent for youths.”

These are intolerable conditions and the Greek workers are fed up. That was proven by the victory of the Syriza Party and their anti-austerity promises. They have promised some very progressive reforms. But they are still reforms of capitalism—not a plan to replace capitalism by establishing a workers’ socialist democracy.

According to a February 22, 2015 *Reuters* article by David Stamp titled, “Greece Readies Reform Promises,”

“Greece’s government prepared reform measures¹ on Sunday to secure a financial lifeline from the euro zone, but was attacked for selling “illusions” to voters after failing to keep a promise to extract the country from its international bailout. Leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has insisted Greece achieved a negotiating success when euro zone finance ministers agreed to extend the bailout deal for four months, provided it came up with a list of reforms by Monday....Tsipras did much of the negotiating for the deal rather than Greece’s Eurogroup representative, Varoufakis. But sources close to the government said this reflected Tsipras’s need to win backing from Syriza’s left wing and his right-wing coalition partner, the Independent Greeks party.”

Further, according to a February 24, 2015 *New York Times* article by James Kantner and Niki Kitsantonis titled, “Eurozone Approves Greece Bailout Overhaul Plan,”

“The reworking of the bailout program by the new Greek government included pledges to take a disciplined approach to budgets, spending and

tax collection, while remaining committed to easing the ‘humanitarian crisis’ caused by years of economic hardship and high unemployment.

“In trying to achieve that delicate balance—to meet the demands of its European creditors in order to keep the loan money flowing, but without reneging on the anti-austerity campaign promises on which it was elected—the government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras may find a difficult road ahead, even with the backing of the Eurozone finance ministers... [Emphasis added]

Again, as in the U.S., Greece is trying to preserve, “...that delicate balance” between the workers and their enemy, the capitalists.

This means Greek workers will see only the most minimum reforms. However, if the Greek workers organize together, independently from and against the capitalist class they can realize as much as they are willing to organize and fight for!

The fight against austerity is worldwide

These are only two examples from the U.S. and Greece that can be multiplied in every part of the world and in every industry. The capitalists are squeezing workers as hard as they can get away with and will continue as long as we let them. We can’t depend upon *their* help to end their economic enslavement over us.

Growing resistance to austerity

We are seeing growing resistance to austerity emerging across the globe. “Partnering” with the enemy capitalist class—class collaboration—must be consciously opposed. Workers must organize independently, democratically and in opposition to the capitalists and their economic system of class slavery in its entirety. We must organize and fight for socialism, for workers’ democratic control—and create a society in our own interests and for the benefit of all.

With all the different shades of austerity, oppression, exploitation, war and carnage carried out by the world's commanders of capital—with the U.S. at the helm—the reality is that they stand as a tiny minority who depend upon our believing that there is no better way. They want us to believe that without them in power the world would be in chaos. Well, the world *is* in chaos—and it's their making! They specialize in pitting us against each other so we don't unite against them. Their goal is to divide and conquer—because they know that together, *we* can conquer them!

The only solution is a worldwide, democratic, working-class, socialist revolution!

1 “Greek Plan Submitted to Eurogroup Finance Ministers” (PDF)

<http://s.kathimerini.gr/resources/article-files/keimeno--3.pdf>

Black Community Control of Police

BY GLEN FORD

A key activist in the early Sixties grassroots movement to overthrow American apartheid recently asked if the current Black Lives Matter campaign will be able to sustain itself. In the near term, the answer is almost certainly, yes. The momentum of the mobilization will be propelled forward by the dogged determination of a new generation of activists, building on the skills and experience of previously vetted organizers and the quickening, soul-wrenching drumbeat of police murder and repression. However, the nascent movement's momentum will soon—very soon—propel it to a “Where do we go from here?” historical moment, when activists must choose whether to challenge the foundations of the system that made Black lives immaterial in the first place, or be sucked into the morass of patchwork reforms that enfeeble the movement while failing to alter relationships of power.

In his article in last week's *BAR*, Bruce Dixon called such attempts to smooth out the most glaring “defects” in the system “proceduralism”—schemes that do not question “the fundamental role of police in enforcing the established order, or the role of prisons and jails in society.” The Black Misleadership Class are master practitioners of such tail-chasing “reforms,” which are purposely crafted for their acceptability to a least some sections of the ruling classes. A typical example is the Obama administration's offer to pay for police body cameras, which are already in place at departments around the nation but were characterized by Al Sharpton and other Black Democratic Party operatives as substantive concessions to protesters. Such gimmicks allow fakers attached to the movement to claim easy “victories” and then urge the crowds to go back home and wait while the administration's vague prom-

ises of change wind their way through the bureaucratic, legislative and judicial processes.

These are cheap tricks and, for the most part, the current crop of grassroots leaders haven't fallen for them. However, the question of Black community control of police—a fundamental and near-universal demand that grew out of the movement of the Sixties—presents a much more complex and daunting scenario. Nothing could be more democratic than the notion that the people most affected by the criminal justice system should have the decisive voice in how the system operates. But, such notions clash with the principles of bourgeois electoral democracy, in which majorities rule, and with the cold reality of elections under capitalism, in which money has the decisive voice. Those who oppose demands for community control of police can claim that the community already exercises control, through its elected officials. This argument has no basis in practice, since the American electoral system privileges the rich, but it is rooted in U.S. law.

Community control of police has always been understood to mean local BLACK people's control of police within the bounds of their communities. The necessity for Black community police oversight is based on historical and current realities and modern principles of self-determination—in other words, on the proven fact that white-dominated governing structures cannot be trusted to hire, supervise and discipline the cops that patrol Black communities; that Blacks have the right to police themselves, and not to be subject to the coercive power of hostile forces. (These same self-determinationist principles can be applied to the totality of the criminal justice system, at all stages of the process, from neighborhood sur-



veillance, through arrest, sentencing and incarceration.) Thus, the principles undergirding Black community control of police are in stark conflict with the narrow vision of democracy upon which U.S. law is based.

The contradiction between embedded U.S. legal principles and self-determinationist necessity becomes even more acute when the jurisdiction in question is majority Black. Theoretically, the Black majority rules itself in “chocolate cities,” subject to the laws promulgated by the larger, surrounding society. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson’s notion of democracy—now rendered technically “race neutral”—decrees that Black community control of police is currently the state of affairs in Atlanta, Detroit, New Orleans, Cleveland and Newark, New Jersey. Yet, police murder Black people in all these cities with regularity, and Black-run city administrations have never failed to contribute their full *quota* of Black bodies to the American prison gulag. The U.S. legal and electoral system does not deliver justice to Black people no matter the coloration in city hall.

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, son of the late activist-poet Amiri Baraka, has submitted a draft plan for a Civilian Complaint Review Board that would have the power to investigate police wrongdoing, subpoena witnesses and recommend disciplinary actions, but could not, on its own, punish cops. The board would be made up of an inspector general appointed by the mayor, three city council members, and five members chosen by designated community organizations, includ-

ing the NAACP and the People’s Organization for Progress (POP), a grassroots outfit that has fought police brutality for more than three decades, chaired by Larry Hamm. Mayor Baraka’s executive order is to take effect later this month, after 30 days of community feedback, although the board is not expected to begin reviewing cases before late this year.

Larry Hamm believes Baraka’s draft is among the most advanced “community control” proposals in the country, despite the fact that it allows the police director to veto board recommendations. Hamm expects that police unions will lobby the New Jersey state legislature to create further immunities from punishment for cops, and that Governor Chris Christie, a GOP presidential hopeful, will inflame the issue. This is to be expected. What POP and other activists must decide, is whether the board actually enhances the power of the people over the cops—resulting in some degree of relief from police oppression—or, instead, provides a veneer of legitimacy to a substantially unchanged *status quo*.

Most importantly, does the existence of the board make it easier or more difficult to organize for fundamental change—the kind of change that Power has no intention of allowing to occur? This is the critical question, because real community control of police—that is, the establishment of self-determining communities free from the boot of hostile forces—can only be achieved when a mass movement makes the community otherwise ungovernable. Community control must be credible in the streets before it is recognized by the oppressor, or by his Black allies. In the final analysis, it must be seized.

Will the Black Lives Matter movement sustain itself, and ultimately, succeed? It can, but only by making Washington and Jefferson’s rules irrelevant.

—*Black Agenda Report*, February 11, 2015

<http://blackagendareport.com/node/14672>



Black Lives Matter Movement

Oprah and Sharpton on the attack

BY GLEN FORD

Al Sharpton and Oprah Winfrey are scared witless that the Black Lives Matter mobilization will become a sustained, independent political movement—one that challenges both the rich white rulers and their junior partners in the Black Misleadership Class. The viciousness of Winfrey’s and Sharpton’s assaults on the new crop of organizers is a good barometer of the nascent movement’s effectiveness, to date, in discomfiting the comfortable. If one thing is clear to African American youth, it is that so-called Black leadership has been complicit in the catastrophe that has engulfed their communities—that the “leaders” are part of the problem, not the solution. Therefore, although the movement-in-the-making is not yet large and coherent enough to shake the foundations of the State or cause Wall Street to shudder, it has already created a crisis of legitimacy for the Black Misleadership Class.

Sharpton’s and Winfrey’s defense is to infantilize the young activists, to deflect the implicit indictment of what currently passes for Black leadership by framing the conflict as generational, rather than substantive. Sharpton launched into a panicked rant at a recent meeting of his National Action Network, in Harlem: “Anytime you have movements, whether it’s in Ferguson, whether it’s in New York, whether it’s in Denver, wherever it is, when they got you more angry at your parents than they got you at the vote you’re supposed to be out there for, you’re being tricked and you’re trying to turn the community into tricks. And they are pimping you, to do the Willie Lynch in our community,” said one of the most accomplished whores in Black American history.

Al Sharpton, a highly ecumenical prostitute who has serviced clients rang-

ing from the most rightwing, down-and-dirty Republicans (Roger Stone, 2003-04); to plutocrats from Hell (Michael Bloomberg); to his current (but now endangered) hookup as the snitching King Rat and activism-deflator for a corporate Democratic president; a man who has lain down with whole kennels of flea-bitten dogs, now defames as “tricks” the young people who stood up to militarized police and dared to make grassroots politics a reality in 21st century America.

The jackleg preacher with the signature pimp-adour hairstyle—whose self-proclaimed heroes are not MLK or Malcolm X, but sports gangster Don King and entertainer James Brown—appears to believe the young organizers are as morally debased and materially obsessed as himself; that self-aggrandizement is their real motivation. “And they play on your ego. ‘Oh, you young and hip, you’re full of fire. You’re the new face.’ All the stuff that they know will titillate your ears. That’s what a pimp says to a ho.”

Sharpton is actually confessing to his own deepest yearnings.

The youth have scoped Sharpton’s whole card: he is a fraud, an activist-for-hire who has found his niche in the bosom of the beast. But he strains to maintain the posture of Movement Man. “How you going to be more mad at folk that are marching for the same cause then you are against the folks y’all are marching against? Don’t you see a trick in there?” Sharpton asked.

Yes, they do—they see that Sharpton is the trickster, whose aim is to Shanghai Black people’s energies and grievances into service to the Democratic Party—just as did an earlier generation of misleaders. What followed was 45 years of demobilization, a “Winter in America,”

as Gil Scott-Heron put it, “where ‘ain’t nobody fighting, cause nobody knows what to save.” The rulers used this long period of non-resistance to build the Black Mass Incarceration State that the Ferguson-inspired rebellion seeks to dismantle. To accomplish this, the new activists have no choice but to challenge the legitimacy of the State’s Black operatives, like Sharpton.

Oprah Winfrey, the media mogul who began her self-marketing journey on the beauty pageant circuit, claims that the young activists don’t have goals. “I think it’s wonderful to march and to protest and it’s wonderful to see all across the country, people doing it,” she says. “But what I’m looking for is some kind of leadership to come out of this to say, ‘This is what we want. This is what we want. This is what has to change, and these are the steps that we need to take to make these changes, and this is what we’re willing to do to get it.’”

What Oprah is really looking for is a movement that reveres the opinions and privileges of Black billionaires, and wishes only that there were more of them. As Black Lives Matter activists have tried to remind her, they have been promulgating public demands and taking them to the streets since the middle of August. Oprah, the journalist, should know that. Her beef is the same as Sharpton’s: she rejects the validity of activism outside electoral politics. Indeed, for Oprah, periodic exercise of the ballot is the only serious kind of politics. *Selma*, the movie produced by her company, put words to that effect in Dr. Martin Luther King’s mouth—a crime against truth and Dr. King’s legacy.

The problem with Winfrey and Sharpton is not their ages (61 and 60, respectively), but their allegiance to

Power. (Based on her wealth, Winfrey is one of the very few genuine Black members of the ruling class, while Sharpton is a mere servant.) To describe their conflict with the burgeoning movement as generational is an insult, not only to young activists, but to the Black strugglers of the Sixties and early Seventies, some of whom remain in prison two-and-a-half generations later. Many of those who participated in the grassroots struggles of this period are only a couple of years older than Winfrey and Sharpton, but younger than lots of the misleaders in the Congressional Black Caucus.

The budding new movement confronts the same power relationships that crushed a previous generation of activists, leaving Black American political leadership in the hands of the most opportunistic, self-serving elements of the community—men and women who made common cause with the growing Mass Black Incarceration State. They are still in place, and more duplicitous than ever. The fight against them—that is, the internal Black struggle—is inseparable from the fight against what we used to call The Man.

—*Black Agenda Report*, February 4, 2014

<http://blackagendareport.com/node/14659>



Insane U.S. Oil Glut Wars

BY GLEN FORD

The people who rule the United States have determined that, the only way for the U.S. to maintain its hegemony in the world is to engineer the economic collapse of its rivals. The likelihood that such economic warfare will wind up dragging the entire planet into chaos and catastrophe does not seem to phase the Lords of Capital, who are so rich they can only be made poor at the point of a firing squad. Having surpassed Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's biggest producer of oil and natural gas, the Americans are now flooding the planet with fuel that no one needs in order to keep prices so low that Russia, Iran and Venezuela will suffer regime change. Washington is also eager to deploy its military and dirty tricks of all kinds to break its rivals' will to resist U.S. Empire.

The problem is, it's very difficult to aim an oil and gas weapon. The effects tend to be general, rather than targeted. It's kind of like poison gas; the wind blows death into everybody's face, including the guy who popped the canister. The Americans have soaked the entire world with gasoline, and now they're running around with matches between their fingers, laughing like maniacs, thinking they have the ultimate power because they can burn the whole place down. Yes, it is conceivable that the regimes in Russia, Iran and Venezuela could be brought low, broken, through years of depressed prices—but oil and gas prices can only be kept low if the world economy is also depressed, locked in stagnation. The destruction of energy exporting economies will only intensify the global recession that has already begun. Chaos, instability, unintended—and even unimaginable—consequences will surely characterize the next, purposely created crisis: a deliberate economic crime against humanity.

It has already become clear to the nations of the Caribbean and Central America that the disruptions imposed by the oil glut go beyond the drilling platforms of Venezuela. The 17 members of Petrocaribe have for years enjoyed access to Venezuelan fuel at cut-rate prices, with the best of credit terms, as part of the socialist country's policy of solidarity with its neighbors. Venezuela even accepted payment in commodities, a kind of barter system. The Petrocaribe program was losing Venezuela about \$2.3 billion a year, and with the collapse in world prices, Venezuela may have to scale back its generosity. Meanwhile, the U.S. is licking its chops, hoping to make the whole region dependent on American liquefied natural gas. But, we all know what dependence on the United States means in the Caribbean and Central America. It means the end of sovereignty, the end of dignity, and the certainty of continued misery for the masses of the people.

The artificial oil glut, on top of global economic stagnation, will also cause insane things to happen to a U.S. economy whose only bright spot—besides the Wall Street casinos—is an energy industry that keeps on churning out oil and gas that a stagnant world can't use, just to spite other countries that have oil. How crazy is that? And how long can that go on?

—*Black Agenda Report*, January 28, 2015

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14643>



The Ultimate Corruption

BY GLEN FORD

The giant British bank HSBC is once again in the spotlight, accused of helping its wealthy customers avoid taxes. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists coordinated the investigation of HSBC. It's estimated that rich people around the world have succeeded in hiding more than \$17 trillion from tax collectors, and that such tax avoidance schemes cost governments \$200 billion in revenue a year. Another organization, Transparency International, has started a "No Impunity" campaign targeting ostentatious displays of wealth by corrupt individuals. Transparency International chairman Jose Carlos Ugaz claims that corruption has reached such huge proportions that it is affecting global economic development. He calls the phenomenon "grand corruption."

If Mr. Ugaz is really looking for the grandest, most destructive kind of corruption, then he will have to set his sights much higher than a few individuals who make themselves obnoxious by flashing their wealth around. The real grand corruption is in the system, itself.

Most so-called anti-corruption campaigns aren't really about corruption, in the larger, grand sense, at all; they're about cheating, and condemning people who break the rules that govern behavior between businessmen. The assumption is that, if it were not for the minority of businessmen that cheat, the system would work just fine, to everyone's benefit.

Thus, we are told, the problem is banks like HSBC that help wealthy people cheat the system. But, the real problem is that the banks as institutions and wealthy people as a class are the ones that control the system, who write the rules for their own benefit, and to the detriment of everybody else. That is the grand corruption: not that

individual rich people break the rules, but that rich people as a class get to make the rules.

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Exploitation of humankind

A number of international agencies compile annual report cards on the levels of so-called "corruption" existing in countries around the world. What these report cards actually measure is not the effects of corruption on various societies, but how the corrupt demands of government officials affect foreign corporations' ability to do business in those countries. If corporations have few difficulties doing business in a given country, then that

country gets high marks for having low levels of corruption. It doesn't matter if the local government fails to protect the nation's natural resources, or allows its people's labor to be cheaply exploited by foreign companies. Selling out one's own people to foreigners is not considered grand, or even petty, corruption.

Europeans see no element of corruption in the fact that they are relatively rich, compared to the rest of the world's people, because Europe spent 500 years pillaging and plundering the planet and enslaving the peoples of other countries. The United States sees nothing corrupt in using its vast military superiority to dominate much of the planet—to exploit the weak countries for the benefit of rich Americans. Yet that is the Mother of All Corruptions in the world, today.

—*Black Agenda Report*, February 25, 2015

<http://blackagendareport.com/node/14689>

Criminalizing Black Children

**Black children are disproportionately tried as adults when they commit crimes.
Deeply internalized racism is to blame.**

BY TERRELL JERMAINE STARR

There was clear evidence that a family member had been sexually abusing 13-year-old Catherine Jones and her 12-year-old brother, Curtis, for years. But no one helped them, and the two children were left to figure it out themselves. In 1999, Catherine and Curtis plotted to kill the abuser, as well as their father and his girlfriend, Nicole Speights, because the kids had come to believe the two were responsible for allowing the abuse to continue, according to *USA Today*. Curtis shot Speights with his father's handgun. Then the kids panicked, tried to cover up the killing, and ran off.

It was a tragic incident that should have been handled by mental health professionals, not a criminal court. But instead of being treated as victims of sexual abuse, a Florida prosecutor charged the children with first-degree murder. The two became the youngest children in U.S. history to be charged as adults. They ended up pleading guilty to second-degree murder and were sentenced to 18 years in prison and probation for life to avoid life sentences.

Catherine Jones may be released a few years ahead of schedule this summer because of good behavior, but she will have spent a good portion of her young life in prison. She missed thumbing out a tweet, mulling a date for her high school prom, enjoying the butterflies of having a teenage crush, and doing the other things teenagers do.

The family member who sexually abused Catherine robbed her of her innocence, and the state of Florida robbed her of her youth. Officials from the Department of Children and Families failed them after multiple investigations found proof the children were being sexually abused; yet the

department did nothing. When their defense attorney argued all of these points in a plea for leniency, the prosecutors didn't see two scared, isolated kids who were being victimized; they saw cold-blooded killers.

Such is the life of a Black child in America's criminal justice system.

Of the 2,500 kids serving life without parole for crimes committed under the age of 18 in America, 60 percent of them are Black. Florida, Curtis and Catherine Jones' home state, leads the nation in charging children as adults. It has a "direct file" statute that allows prosecutors to transfer juvenile cases straight to criminal courts without input from a judge. More than 50 percent of children transferred are Black; 24 percent are white.

A 2014 study titled, "The Essence of Innocence: The Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children," might explain what's behind the impulse to push young Black offenders into adulthood. According to the study, white people consistently view Black children as less innocent than white children.

Here is a breakdown of the study, according to the American Psychological Association:

"The study also involved 264 mostly white, female undergraduate students from large public U.S. universities. In one experiment, students rated the innocence of people ranging from infants to 25-year-olds who were Black, white or an unidentified race. The students judged children up to nine-years-old as equally innocent regardless of race, but considered Black children significantly less innocent than other children in every age group beginning at age ten, the researchers found.

"The students were also shown photographs alongside descriptions of various crimes and asked to assess the age and innocence of white, Black or Latino boys ages ten to 17. The students overestimated the age of Blacks by an average of 4.5 years and found them more culpable than whites or Latinos, particularly when the boys were matched with serious crimes, the study found. Researchers used questionnaires to assess the participants' prejudice and dehu-



manization of Blacks. They found that participants who implicitly associated Blacks with apes thought the Black children were older and less innocent.”

“Children in most societies are considered to be in a distinct group with characteristics such as innocence and the need for protection,” Phillip Atiba Goff, the author of the study wrote. ‘Our research found that Black boys can be seen as responsible for their actions at an age when white boys still benefit from the assumption that children are essentially innocent.’”

There’s a harsher reality behind Goff’s comments; in American society, Black children aren’t seen as children to begin with. No conversation about criminal justice reform can be had without an honest inspection of white people’s internalized racism. A recent Stanford University study conducted by researchers Rebecca Hetey and Jennifer Eberhardt found that when white people are aware of the disproportionate incarceration of African Americans, they actually support harsher penalties that perpetuate inequity.

The *Stanford News Service* reported on the results of the study:

Their first experiment unfolded at a train station near San Francisco. A white female researcher asked 62 white voters to watch a video containing mug shots of male inmates. Some of the participants saw a video in which 25 percent of the mug shots were of Black men, while others saw a video in which

the percentage of Black men among the mug shots rose to 45 percent.

The participants then had an opportunity to sign a real petition aimed at easing the severity of California’s three-strikes law. “It seemed like a great opportunity—a real-life political issue—to test this question of whether Blacker prison populations lead people to accept these more punitive policies,” Eberhardt said.

The results were clear. Over half of the participants who’d seen the mug shots with fewer Black men signed the petition, whereas only 27 percent of people who viewed the mug shots containing a higher percentage of Black inmates agreed to sign. This was the case regardless of how harsh participants thought the law was.

“Many legal advocates and social activists seem to assume that bombarding the public with images, statistics and other evidence of racial disparities will motivate people to join the cause and fight inequality,” Rebecca Hetey, co-author of the study, said. “But we found that, ironically, exposure to extreme racial disparities may make the public less, not more, responsive to attempts to lessen the severity of policies that help maintain those disparities.”

If you’re shocked by Hetey’s comment, you shouldn’t be. An *NBC News/Marist College* poll released in December found that 52 percent of white people have a “great deal” of confidence that police are treating Black people in their communities fairly.

The reason for this is simple: white people trust the cops. They believe that if police are arresting all of these Black people who end up in prison, there

must be a justifiable reason for that. One has to wonder if the men and women prosecuting these cases share such thinking.

The good news is that some positive changes have been made in how juveniles are sentenced during Catherine Jones’ incarceration.

In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty could not be applied to defendants under the age of 18. In 2012, the Court ruled that juveniles couldn’t be sentenced to life in prison for murder convictions.

“Mandatory life without parole for a juvenile precludes consideration of his chronological age and its hallmark features—among them, immaturity, impetuosity, and failure to appreciate risks and consequences,” Justice Elena Kagan wrote in the 2012 decision. “It prevents taking into account the family and home environment that surrounds him—and from which he cannot usually extricate himself—no matter how brutal or dysfunctional.”

Catherine was robbed of this consideration back in 1999. Being a Black child, her humanity was ignored, because the criminal justice system didn’t see her as a little girl to begin with.

Changing juvenile laws so that children in Catherine’s situation aren’t treated as adults is a great start. True reform, however, will come only when we put an end to the racist thinking that labels kids criminals in the first place.

—AlterNet, January 19, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/country-all-too-ready-see-black-children-criminals>



More Child Hunger in the USA

Census data finds 16 million kids relied on food stamps, higher than pre-recession levels

By NADIA PRUPIS

One in five U.S. children relied on food assistance in 2014—a figure higher than before the recession—highlighting the uneven results of the so-called economic recovery, new information from the U.S. Census Bureau reveals.

That total is up from one in eight in 2007, according to data released Wednesday. While single-parent families with only a mother present who received food stamps jumped the highest—up 8.1 million from 5.5 million in 2007—figures increased across the board.

Married-parent families in need of assistance went up to 5.2 million from 2.7 million, while those with two unmarried parents jumped to 1.2 million from .5 million.

The news comes shortly after President Barack Obama heralded economic progress and increased job figures as a sign of the country's emergence from the 2008 recession in his State of the Union address on January 20, 2015.

The data supplements other recent reports that point to a one-sided recovery, as more low-income families slip into poverty under a growing wealth gap.

As the Southern Education Foundation revealed in January, more than half of students enrolled in U.S.

public schools live in poverty; that report also analyzed Census data in its findings. Another study by the National Center on Family Homelessness dis-

the Southern Education Foundation revealed in January, more than half of students enrolled in U.S. public schools live in poverty

covered that roughly 2.5 million children were homeless in 2013, an eight percent increase from the previous year. And the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) reported last week that four-in-ten kids live in low-income families.

“Far too many American children live in economically insecure families,

and this serious threat to our nation's future does not get the attention it deserves,” said NCCP director Renée Wilson-Simmons.

The U.S., meanwhile, remains the only Western country to not have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Political observers noted the conspicuous absence of food insecurity as an issue in the midterm elections, which came the same year that Congress cut \$8.6 billion from the federal food stamp program in exchange for increased subsidies to farmers with large properties.

An additional \$6 billion is expected to be cut from the program over the next two years.

—*Common Dreams*, January 29, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/01/29/further-proving-one-sided-recovery-one-five-us-children-food-assistance>



Black Women Matter Too!

BY MICHAL ORTNER

Police involvement in the deaths of several Black individuals across the nation has stirred up fear, questions, and discussions regarding the innocent lives lost. Because many officers have avoided indictments, protests have continued to take place in many cities.

Tanisha Anderson, 37, was killed nearly three months ago in an incident involving Cleveland police officers. In November, Anderson was suffering from a “mental health episode,” so her mother contacted 911. As officers attempted to escort Anderson to a treatment center, there was a struggle, which left her limp. The family claims that police slammed her body on the ground and placed a knee in her back. These events led to her death, which was ruled a homicide.

Another Cleveland death took place when 12-year-old Tamir Rice was killed by police gunfire the week after Anderson’s death. Rice was carrying a toy gun while walking through a park. Much like Eric Garner and Michael Brown, Rice has become a symbol in the Black Lives Matter campaign, which focuses on excessive police force and irregularities in the treatment of African-American citizens.

Despite the Black Lives Matter movement that is tearing across the nation, the loss of life among African-American women has remained a quiet subject.

“We wanted to make sure [Anderson’s death] didn’t get swept under the rug,” Rachele Smith said to *The Huffington Post* after protesting at the Cleveland Center of Justice. “We hear a lot about Tamir Rice and Eric Garner.... There’s no hierarchy in these tragedies, but she was unarmed, and the police were called to help her—there’s this intersectionality of oppression there, and innocence.”

“The reason why it’s important to center girls and women in this conversation is because the other narrative, and it’s not a competing narrative, but it’s just not a complete narrative, is that this only happens to Black boys and men,” writer, Dream Hampton said. “We have always only framed this as a Black male problem, and it is time to tell the entire truth about who police violence and terrorism happens to.”

In addition to Anderson, countless other women and girls have lost their lives at the hands of police officers in the past decade. Some names that are seldom spoken of in the battle against police bru-



tality are Yvette Smith, 47; Miriam Carey, 34; Shelly Frey, 27; Darnisha Harris, 16; Malissa Williams, 30; Shantel Davis, 23; Rekia Boyd, 22; Aiyana Stanley-Jones, 7; Tarika Wilson, 26; Kathryn Johnston, 92; and Kendra James, 21 were all fatally shot by police authorities.

Alberta Spruill, 57, died of a heart attack following an unfounded encounter with police. Shereese Francis, 29, and Alesia Thomas, 35, died in similar encounters with police, who used brutal force to remove them from their homes.

“That’s why it’s necessary for this to be out there,” George Francis, father of Shereese Francis, stated. “So that they put a new system in place to prevent this from happening to other people. They will be more careful when they know that they will be brought to account.”

—*Naturally Moi*, February 15, 2015

<http://naturallymoi.com/2015/02/why-Black-lives-matter-campaign-is-an-incomplete-narrative/>



Part-Time Professors in Poverty

American college professors donate plasma for money, rely on food stamps to feed themselves

BY APRIL V. TAYLOR

College professors work hard to obtain the education necessary to teach at the college level, and many believe that the hard work of obtaining a doctorate degree will pay off financially once they are able to begin teaching. However, the reality is much different than the dream. As many colleges and universities across the country have sought to trim their budgets, they have increasingly relied on part-time adjunct professors to fill teaching positions. Many of them work from semester to semester, with no job security, no medical, dental or vision benefits, no retirement plan, and no family or sick leave.

Even worse than the lack of job security and benefits, is the pay. Most part-time adjunct professors earn between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per class, per semester. Starting in community colleges, the use of part-time adjunct professors is now the norm in four-year institutions and research universities, both public and private, with an estimated 74 percent of all faculty at America's colleges being part-time adjuncts.

Colleges exploit adjuncts to be able to spend more money on non-academic endeavors leaving many adjuncts to be the lowest paid people on a college campus, many times earning less than janitorial staff who clean the classrooms they teach in. While adjunct pay has dropped 49 percent between 1970 and 2008, the salary of college presidents has risen by 35 percent, meaning they make 170 times more than the teachers who make the existence of a college even possible.

The average annual salary of an adjunct professor is just \$21,600, putting many professors below the poverty line for a family of four. Miranda Merklein is an adjunct professor at a Santa Fe community college, and she

describes her dismal pay by stating, "The most shocking thing is that many of us do not even earn the federal minimum wage. Our students didn't know that professors with PhDs aren't even earning as much as an entry-level fast food worker. We're not calling for the \$15 minimum wage. We don't even make minimum wage. And we have no benefits and no job security."

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Merklein goes on to describe, "If it's a three credit course, you're paid for your time in the classroom only. So everything else you do is by donation. If you hold office hours, those you're doing for free. Your grading you do for free...anything we do with the student where we sit down and explain what happened while the student was absent, that's also free labor. Some would call it wage theft because these are things we have to do in order to keep our jobs."

Being a tenured professor used to offer the guarantee of eventually earning a six-figure income and decent retirement, but universities now rely on what many are referring to as the "Wal-Mart" business

model that reduces labor costs and increases labor servility as college campuses become more corporatized. This has increasingly created an environment where professors not only do not earn a living wage, but they do not speak up about unethical job conditions, accept tiny salaries, and do their work, praying that they will be allowed to be employed under the same miserable conditions the following year, because some salary is better than no salary. Robert Baum, a dean who was once an adjunct professor, states, "The Wal-Mart model is based on the idea of putting the burden of taking care of the worker on either the state or on the worker's credit card or on the worker's family. And that is no different than what I've experienced across my adjunct life. No different. Zero difference."

America's higher education system is an embarrassment. Higher education is mostly free in countries all over the world, but in America, students become saddled with more debt than what many people spend on a down payment on a house before they ever work the first day as a professional worker.



Guantánamo in America

BY ANDRE DAMON

Adjunct professor Nathaniel Oliver describes the quandary like this, “You fall in this trap where you may be working for less than you would be at a place that pays minimum wage yet you can’t get the minimum wage jobs because of your education.” College professors are essentially over-qualified to work fast food or customer service type jobs, but are not able to earn an adequate salary doing what they spent years studying to do. Oliver considers himself fortunate for only requiring food stamps, something that has become a fact of life for many adjunct professors.

Oliver states, “It’s completely insane. And this isn’t happening just to me. More and more people are doing it. We have food stamps. We wouldn’t be able to survive without them. Many professors are on food stamps and they go to food donation centers. They donate plasma. And that’s a pretty regular occurrence.” Professors all over the country have attempted to form unions, with intense pressure from schools to prevent them from organizing. Several professors have also penned a petition to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division, calling for, “an investigation into the labor practices of our colleges and universities in the employment of contingent faculty.”

Something must be done. A country that allegedly prides itself on making education an equal opportunity for all of its citizens cannot treat the majority of its professors as slave labor by asking them to work for compensation that requires government subsidies like food stamps for them to be able to meet the basic need of feeding themselves.

—*Kulture Kritic*, February 16, 2015

<http://kulturekritic.com/2015/02/latest-posts-2/american-college-professors-donate-plasma-money-rely-food-stamps-feed/>

February 21, 2015—In the years since the beginning of the Bush administration’s “war on terror,” a series of revelations have exposed the horrific torture practices used against prisoners at Guantánamo Bay, CIA “black sites” and other prisons abroad, as a matter of state policy.

These barbaric practices, which were documented in stomach-churning detail in the CIA torture report released last year, are rooted in the drive of U.S. imperialism to plunder and dominate the world and suppress by force all opposition to its predatory aims. But the same ruling class that is waging imperialist war abroad is waging a class war at home, presiding over the enormous enrichment of the financial oligarchy at the expense of the working class.

There is no hard line between foreign and domestic policy, a fact that was given concreteness this week in the revelation, published in the *Guardian* newspaper, that one of the top interrogators at Guantánamo Bay had pioneered the methods he used at the torture camp working as a detective in Chicago.

According to the *Guardian*, Richard Zuley obtained at least one wrongful murder conviction by methods that he would later use at Guantánamo Bay: Prolonged shackling in “stress posi-

tions,” threats against family members, threats that the accused could be subject to the death penalty if they did not confess and demands that those under torture implicate themselves and others.

The newspaper cites the example of one Chicago woman whom Zuley kept shackled to a wall for more than 24 hours until she confessed that she and her ex-boyfriend had committed a murder. She remains in prison to this day. Another victim, Lathierial Boyd, was released in 2013 after spending 23 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

Zuley’s background and his outstanding ability to extract confessions were noticed by administrators at Guantánamo Bay, who set him to work in a team of torturers at the prison.

Among Zuley’s victims, according to the *Guardian*, was Ould Slahi, author of the recently-published book *Guantánamo Diary*, in which he recounts being tortured, sexually assaulted and beaten to within an inch of his life at the prison, to the point where he would sign any confession his torturers would put before him.

The revelations, declared the *Guardian*, express “a continuum between police abuses in urban America” and the torture perpetrated in the name of the war on terror. The case of Zuley is hardly an aberration, however. The American ruling class presides over a country that incarcerates a greater percentage of its population than any other in the world, where the brutal treatment of prisoners is a daily reality.

A recent report from the American Civil Liberties Union, for example, documents the horrific conditions facing over 80,000 people in solitary confinement in the U.S. prison system, including the mentally ill, mentally handicapped and children. This bar-





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baric practice has been declared a form of torture by the United Nations.

According to the ACLU, 95 percent of those subjected to solitary confinement reported developing symptoms of psychological illness, such as panic or anxiety attacks and hallucinations. In Texas alone there are more than 100 prisoners who have spent more than 20 years in tiny cells for 22 hours a day, with virtually no direct contact with any other human beings.

Domestic prisons, which are increasingly being used to hold those accused of terrorism, often as a result of entrapment by intelligence agencies, are introducing rules similar to those in force abroad. Next week, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the body that oversees civilian penitentiaries, will implement a new rule that, in the words of law professor David M. Shapiro “all but prevents prisoners incarcerated in the United States and suspected of connections to terrorism from speaking with their families.”

Shapiro notes that another set of recently introduced methods “make an unprecedented inroad into the attorney-client privilege, permitting federal

agents to intercept communications between certain prisoners deemed a threat to national security and their attorneys.” He adds that prisons in New York and Colorado have already used these methods.

The prison system, including the continued barbaric practice of state-sanctioned executions, is only part of a broader apparatus, including a militarized police force that kills with impunity and an intelligence system that spies on the population in violation of

basic democratic rights. Whether under Republicans or Democrats, Bush or Obama, the state functions ever more openly as an instrument of violence and repression.

If the methods utilized at Guantánamo and elsewhere represent in part the “export” of techniques used within the U.S., it is also true that the brutal methods honed by the ruling class abroad will be transferred ever more directly back into the United States, applied to suppress the growth of political opposition to war and social inequality.

The reemergence of torture, forced confessions, and other medieval practices is part of the repudiation of democratic legal and political forms under the pressure of growing social inequality.

The American financial aristocracy, which makes its wealth through fraud and swindling, and the degraded thugs they hire to carry out their dirty work in prisons, police precincts and torture chambers, see the legal norms of due process and equality under the law as impediments to their plunder, violence and murder.

—*World Socialist Web Site*, February 21, 2015

<http://www9.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/02/21/pers-f21.html>



Disappeared in Chicago

Chicago police detain Americans at abuse-laden “black site”

By SPENCER ACKERMAN

Exclusive: Secret interrogation facility reveals aspects of war on terror in U.S.

“They disappeared us:” protester details 17-hour shackling without basic rights

Accounts describe police brutality, missing 15-year-old and one man’s death

The Chicago police department operates an off-the-books interrogation compound, rendering Americans unable to be found by family or attorneys while locked inside what lawyers say is the domestic equivalent of a CIA black site.

The facility, a nondescript warehouse on Chicago’s west side known as Homan Square, has long been the scene of secretive work by special police units. Interviews with local attorneys and one protester who spent the better part of a day shackled in Homan Square describe operations that deny access to

basic constitutional rights.

Alleged police practices at Homan Square, according to those familiar with the facility who spoke out to the *Guardian* after its investigation into Chicago police abuse, include:

- Keeping arrestees out of official booking databases.
- Beating by police, resulting in head wounds.
- Shackling for prolonged periods.
- Denying attorneys access to the “secure” facility.
- Holding people without legal counsel for between 12 and 24 hours, including people as young as 15.

At least one man was found unresponsive in a Homan Square “interview room” and later pronounced dead.

Brian Jacob Church, a protester known as one of the “Nato Three,” was held and questioned at Homan Square in 2012 following a police raid. Officers restrained Church for the better part of a day, denying him access to an attorney, before sending him to a nearby police station to be booked and charged.

“Homan Square is definitely an unusual place,” Church told the *Guardian* on Friday. “It brings to mind the interrogation facilities they use in the Middle East. The CIA calls them black sites. It’s a domestic black site. When you go in, no one knows what’s happened to you.”

The secretive warehouse is the latest example of Chicago police practices that echo the much-criticized detention abuses of the U.S. war on terrorism. While those abuses impacted peo-



ple overseas, Homan Square—said to house military-style vehicles, interrogation cells and even a cage—trains its focus on Americans, most often poor, Black and Brown.

Unlike a precinct, no one taken to Homan Square is said to be booked. Witnesses, suspects or other Chicagoans who end up inside do not appear to have a public, searchable record entered into a database indicating where they are, as happens when someone is booked at a precinct. Lawyers and relatives insist there is no way of finding their whereabouts. Those lawyers who have attempted to gain access to Homan Square are most often turned away, even as their clients remain in custody inside.

“It’s sort of an open secret among attorneys that regularly make police station visits, this place—if you can’t find a client in the system, odds are they’re there,” said Chicago lawyer Julia Bartmes.

Chicago civil-rights attorney Flint Taylor said Homan Square represented a routinization of a notorious practice in local police work that violates the fifth and sixth amendments of the constitution.

“This Homan Square revelation seems to me to be an institutionalization of the practice that dates back more than 40 years,” Taylor said, “of violating a suspect or witness’ rights to a lawyer and not to be physically or otherwise coerced into giving a statement.”

Much remains hidden about Homan Square. The Chicago police department has not responded to any of the *Guardian’s* recent questions—neither about any aspect of operations at Homan Square, nor about the *Guardian’s* investigation of Richard Zuley, the retired Chicago detective turned Guantánamo Bay torturer. (On Monday evening, it instead provided a statement to *MSNBC* regarding the *Guardian’s* Zuley investigation: “The vast majority of our officers serve the public with honor and integrity,” said

the statement, adding that the department “has zero tolerance for misconduct, and has instituted a series of internal initiatives and reforms, to ensure past incidents of police misconduct are not repeated.” Without providing any specifics, it claimed “the allegations in this instance are not supported by the facts.”)

When a *Guardian* reporter arrived at the warehouse on Friday, February 20, 2015, a man at the gatehouse outside refused any entrance and would not answer questions. “This is a secure facility. You’re not even supposed to be standing here,” said the man, who refused to give his name.

A former Chicago police superintendent and a more recently retired detective, both of whom have been inside Homan Square in the last few years in a post-police capacity, said the police department did not operate out of the warehouse until the late 1990s.

But in detailing episodes involving their clients over the past several years, lawyers described mad scrambles that led to the closed doors of Homan Square, a place most had never heard of previously. The facility was even unknown to Rob Warden, the founder of Northwestern University Law School’s Center on Wrongful Convictions, until the *Guardian* informed him of the allegations of clients who vanish into inherently coercive police custody.

“They just disappear,” said Anthony Hill, a criminal defense attorney, “until they show up at a district for charging or are just released back out on the street.”

Jacob Church learned about Homan Square the hard way. On May 16 2012, he and 11 others were taken there after police infiltrated their protest against the Nato summit. Church says officers cuffed him to a bench for an estimated 17 hours, intermittently interrogating him without reading him his Miranda rights to remain silent. It would take another three hours—and an unusual

lawyer visit through a wire cage—before he was finally charged with terrorism-related offenses at the nearby 11th district station, where he was made to sign papers, fingerprinted and photographed.

In preparation for the Nato protest, Church, who is from Florida, had written a phone number for the National Lawyers Guild on his arm as a precautionary measure. Once taken to Homan Square, Church asked explicitly to call his lawyers, and said he was denied.

“Essentially, I wasn’t allowed to make any contact with anybody,” Church told the *Guardian*, in contradiction of a police guidance on permitting phone calls and legal counsel to arrestees.

Church’s left wrist was cuffed to a bar behind a bench in windowless cinderblock cell, with his ankles cuffed together. He remained in those restraints for about 17 hours.

“I had essentially figured, ‘All right, well, they disappeared us and so we’re probably never going to see the light of day again,’” Church said.

Though the raid attracted major media attention, a team of attorneys could not find Church through 12 hours of “active searching,” Sarah Gelsomino, Church’s lawyer, recalled. No booking record existed. Only after she and others made a “major stink” with contacts in the offices of the corporation counsel and Mayor Rahm Emanuel did they even learn about Homan Square.

They sent another attorney to the facility, where he ultimately gained entry, and talked to Church through a floor-to-ceiling chain-link metal cage. Finally, hours later, police took Church and his two co-defendants to a nearby police station for booking.

After serving two-and-a-half years in prison, Church is currently on parole after he and his co-defendants were found not guilty in 2014 of terrorism-related offenses but guilty of lesser charges of possessing an incendi-

ary device and the misdemeanor of “mob action.”

The access that Nato Three attorneys received to Homan Square was an exception to the rule, even if Jacob Church’s experience there was not.

Three attorneys interviewed by the *Guardian* report being personally turned away from Homan Square between 2009 and 2013 without being allowed access to their clients. Two more lawyers who hadn’t been physically denied described it as a place where police withheld information about their clients’ whereabouts. Church was the only person who had been detained at the facility who agreed to talk with the *Guardian*: their lawyers say others fear police retaliation.

One man in January 2013 had his name changed in the Chicago central bookings database and then taken to Homan Square without a record of his

transfer being kept, according to Eliza Solowiej of Chicago’s First Defense Legal Aid. (The man, the *Guardian* understands, wishes to be anonymous; his current attorney declined to confirm Solowiej’s account.) She found out where he was after he was taken to the hospital with a head injury.

“He said that the officers caused his head injuries in an interrogation room at Homan Square. I had been looking for him for six to eight hours, and every department member I talked to said they had never heard of him,” Solowiej said. “He sent me a phone pic of his head injuries because I had seen him in a police station right before he was transferred to Homan Square without any.”

Bartmes, another Chicago attorney, said that in September 2013 she got a call from a mother worried that her 15-year-old son had been picked up by

police before dawn. A sympathetic sergeant followed up with the mother to say her son was being questioned at Homan Square in connection to a shooting and would be released soon. When hours passed, Bartmes traveled to Homan Square, only to be refused entry for nearly an hour.

An officer told her, “Well, you can’t just stand here taking notes, this is a secure facility, there are undercover officers, and you’re making people very nervous,” Bartmes recalled. Told to leave, she said she would return in an hour if the boy was not released. He was home, and not charged, after “12, maybe 13” hours in custody.

On February 2, 2013, John Hubbard was taken to Homan Square. Hubbard never walked out. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the 44-year old was found “unresponsive inside an interview room,” and pronounced dead. The Cook County medical examiner’s office could not locate any record for the *Guardian* indicating a cause of Hubbard’s death. It remains unclear why Hubbard was ever in police custody.

Homan Square is hardly concerned exclusively with terrorism. Several special units operate outside of it, including the anti-gang and anti-drug forces. If police “want money, guns, drugs,” or information on the flow of any of them onto Chicago’s streets, “they bring them there and use it as a place of interrogation off the books,” Hill said.

A former Chicago detective and current private investigator, Bill Dorsch, said he had not heard of the police abuses described by Church and lawyers for other suspects who had been taken to Homan Square. He has been permitted access to the facility to visit one of its main features, an evidence locker for the police department. (“I just showed my retirement star and passed through,” Dorsch said.)

Transferring detainees through police custody to deny them access to legal counsel would be “a career-



ender,” Dorsch said. “To move just for the purpose of hiding them, I can’t see that happening,” he told the Guardian.

Richard Brzeczek, Chicago’s police superintendent from 1980 to 1983, who also said he had no first-hand knowledge of abuses at Homan Square, said it was “never justified” to deny access to attorneys.

“Homan Square should be on the same list as every other facility where you can call central booking and say: ‘Can you tell me if this person is in custody and where,’” Brzeczek said.

“If you’re going to be doing this, then you have to include Homan Square on the list of facilities that prisoners are taken into and a record made. It can’t be an exempt facility.”

Indeed, Chicago police guidelines appear to ban the sorts of practices Church and the lawyers said occur at Homan Square.

A directive titled “Processing Persons Under Department Control” instructs that “investigation or interrogation of an arrestee will not delay the booking process,” and arrestees must be allowed “a reasonable number of telephone calls” to attorneys swiftly “after their arrival at the first place of custody.” Another directive, “Arrestee and In-Custody Communications,” says police supervisors must “allow visitation by attorneys.”

Attorney Scott Finger said that the Chicago police tightened the latter directive in 2012 after quiet complaints from lawyers about their lack of access to Homan Square. Without those changes, Church’s attorneys might not have gained entry at all. But that tightening—about a week before Church’s arrest—did not prevent Church’s prolonged detention without a lawyer, nor the later cases where lawyers were unable to enter.

The combination of holding clients for long periods, while concealing their whereabouts and denying access to a

lawyer, struck legal experts as a throw-back to the worst excesses of Chicago police abuse, with a post-9/11 feel to it.

On a smaller scale, Homan Square is “analogous to the CIA’s black sites,” said Andrea Lyon, a former Chicago public defender and current dean of Valparaiso University Law School. When she practiced law in Chicago in the 1980s and 1990s, she said, “police used the term ‘shadow site’” to refer to the quasi-disappearances now in place at Homan Square.

“Back when I first started working on torture cases and started representing criminal defendants in the early 1970s, my clients often told me they’d been taken from one police station to another before ending up at Area 2 where they were tortured,” said Taylor, the civil-rights lawyer most associated with pursuing the notoriously abusive Area 2 police commander Jon Burge. “And in that way the police prevent their family and lawyers from seeing them until they could coerce, through torture or other means, confessions from them.”

Police often have off-site facilities to have private conversations with their informants. But a retired Washington DC homicide detective, James Trainum, could not think of another circumstance nationwide where police held people incommunicado for extended periods.

“I’ve never known any kind of organized, secret place where they go and just hold somebody before booking for hours and hours and hours. That scares the hell out of me that that even exists or might exist,” said Trainum, who now studies national policing issues, to include interrogations, for the Innocence Project and the Constitution Project.

Regardless of departmental regulations, police frequently deny or elide access to lawyers even at regular police precincts, said Solowiej of First Defense Legal Aid. But she said the outright denial was exacerbated at Chicago’s secretive interrogation and holding

facility: “It’s very, very rare for anyone to experience their constitutional rights in Chicago police custody, and even more so at Homan Square,” Solowiej said.

Church said that one of his more striking memories of Homan Square was the “big, big vehicles” police had inside the complex that “look like very large MRAPs (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) that they use in the Middle East.”

Cook County, home of Chicago, has received some 1,700 pieces of military equipment from a much-criticized Pentagon program transferring military gear to local police. It includes a Humvee, according to a local *ABC News* report.

Tracy Siska, a criminologist and civil-rights activist with the Chicago Justice Project, said that Homan Square, as well as the unrelated case of ex-Guantánamo interrogator and retired Chicago detective Richard Zuley, showed the lines blurring between domestic law enforcement and overseas military operations.

“The real danger in allowing practices like Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib is the fact that they always creep into other aspects,” Siska said.

“They creep into domestic law enforcement, either with weaponry like with the militarization of police, or interrogation practices. That’s how we ended up with a black site in Chicago.”

—*The Guardian, UK*, February 24, 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/24/chicago-police-detain-americans-black-site>



Burned Alive

ISIS burned a man alive. White Americans did the same thing to thousands of Black people.

BY CHAUNCEY DEVEGA

ISIS burned Muadh al Kasasbeh, a captured Jordanian fighter pilot, to death. They doused him with an accelerant. His captors set him on fire. Muadh al Kasasbeh desperately tried to put out the flames. ISIS recorded Muadh al Kasasbeh's immolation, produced a video designed to intimidate their enemies, and then circulated it online.

ISIS's burning alive of Muadh al Kasasbeh has been denounced as an act of savagery, barbarism, and wanton cruelty—one from the “dark ages” and not of the modern world.

American Exceptionalism blinds those who share its gaze to uncomfortable facts and truths about their own country.

For almost a century, the United States practiced a unique cultural ritual that was as least as gruesome as the “medieval” punishments meted out by ISIS against its foes.

What is now known as “spectacular lynching” involved the ceremonial torture, murder—and yes, burning alive—of Black Americans by whites. Like ISIS's use of digital media to circulate images of the torturous death of Muadh al Kasasbeh by fire, the spectacular lynchings of the Black body were shared *via* postcards and other media.

In fact, the burned to death images of the Black body were a form of mass culture in 19th and 20th century America.

This account of the horrific murder of Sam Hose by White Americans is an even more grotesque and exaggerated version of the cruelty visited upon Muadh al Kasasbeh by ISIS:

“The white-owned newspapers of the South had long gorged themselves with exaggerated or fabricated accounts of such violence. In the papers' version, the fight between Sam Hose and his boss became

transformed into the most enraging crime of all: the rape of the white man's wife.”

White Georgians tracked Hose down and prepared for his lynching. Two thousand people gathered for the killing, some taking a special excursion train from Atlanta for the purpose. The leaders of the lynching stripped Hose, chained him to a tree, stacked wood around him, and soaked everything in kerosene. The mob cut off Hose's ears, fingers and genitals; they peeled the skin from his face. They watched, a newspaper reported, “with un-feigning satisfaction” as the man's veins ruptured from the heat and his blood hissed in the flames.

**American
Exceptionalism blinds
those who share its gaze
to uncomfortable facts
and truths about their
own country.**

“Oh, my God! Oh, Jesus,” were the only words Hose could manage. When he finally died, the crowd cut his heart and liver from his body, sharing the pieces among themselves, selling fragments of bone and tissue to those unable to attend. No one wore a disguise, no one was punished.

The murder of Jessie Washington is a genius work in white on Black violence, far worse than the wickedness of ISIS's acts against Muadh al Kasasbeh:

“Great masses of humanity flew as swiftly as possible through the streets of the city in order to be present at the bridge when the hanging took place, but when it was learned

that the Negro was being taken to the City Hall lawn, crowds of men, women and children turned and hastened to the lawn.

“On the way to the scene of the burning people on every hand took a hand in showing their feelings in the matter by striking the Negro with anything obtainable, some struck him with shovels, bricks, clubs, and others stabbed him and cut him until when he was strung up his body was a solid color of red, the blood of the many wounds inflicted covered him from head to foot.

“Dry goods boxes and all kinds of inflammable material were gathered, and it required but an instant to convert this into seething flames. When the Negro was first hoisted into the air his tongue protruded from his mouth and his face was besmeared with blood.

“Life was not extinct within the Negro's body, although nearly so, when another chain was placed around his neck and thrown over the limb of a tree on the lawn, everybody trying to get to the Negro and have some part in his death. The infuriated mob then leaned the Negro, who was half alive and half dead, against the tree, he having just strength enough within his limbs to support him.

“As rapidly as possible the Negro was then jerked into the air at which a shout from thousands of throats went up on the morning air and dry goods boxes, excelsior, wood and every other article that would burn was then in evidence, appearing as if by magic. A huge dry goods box was then produced and filled to the top with all of the material that had been secured.

“The Negro's body was swaying in the air, and all of the time a noise as of thousands was heard and the Negro's body was lowered into the box. No sooner had his body

touched the box than people pressed forward, each eager to be the first to light the fire, matches were touched to the inflammable material and as smoke rapidly rose in the air, such a demonstration as of people gone mad was never heard before. Everybody pressed closer to get souvenirs of the affair. When they had finished with the Negro his body was mutilated.

“Fingers, ears, pieces of clothing, toes and other parts of the Negro’s body were cut off by members of the mob that had crowded to the scene as if by magic when the word that the Negro had been taken in charge by the mob was heralded over the city. As the smoke rose to the heavens, the mass of people, numbering in the neighborhood of 10,000 crowding the City Hall law and overflowing the square, hanging from the windows of buildings, viewing the scene from the tops of buildings and trees, set up a shout that was heard blocks away.”

Many thousands of Black Americans were killed by white lynchers in the United States.

The spectacular lynching was a ceremony (it was not something random or spontaneous; the acts of a few out for Black blood possessed insane white people), with distinct practices, that symbolically purged the Black body from the white polity in an era of formal white supremacy:

“The actual process of lynching was morbid and incredibly violent. Lynching does not necessarily mean hanging. It often included humilia-

tion, torture, burning, dismemberment and castration. Victims were beaten and whipped, many times in front of large crowds that sometimes numbered in the thousands. Coal tar was frequently used to douse the unfortunate victim prior to setting him afire.”

Onlookers sometimes fired rifles and handguns hundreds of times into the corpse while people cheered and children played during the festivities. Pieces of the corpse were taken by onlookers as souvenirs of the event. Such was the case when James Irwin was lynched on January 31, 1930. Irwin was accused of the murder of a white girl in the town of Ocilla, Georgia. Taken into custody by a rampaging mob, his fingers and toes were cut off, his teeth pulled out by pliers and finally he was castrated. It still wasn’t enough. Irwin was then burned alive in front of hundreds of onlookers.

No one was ever punished for this barbaric killing. Black victims were hacked to death, dragged behind cars, burned, beaten, whipped, sometimes shot thousands of times, mutilated; the savagery was astonishing. How could ordinary people participate in such brutality?

The rendering of spectacular violence against non-whites paid a psychological wage to white people that helped to create a type of social cement for White America, one that covered up its own intra-group tensions of class, religion, and gender. This racial logic continues in the present with a racially

discriminatory criminal justice system, the murder by police of Black and brown people, and how white Americans support such unfair treatment.

American politicians and other opinion leaders have denounced ISIS and the death by fire meted out to Muadh al Kasasbeh.

Would they apply the same standards to white Americans who committed mass violence against African-Americans through lynchings, racial pogroms, and other like deeds?

Would they support reparations as a material gesture of apology for such crimes?

Would white folks, on both sides of the ideological divide, condemn their ancestors who participated in such types of violence?

Will white America ever be willing to fully own its historic ISIS-like behavior against African-Americans and other people of color, and how such violence created the present, where neighborhoods are hyper-segregated, there exists a huge wage and income gap along the color line, and by almost every measure, Black and brown Americans have significantly diminished life chances relative to white people?

Violence is a human trait. ISIS’s burning alive of Muadh al Kasasbeh is an act of barbarism.

However, we cannot overlook how the United States has conducted master classes in violence and barbarism both before, during, and since its founding...and yes, much of this violence was against people of color whose labor, lives, land, and freedom were stolen to create American empire.

Chauncey DeVega, a pseudonym, is editor and founder of the blog We Are Respectable Negroes. His essays on race, popular culture and politics have been published in various books and Web sites.

—Altnet, February 5, 2015

<http://www.altnet.org/news-amp-politics/yes-isis-burned-man-alive-white-americans-did-same-thing-thousands-Black-people?akid=12766.229473.-5izDB&rd=1&src=newsletter1031451&t=10>



Another Death by U.S. Drones

Thirteen-year-old boy who lived in fear of U.S. drones, killed by CIA strike in Yemen

By JON QUEALLY

Just weeks after speaking with western journalists about his pervasive fear of the U.S. drones flying overhead in his home country of Yemen, 13-year-old Mohammed Tuaiman was reportedly killed in a CIA-directed bombing on January 26.¹

His family vows that it will demand justice for Mohammed and insists, “He wasn’t a member of al-Qaida. He was a kid.”

As *Common Dreams* reported on January 27, the suspected CIA drone strike which killed Mohammed was the first such attack reported in Yemen this year and came just two days after U.S. military officials announced that the drone campaign would not be deterred by ongoing unrest in the region.

Mohammed’s father and one of his brothers were killed by a U.S. drone in 2011, which sparked the young boy’s fear of what he called the U.S. “death machines.” Subsequently interviewed

by the *Guardian*, and given a camera in order to document his life in war-torn Yemen, Mohammed spoke earnestly and openly about the dangers and fears that plagued his life.

When the *Guardian* interviewed Mohammed last September, he spoke of his anger towards the U.S. government for killing his father. “They tell us that these drones come from bases in Saudi Arabia and also from bases in the Yemeni seas and America sends them to kill terrorists, but they always kill innocent people. But we don’t know why they are killing us.”

“In their eyes, we don’t deserve to live like people in the rest of the world and we don’t have feelings or emotions or cry or feel pain like all the other humans around the world.”

So far, both the CIA and the Pentagon have refused to comment on the drone attack, which took Mohammed’s life.

Speaking with the *Guardian*, Mohammed’s older brother Meqdad, vowed to seek justice for his family. “We live in injustice and we want the United States to recognize these crimes against my father and my brothers. They were innocent people, we are weak, poor people, and we don’t have anything to do with this.”

—*Common Dreams*, February 10, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/02/10/13-year-old-boy-who-lived-fear-us-drones-killed-cia-strike-yemen>

1 See the video, produced by the *Guardian*, which tells the story of Mohammed Tuaiman and mostly features footage he shot himself, reflecting on his life in Yemen and conducting interviews with family members at:

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/02/10/13-year-old-boy-who-lived-fear-us-drones-killed-cia-strike-yemen>



Everywhere Is War

BY CLIFFORD D. CONNER

Bob Marley's stirring reggae song "War" says, in part:

Until there are no longer
First class and second-class citizens
of any nation,
Everywhere is war.
Until that day,
The dream of lasting peace
Will remain but a fleeting illusion.

Many people resign themselves to the conclusion that war will forever be the scourge of the human race. But an alternative to that pessimism begins with thinking more deeply about the subject. Bob Marley's lyrics (which, ironically, were originally written by a speechwriter for a dictatorial ruler) suggest that war may not be eternal after all—that a global future is at least imaginable wherein the absence of racial and economic injustice could remove the motives for war and make it obsolete.

There is a close relationship between war and deep economic inequality. The struggle over scarce resources underlies all social tensions, and when those tensions reach critical mass, they erupt in violence, sometimes in the form of rebellion that explodes into civil war and other times in the form of war between nations. An implication of Marley's song is that if economic injustice could be eliminated from the world, then war would disappear as well.

To say that there is economic inequality in today's world would vastly understate the inconceivably deep disparity of wealth. A handful of billionaires control most of the Earth's resources while billions of people remain mired in hunger, disease, degradation, and grinding poverty. This is not a secret, nor is it the exaggerated claim of disgruntled socialists. It has been reported by the mainstream news

media of the world. On the January 20, 2014, broadcast of *NBC Nightly News*, Brian Williams declared:

"Some new figures came out today on global wealth and income disparity, and they are so shocking it takes a while for them to sink in. A study commissioned by Oxfam says the world's richest 85 individuals have the same wealth as 3.5 billion people around the world. Once again: 85 people on this planet have the same amount of wealth as the poorest three-and-a-half billion people on this planet."

Brian Williams calls these figures "shocking," and they are, but it is equally shocking how few people seem to have noticed. The revelation has had a negligible impact on public con-

sciousness and discourse, and none at all on governmental policies.

"Wealth" is measured in monetary terms, but it is important to move beyond the realm of abstraction by thinking of it as what money can buy—control of the world's material resources. Eighty-five superrich individuals control as much of the world's land, water, food, minerals, energy, and manufacturing capacity as the least rich 3,500,000,000 people. And with control of the material resources also comes control of employment opportunities, of political and legal systems, of education at all levels, of healthcare, and of the mass media.

Don't allow this to remain a mere numerical abstraction in your mind.

U.S. military: occupier of allies

Facts are still awfully stubborn even in this *era*. Seventy years after the end of World War II, the U.S. military still occupies the main losers of the conflict and current "allies." About 40,000 U.S. troops occupy Germany, while 60,000 occupy Japan. Fifty-four years since the end of the Korean War, almost 30,000 troops occupy South Korea. Fourteen years after the invasion of Afghanistan, a Praetorian guard of 11,000 is still in that country, and 12 years after the invasion of Iraq a force of about 5,000 troops, quickly growing, remains there. Some other significant footprints of the U.S. military on so-called sovereign countries are as follows: about 12,000 in Kuwait; 3,500 in Bahrain; 1,500 in Turkey; 11,000 in Italy; 10,000 in the United Kingdom; and 2,000 in Spain.

The overall U.S. military force overseas occupies more than 150 countries and amounts to the staggering number of 160,000 troops, with an additional 70,000 deployed in "contingency" operations with either the Navy, Air Force, or Special Forces. A priority of further military expansion, in this case through NATO, is Eastern Europe using the pretext of necessary defense against "Russia's aggressions." In Spring 2015, NATO will establish command centers in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to oversee 5,000 troops.

Excerpt from "U.S. Military and NATO," by Gilbert Mercier

—*Counterpunch*, February 2, 2015

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/03/02/praetorian-guard-of-the-orwellian-empire/>

Translate it into feeling—or at least trying to imagine—the daily misery of the so-called slumdogs of Bombay, the dirt-poor denizens of Rio de Janeiro’s *favelas*, or the super-exploited textile workers of Bangladesh. These are representative of the three-and-a-half billion who have next to nothing.

Current trends do not suggest a reversal of this appalling inequity. To the contrary, the wealth of the superrich follows the logic of compound interest. As their assets increase, their growth tends to accelerate, thus causing the extreme inequality of wealth to grow ever faster. As the struggle over scarce resources intensifies, the prospects for eliminating warfare diminish accordingly.

The most obvious scarce resource that wars have been fought over in recent times is oil. When nations go to war, it is to protect the economic interests of the elites who rule their political establishments. The United States’ endless wars in the Middle East have been, in the final analysis, aimed at controlling the countries where much of the world’s oil is produced and those through which pipelines transport it. Some analysts have argued—persuasively, in my opinion—that the long-range strategic goal of the United States in the Middle East is not primarily aimed at procuring oil for its own needs but at keeping it out of the hands of a likely future rival superpower—China.

But is war as a consequence of scarcity avoidable? If the scarcity of resources were a natural phenomenon, probably not. But it is not natural. It is, to use a newly fashionable term, “anthropogenic”—a consequence of human activity. If humans created the problem, then it is reasonable to assume that humans can resolve it. But first it must be understood.

How scarcity ceased to be natural

Throughout most of the twelve-thousand years or so since the Agricultural Revolution, the scarcity of food was straightforward and easy to

understand. Periodic famines and malnutrition-based epidemics were due to the fact that not enough food could be produced to feed the Earth’s population. In 1798 Reverend Thomas Malthus famously predicted that we are forever doomed to that terrible fate.

But the Reverend Malthus was mistaken and his timing could not have been worse. No sooner had he made his prediction than the Industrial Revolution began to take off, resulting in a rapid, immense increase in agricultural productivity. That gave the world’s farmers the ability to produce enough food to feed the entire population of the Earth many times over.

And yet mass malnutrition and starvation have persisted to the present era. Hunger-related diseases kill tens-of-thousands of people, mostly children, in poor countries every day. Do not allow that statistic to pass unabsorbed: tens-of-thousands per day. This is despite the fact that, according to the World Food Program of the United Nations, “there is enough food in the world to feed everyone.” How can this be?

A study by another United Nations-sponsored organization attempted an answer: “Poverty is the principal cause of hunger.” And taking it a step further: “Harmful economic systems are the principal cause of poverty and hunger.”¹ In the global economic system today, no matter how much food is produced and available, it can’t alleviate the hunger of people who have no money to buy it.

Although the Industrial Revolution gave us the capacity to produce way more than enough food for everybody, a great deal of that capacity has not been put to use. In our current market-based system of resource allocation, the decision of how much food to produce is not based on how many human beings need it, but only on profit considerations.

And that has led to one of the greatest absurdities imaginable. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, agricultural productivity had increased to the point that too much food was being produced—too much, that is, for the market to absorb. Crop prices plummeted and growing numbers of farmers went bankrupt. A permanent crisis of overproduction in agriculture set in that has persisted to the present.

By the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the growing tide of “excess” food in the United States required government intervention to avoid the total paralysis of American agriculture, producing one of history’s most outrageous paradoxes. In a hungry world, agricultural policy in the advanced market-ruled economies has long been devoted to reducing food production in the name of “price support.” Mountains of wheat and other grains have been burned or put into storage to keep it off the market, and farmers are paid to withhold tens-of-millions of acres of cropland from production. The crisis of runaway agricultural growth has been called “agricultural Malthusianism” in ironic tribute to Malthus’s wrong-way prognosis.

Nothing could be less natural or more irrational than an economic system that repeatedly creates “crises of overproduction.” Agriculture provides only the most salient example of that phenomenon. Regrettably, the production of all of life’s necessities is retarded by the deliberate creation of artificial scarcity in an attempt to avoid crises of overproduction. The economist Richard D. Wolff described its extent in the United States: “Over 20 million workers are unemployed or underemployed. Over a quarter of the nation’s productive capacity remains unutilized, gathering rust and dust. Annual output of \$1 trillion is lost by wasting these resources.”²

That is the fatal flaw in the economic system that dominates the plan-

et Earth today. Its survival depends upon maintaining scarcity. What a tragic contradiction! It long ago generated an enormous growth in productive capacity that made possible the elimination of scarcity—but it can't function without scarcity.

In the current world order, the need to maintain scarcity means that for every winner there must be many, many more losers. That is evident in the aforementioned equivalence of wealth of 85 winners and 3,500,000,000 losers.

The economic imperative that makes war inevitable

The economic system's need to artificially maintain scarcity is the key to understanding the persistence of warfare in today's world. In the popular imagination wars are caused by spectacular events such as the assassination of an Austrian Archduke, the sinking of the Battleship Maine, or the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Historians try to probe beneath the surface to discover more fundamental causes. Their analyses are often perceptive and valuable, but they rarely call attention to the primary economic factor that makes war inevitable.

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, the international political stage was dominated by the struggle between the two world superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. It was called the Cold War because it never developed into open hostilities, which would presumably have involved nuclear warfare. But as the four-decade-long standoff continued, there were plenty of "hot wars" going on, many of which were "proxy wars" carried on or instigated by the two superpowers themselves.

At the beginning of the final decade of the twentieth century, however, the Cold War came to a sudden end with the internal collapse of one of the combatants. The Soviet Union disintegrated, leaving the United States as the sole dominant military power on the planet.

When that occurred, a new term appeared in the public discourse of the United States and its allies: "peace dividend." With the Soviet Union gone, the United States would no longer have to continue its massive expenditures on war. The military-industrial complex—the web of the Pentagon and large aircraft and weapons manufacturers—could be scaled back.

With no need to continue spending trillions of dollars on weapons, war research, and maintaining a huge standing army, that money could instead be directed toward rebuilding the country's highways and bridges, upgrading public education, and generally improving the quality of life of its citizens. That was the alluring idea encapsulated in the phrase "peace dividend."

But those who expected a significant reorienting of economic priorities were to be disappointed. There was a temporary decline in war spending during the 1990s, but that was sharply reversed after the beginning of the new millennium. The official "Defense Spending"

category in the U.S. budget does not include all war-related expenditure, but the annual figures for 1990, 2000, and 2010 provide a useful indication of the overall trend:

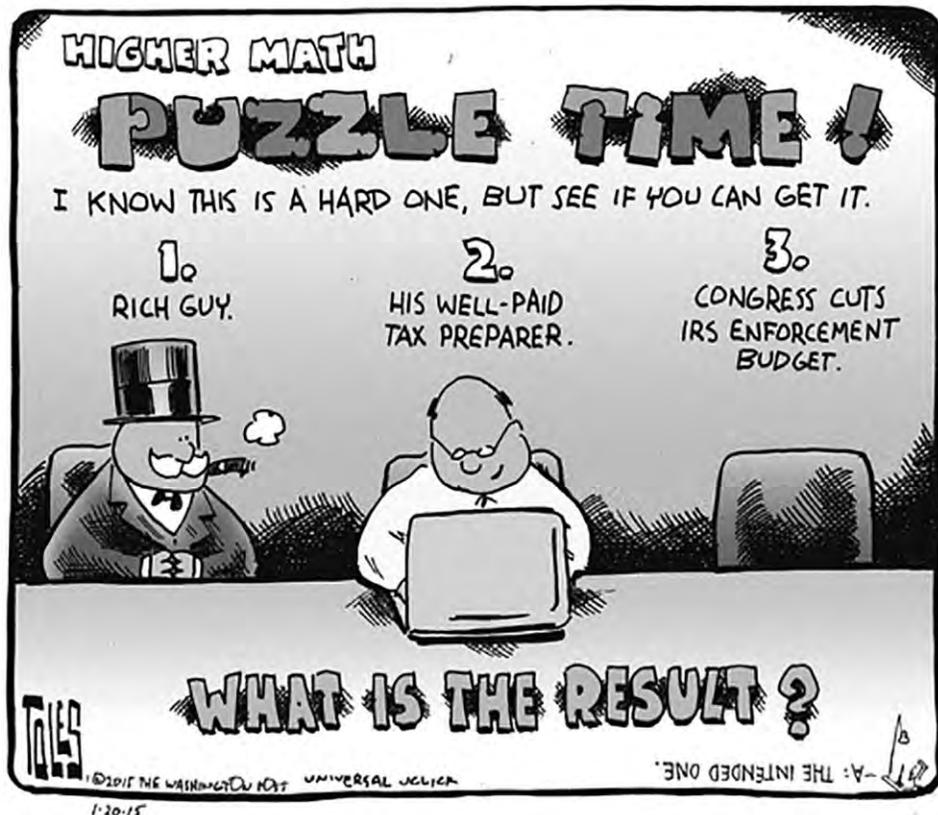
1990: \$402.73 billion

2000: \$391.70 billion

2010: \$832.75 billion³

This is the bottom line: The American economy is hopelessly addicted to war spending. Without it, the wheels of production would cease to turn and the country would rapidly plunge into deep depression. The United States, in its present form, can no more redirect its military budget toward constructive ends than a chicken can lay a duck egg.

That understanding had been derived from the experience of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The crucial lesson was that the American economy had become too productive for its own good. Its ability to manufacture products had outrun its ability to generate enough purchasing power



to absorb all the products with which it continuously floods the market.

British economist John Maynard Keynes explained to American president Franklin D. Roosevelt that to keep their economies from falling into gridlock, governments of all the advanced countries would henceforth have to create new purchasing power (*i.e.*, new jobs) by engaging in massive deficit spending.

It would not suffice to merely “prime the pump” and then step back to allow the invisible hand of supply and demand to reestablish economic equilibrium. Government deficit spending, Keynes said, would have to become a permanent condition, with deficits continuously increasing. Frequently asked what would happen “in the long run” as governments continued endlessly piling up mountains of debt, Keynes avoided the question with a famous riposte: “In the long run we are all dead.”

Roosevelt tried to create jobs by means of public works programs, but they were far from adequate to the task of lifting the American economy out of the doldrums of depression. Not all deficit spending, it was discovered, is equally effective in creating new pur-

chasing power. Using government money to produce useful things such as schools or housing or hospitals or highways does not create sufficient purchasing power because it competes with private capital, and that tends to reduce the number of jobs in the private sector.

The most effective of Roosevelt’s public works programs were those that produced nothing, most notoriously exemplified by legions of workers with shovels digging holes and then filling them back in again. In his most important work, Keynes alluded to the benefits of this kind of apparently absurd economic activity:

“If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with banknotes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coalmines which are then filled up to the surface with town rubbish, and leave it to private enterprise . . . to dig the notes up again . . . the real income of the community, and its capital wealth also, would probably become a good deal larger than it is.”⁴

As useless as such activity would be, it would give workers paychecks so they could buy some of the surplus production without having them create more surplus products. But the obvious wastefulness was an insult to

reason, and it was impossible in the American political context to explain that the paradox was an inescapable feature of the production-for-profit economic system.

None of Roosevelt’s public works efforts went nearly far enough to reboot the American economy. What ended the Great Depression was the truly massive military expenditure in the run-up to World War II. Factories reopened and workers went back to work, got paychecks, and began spending. After the war the rebuilding of Europe through the Marshall Plan restarted the Western European economies and kept the American economy humming. This, however, was a temporary fix.

As Keynes had warned, the world economy would once again lapse into a terminal crisis of overproduction unless governments continuously engaged in deficit spending on a massive scale. And the expenditures would have to be on useless production—industrial output that would not house, feed, clothe, or otherwise benefit anybody in any way. But how could such an absurdity be justified?

The answer was found in bogus appeals to national security requiring ever-increasing “defense” budgets. Thus was born the era of “weaponized Keynesianism”—a vast exercise in deliberate waste designed to artificially maintain the scarcity without which the economy would crash and burn.

During the Cold War, the trillions upon trillions of dollars spent on war preparations were deemed necessary to protect the United States from communism. With the demise of the Soviet Union, a new foe had to be invented. And so it was: “international terrorism.”

Random acts of terrorism pose a real (if statistically miniscule) threat to some urban populations in the United States, but to think that the architects of American foreign policy consider Al Qaeda or ISIS to be serious threats to



their power is ludicrous. The real purpose of the “war on terror” was to launch a massive scare campaign—to frighten the American public into accepting the continuation of mammoth war expenditures.

The bellicosity of American policymakers is a symptom, not a cause, of U.S. militarism. The war spending is not primarily driven by a desire for weapons, either defensive or offensive, but by the need to create enough purchasing power to keep the American economy from collapsing.

This understanding is almost totally absent from the public discourse, and yet it is crucial to comprehending why, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., the U.S. government is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.”⁵ Dr. King made that statement in 1967, during the Vietnam War, but it is no less applicable at present—even though the current U.S. president is, like Dr. King, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

There are certainly more flagrant sabre-rattlers than Barack Obama in the world today—Vladimir Putin, Bashar al-Assad, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Kim Jong-Un come readily to mind—but none with nearly as deadly an arsenal at their disposal, or the number of war deaths to their credit. Whether Obama himself is a humane-minded individual or not is beside the point. He is at the helm of an out-of-control military machine.

As an American historian of science, I have especially lamented the way science and technology in my country have been corrupted by the war-spending imperative. From nuclear weapons to the development of remote-control war, wherein drone aircraft operated from computers in Iowa rain death and destruction on rural Pakistan, the majority of government spending on scientific research and development in the United States over the past 70 years has been devoted to finding more effective ways to kill people. Imagine what could have been accomplished to

improve the human condition if all of our scientific talent and resources had instead been directed toward conquering hunger, poverty, and disease throughout the world.

In conclusion . . .

War is a complex social phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a single cause, but the military-spending imperative I have described is the greatest single impediment to world peace. For opponents of war, understanding this is a *sine qua non*.

But the dark cloud of war that hangs over the human race may, after all, prove to have a silver lining. The good news is that war is only inevitable as long as the market-based, production-for-profit system dominates the economic life of our planet. Eliminate that system and Bob Marley’s “dream of lasting peace” will no longer be “but a fleeting illusion.”

That, however, is a tall order. The production-for-profit system is ferociously defended by the tiny minority that profits most from it. And their control of most of the world’s resources gives them power that seems nearly impossible to dislodge.

But challenge it we must, for what is the alternative? Even the unacceptable *status quo* is not an alternative, because a global financial crisis now threatens to plunge the planet ever deeper into military, political, and ecological chaos. To avoid that nightmare, the world system must be transformed from one driven to maximize private profits into one designed to fulfill human needs. That requires an economics controlled by human intelligence rather than blind market mechanisms.

Control by human intelligence means economic planning. But who would do the planning? The history of the twentieth century has provided us with major examples of bureaucratically planned economies that have functioned reasonably well, but because they were sustained by repressive polit-

ical dictatorships they do not inspire emulation. The ultimate challenge to the present generation is to create a new world system in which central economic planning is combined with democratic control over the planning process—control from the bottom up rather than the top down.

I am well aware how utopian this sounds in the context of today’s farcical public discourse. But in addition to being a historian of science, I am also a historian of social revolution, and taking the long view leaves me in no doubt that rapid, radical social change is not only a possibility but is ultimately unavoidable. Some possible outcomes, however, are desirable and others less so.

The present world system is already in deep crisis. It may well self-destruct. The suffering that would produce could either generate widespread despair and apathy, allowing fascism to reign triumphant, or it could bring about a massive upsurge of anger and protest. If the latter—if hundreds-of-millions of people arise in struggle and succeed in establishing economic democracy—the world could finally, once and forever, put war in its rear-view mirror.

—This article is published in the *Spring/Summer 2015 issue of Indigo*, “Humanities Magazine for Young People,” a South Korean publication.

1 World Hunger Education Service (emphasis added): <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>

2 Richard D. Wolff, “Ongoing Crisis and Liberal Blindness,” *MRzine*: <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/wolff060611.html>

3 FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data): <http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/FDEFX>

4 John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, chapter 10, section 6.

5 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam,” Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967.

Endless Afghan War

A nation plagued by unexploded bombs

BY JON QUEALLY

As seen in other abandoned battlefields in the annals of U.S. wars overseas, new reporting out of Afghanistan shows that among the other deadly legacies left behind by foreign troops are tens-of-thousands of unexploded munitions dropped from the sky or left in the ground that will continue to kill and maim civilians long after the “official” fighting has stopped.

Reporting from the Afghan city of Khost, *Guardian* foreign correspondent Sune Engel Rasmussen reviewed data and spoke with members of the UN’s Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) to learn that unexploded bombs and shells in Afghanistan “are killing and maiming people at a rate of more than one a day”—the vast majority of whom are children.

Citing MACCA statistics from 2014, Rasmussen reports “there were 369 casualties in the past year, including 89 deaths. The rate rose significantly in October and November when 93 people were injured, 84 of them children. Twenty died.”

Offering a tragic account of siblings from a single family, Rasmussen relays the story of 10-year-old Mohammad

Yunus and his eight-year-old sister, Sahar Bibi. “The grenades that killed Mohammad and Sahar, as they were combing through dry branches to collect firewood for their family, should have detonated long before they were picked up. Instead, the shells exploded in the children’s hands and ripped through their bodies, killing them instantly. The blasts also injured their two brothers, aged five and 12.”

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In a war that has spanned more than twelve years—with no end in sight—it is not surprising that the number of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) has risen to alarming rates, but as was true in the U.S. war in southeast Asia—where the nations of Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia continue to suffer the

consequences of years of carpet bombing by the U.S. military—the problem will not go away just because the war is at some point declared over.

As the *Guardian* reports:

“Though first steps have been taken to tackle [UXO], agencies complain the U.S.-led forces are withholding information about where they may have dropped explosives.

“We ask for information about battlefields that may have UXO, but we have received coordinates for only 300 locations. It’s not enough,” said Mohammad Sediq Rashid, director of MACCA.

“Colonel Calvin Hudson, NATO’s Combined Joint Task Force chief engineer in Kabul, says NATO gives as much information to mine-clearing agencies as possible without compromising operational security—coordinates for areas where Afghan forces continue their operations are withheld.

“Much of the fighting in Afghanistan has taken place in and around residential areas, increasing the risk of civilian casualties in the aftermath of the war. UK and U.S. diplomats emphasize that international law does not give their countries a responsibility to clear battlefields. But that does not absolve NATO countries of their duty to clean up after themselves, said Rashid.

“It is a moral responsibility,” he said, adding that scattering unstable explosives around the country defeats the initial purpose of the war. ‘Military intervention is the last resort, and it’s intended to protect people and stabilize the country,’ he said.”

—*Common Dreams*, January 29, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/01/29/legacy-endless-afghan-war-includes-nation-plagued-unexploded-bombs>



Hard Times in America

Five facts that show half of America is seriously struggling

By PAUL BUCHHEIT

Happy Monday! S&P 500 now up ten percent for year—CNN Money

Third-quarter U.S. economic growth strongest in 11 years—Reuters

The U.S. economy is on a tear—Wall Street Journal

Half of our nation, by all reasonable estimates of human need, is in poverty. The jubilant headlines above speak for people whose view is distorted by growing financial wealth. The argument for a barely surviving half of America has been made before, but important new data is available to strengthen the case.

1. No money for unexpected bills

A recent *Bankrate* poll found that almost two-thirds of Americans didn't have savings available to cover a \$500 repair bill or a \$1,000 emergency room visit.

A related *Pew* survey concluded that over half of U.S. households have less than one month's income in readily available savings, and that ALL their savings—including retirement funds—amounted to only about four months of income.

And young adults? A negative savings rate, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal*. Before the recession their savings rate was a reasonably healthy five percent.

2. Forty percent collapse in household wealth

Over half of Americans have good reason to feel poor. Between 2007 and 2013 median wealth dropped a shocking 40 percent, leaving the poorest half with negative wealth (because of debt), and a full 60 percent of households owning, in total, about as much as the nation's 94 richest individuals.

People of color fare the worst, with half of Black households owning

less than \$11,000 in total wealth, and Hispanic households less than \$14,000. The median net worth for white households is about \$142,000.

3. Cost of living surges as income falls

Official poverty measures are based largely on the food costs of the 1950s. But food costs have doubled since 1978, housing has more than tripled, and college tuition is eleven times higher. The cost of raising a child increased by 40 percent between 2000 and 2010.

And despite the gains from Obamacare, healthcare expenses continue to grow.

As all these essential costs have been going up, median household income has been going down since 2000, with the greatest drop occurring since 2009, as 95 percent of the post-recession income gains have gone to the richest one percent.

4. Lots of new jobs (below living wage)

"Amazing" jobs report, apart from wages—Marketwatch

Amazing at the top and at the bottom. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, there have been job gains at the highest paid level—engineering, finance, computer analysis; and there have been job gains at the lowest paid level—personal healthcare, retail, and food preparation.

But the jobs that kept the middle class out of poverty—education, construction, social services, transportation, and administration—have seen a decline since the recession, especially in the northeast. At a national level jobs gained are paying 23 percent less than jobs lost.

Worse yet, the lowest paid workers, those in housekeeping and home healthcare and food service, have seen their wages drop six to eight percent (although wages overall rose about two percent in 2014).

5. Our greatest shame: half of the children in poverty

Over half of public school students are poor enough to qualify for lunch subsidies. There's been a stunning 70 percent increase since the recession in the number of children on food stamps. State of Working America reported that almost half of black children under the age of six are living in poverty.

The celebratory quotes about a booming economy seem so far away.

Paul Buchheit teaches economic inequality at DePaul University. He is the founder and developer of the Web sites UsAgainstGreed.org, PayUpNow.org and RappingHistory.org, and the editor and main author of American Wars: Illusions and Realities (Clarity Press).

—AlterNet, February 8, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/economy/5-facts-show-half-america-seriously-struggling?akid=12773.229473.MN0ZLs&rd=1&src=newsletter1031557&t=7>

Between 2007 and 2013 median wealth dropped a shocking 40 percent, leaving the poorest half with negative wealth (because of debt), and a full 60 percent of households owning, in total, about as much as the nation's 94 richest individuals.

The Top One Percent

BY JON QUEALLY

In less than two years, if current trends continued unchecked, the richest 1 percent of people on the planet will own at least half of the world's wealth.

That's the conclusion of a new report from Oxfam International, released Monday, which states that the rate of global inequality is not only morally obscene, but an existential threat to the economies of the world and the very survival of the planet. Alongside climate change, Oxfam says that spiraling disparity between the super-rich and everyone else, is brewing disaster for humanity as a whole.

"Do we really want to live in a world where the one percent own more than the rest of us combined?" asked Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International. "The scale of global inequality is quite simply staggering and despite the issues shooting up the global agenda, the gap between the richest and the rest is widening fast."

According to the report—titled "Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More:"

"Global wealth is becoming increasingly concentrated among a small wealthy elite. Data from Credit Suisse shows that since 2010, the richest one percent of adults in the world have been increasing their share of total global wealth....In

2001, the richest one percent of people in the world owned 48 percent of global wealth, leaving just 52 percent to be shared between the other 99 percent of adults on the planet. Almost all of that 52 percent is owned by those included in the richest 20 percent, leaving just 5.5 percent for the remaining 80 percent of people in the world. If this trend continues of an increasing wealth share to the richest, the top one percent will have more wealth than the remaining 99 percent of people in just two years with the wealth share of the top one percent exceeding 50 percent by 2016."

The report also shows that even among the über-rich there remain divisions, with an outsized majority on the list of the world's wealthiest people hailing from the United States. And it's not an accident. The world's most-wealthy, as the Oxfam report documents, spends enormous amounts of their money each year on lobbying efforts designed to defend the assets they have and expand their ability to make even more.

The world's wealthiest, reads the report, "have generated and sustained their vast riches through their interests and activities in a few important economic sectors, including finance and insurance and pharmaceuticals and healthcare. Companies from these sectors spend millions of dollars every year on lobbying to create a policy environment that protects and enhances their interests further. The most prolific lobbying activities in the U.S. are on budget and tax issues; public resources that should be directed to benefit the whole population, rather than reflect the interests of powerful lobbyists."

Released on the eve of the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Oxfam says that the world's financial and political elite can

no longer ignore, and should no longer perpetuate, inequality at this scale.

"Our report is just the latest evidence that inequality has reached shocking extremes, and continues to grow," said Byanyima, who was invited to act as co-chair for this year's Davos summit. "It is time for the global leaders of modern capitalism, in addition to our politicians, to work to change the system to make it more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable."

She continued, "Extreme inequality isn't just a moral wrong. It undermines economic growth and it threatens the private sector's bottom line. All those gathering at Davos who want a stable and prosperous world should make tackling inequality a top priority."

Contained in the paper is a seven-point plan of specific proposals, which Oxfam says must be added to the agenda of all world leaders:

1. Clamp down on tax dodging by corporations and rich individuals
2. Invest in universal, free public services such as health and education
3. Share the tax burden fairly, shifting taxation from labor and consumption towards capital and wealth
4. Introduce minimum wages and move towards a living wage for all workers
5. Introduce equal pay legislation and promote economic policies to give women a fair deal
6. Ensure adequate safety-nets for the poorest, including a minimum income guarantee
7. Agree to a global goal to tackle inequality.

On her role as co-chair at the WEF summit this week, Byanyima told the *Guardian* she was surprised to be invit-



ed, because Oxfam represents a “critical voice” to most of the others who attend. “We go there to challenge these powerful elites,” she said. “It is an act of courage to invite me.”

However, part of the message contained in the report is that economic inequality of this magnitude is not just threat to the poor and disadvantaged but also to those who have traditionally benefited from the model of pro-growth capitalism. As growing amounts of research have shown—most prominently in the work of French economist Thomas Piketty—the nearly unprecedented levels of inequality is hurting modern capitalism even on its own terms.

But just as these levels of inequality are the result of government policies that have benefited the rich, Oxfam believes that a change in such governing structures is the key to reversing the trend.

As Byanyima told the *Guardian*, “Extreme inequality is not just an accident or a natural rule of economics. It is the result of policies and with different policies it can be reduced. I am optimistic that there will be change.”

—*Common Dreams*, January 19, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/01/19/richest-1-percent-have-more-rest-humanity-combined>



Frank Fried ¡Presente!

1927-2015

BY CARL FINAMORE



Franklin Fried

Franklin Fried, who devoted more than 70 years to supporting and fighting for freedom, justice, equality, and liberation for working and oppressed people in the U.S. and around the world, died Tuesday, January 13, at his home in Alameda, California. He was 87.

Frank Fried was the principal presenter of folk and popular music in Chicago for a quarter-of-a-century, but he always thought of himself, first and foremost, as a revolutionary socialist. In his own view, his signal achievement was a historic 1968 series of benefit concerts for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which he organized at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He also produced the Beatles’ 1964 and 1965 Chicago appearances, along with innumerable concerts by the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Miriam Makeba, Pete Seeger, Frank Zappa, the Chad Mitchell Trio, and many other artists.

Frank was a radical, a socialist, and a labor and civil rights activist throughout his life, and he took great pride in never having abandoned his principles of fair play throughout his storied show business career. “After shaking hands with some managers and promoters in the business, you would have to check if you still had all your fingers,” he would half jest. The colorful story of how he tried to be different, with mixed success, is recounted on his website, *showbizred.com*.

Frank was born in 1927 on Chicago’s north side. His father, a lawyer in private practice, died when Fried was a child. His mother, who worked as a secretary for the Illinois State Athletic Commission, felt compelled to send Fried to a military school for proper discipline. After military school, he attended the University of Chicago. He dropped out after two years to serve in the United States Navy at the end of World War II.

After the war, Fried joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) as a teenager and worked as a welder in Chicago’s booming U.S. Steel South Works plant. He was attracted to the SWP’s democratic vision of world socialism. In 1947, he and his Chicago comrades helped lead a broad and successful defense campaign for James Hickman, who was up on murder charges. Hickman, an African American sharecropper who had recently moved his family to Chicago from the South, was accused of shooting the landlord who had burned his family out of their apartment, killing three of Hickman’s children. With help from SWP organizers, community pressure got the charges reduced and Hickman released. The dramatic story is recounted in a recent book from Haymarket Press, *People Wasn’t Made to Burn*, which is dedicated to Frank.

Frank called the campaign “perhaps the party’s finest hour” and credited that organizing experience for much of his later success in building broad coalitions for social justice. Frank had a remarkable ability to collaborate with folks from across the left spectrum, and to help others reach out and build in ways they would not have done without his help and counsel.

A few years later, Frank was expelled from the SWP along with prominent dissident Bert Cochran and many of the party’s foremost intellectuals and labor activists. In 1954 Fried helped that group launch the *American Socialist*, a magazine that aimed to free the idea of socialism from its association in the American mind with Stalinist dictatorship, and he traveled the country promoting it.

The magazine folded in 1959, a victim of the poisonous cold war atmosphere, Frank said later. “The trajectory that we expected of hooking up with militant sections of the labor movement and a new beginning of the radical movement never happened,” he explained. “The group did not leave much of a footprint, but individuals played an important role in the labor and civil rights movement, and the attractive style and open tone of the magazine did leave an imprint on the New Left that came after us,” he added.

For Frank, the value of the *American Socialist* group lay in reaching out and attempting to regroup with other socialists without rejecting its Trotskyist background. “We attempted to bring our heritage to the problems and radical language and organization of the modern world without ever forgetting the legacy of Leon Trotsky, who had an incredible impact on me as he stood up for workers democracy against the tides of history,” he said.

Frank stumbled into show business when he met the Austrian folk singer Martha Schlamme at the Gate of Horn,

an early folk music venue in Chicago, in 1958. In need of a job and intrigued by the power of folk songs to move people emotionally and politically, Frank went to work as an assistant to Albert Grossman, the club’s owner. On a trip to San Francisco the following year on Grossman’s behalf, Frank met the Gateway Singers, a racially integrated folk singing group, and managed the group through their period of greatest commercial success. He had a knack for managing, and by the end of the 1950s he was also handling the Chad Mitchell Trio and numerous other prominent folk and popular music performers.

Frank opened Triangle Productions in 1959, with fellow socialist Fred Fine, in order to raise money for leftist projects through benefit concerts. When folk music became a pop craze during the Kennedy administration, the business took off. This was a major turn away from the repression of the 1950s, both culturally and politically. Many of the folk artists were unabashedly radical, and some, like Pete Seeger, were still blacklisted. Frank took special pride in being one of the first commercial promoters to book Seeger, whose sold-out concerts on Frank Fried’s stage in 1957 marked a defeat for the McCarthyite blacklist.

When Bob Dylan’s turn from folk toward rock resulted in an explosion of psychedelic, blues and country-inflected music, Frank recognized that the new groups would seize the spotlight from both acoustic folk groups and more traditional, pasteurized pop. He moved quickly on his hunch. By the early 1960s, Triangle shows dominated live entertainment programming in Chicago and the surrounding area. Triangle Productions ran tours and concerts for the Rolling Stones, the Mothers of Invention, and many other major acts of the time. Meanwhile, Frank Sinatra, Harry Belafonte, Johnny Mathis, and Barbra Streisand remained regulars on his stages.

Throughout his career, Frank tried to weave themes of social justice into his cultural promotions, paying special attention to Miriam Makeba and other politically engaged artists. In 1963 Frank served as producer for “We Shall Overcome,” the only commercial recording by the SNCC Freedom Singers, on Mercury Records and he also took an active role in the movement against the Vietnam War as a leader of Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace.

In 1977 he returned to his roots in the steel industry as a key backer of Ed Sadlowski’s insurgent “Steelworkers FightBack” campaign. Frank traveled the country with Sadlowski, working plant gates and union halls in an attempt to divert the Steelworkers Union from what Sadlowski had dubbed “tuxedo-unionism” and toward a militant working class perspective. He and Sadlowski became lifelong friends.

Frank sold his production company in the early 1980s and moved to Los Angeles with his wife Françoise, hoping the weather might help ease her congenital degenerative disease. After Françoise’s death in 1985, Frank moved to New Orleans as the CEO of the Delta Queen Steamboat Co. He remarried there in 1988 and moved to the hills above Oakland, California with his second wife, the mystery writer Alice Wilson-Fried, and their daughter Teasha.

Frank’s friendship with Miriam Makeba inspired him to active solidarity with the fight against Apartheid in South Africa. After Apartheid, he was a stalwart supporter of the struggle to build a Socialist alternative as the only way to guarantee the promise of Liberation. He helped launch *Amandla!*, a popular radical opinion magazine associated with the Democratic Left Front, and remained a valued advisor to its editors.

Frank met the writer Daniel Singer when they fought together to defend

Solidarnosc against the Polish and Soviet Stalinist parties and in the 1990s, Frank led the launch of the Daniel Singer Prize, an annual essay competition for young people on topics related to socialism.

In 2011 Frank plunged into supporting the renovation of the Trotsky Museum in Mexico City, organizing a U.S. tour by Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson. He also recently joined the Solidarity chapter in the San Francisco Bay Area as a means of being connected to the movement he invested so much of his hopes in. His longtime comrade Carl Finamore reported that even when Frank was too frail to speak, "he was still able to muster enough energy to give us the middle finger and the raised fist at separate points during our discussions."

Preceded in death by his first wife, Francoise Nicolas, and his elder sister, Vivian Medak, Frank is survived by his wife Alice, his children Pascale, Isabelle, Bruno, Troy, and Teasha, and many grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Frank's memorial celebration was held January 24, 2005. The family requests that donations in Frank's memory be sent to *Amandla! Magazine* (in care of editor Brian Ashley, brian@amandla.org.za) or to the Center for Constitutional Rights (<http://goo.gl/H4Cmcr>).

Explorations in Plain Marxism

Revolutionary theory, practical action

BY PAUL LE BLANC

The ideas of Karl Marx are often put forward as an invaluable resource for those wishing to understand the world in order to change it for the better. Yet various people who speak as Marxists often insist upon divergent ways of understanding even the most basic concepts associated with Marxism—such as capitalism and the working class.

There are also perplexing divergences around such conceptions as ideology, class-consciousness, and the seemingly bizarre concept of labor aristocracy. As if this wasn't enough, relatively new concepts—identity and intersectionality—have been thrown into the mix.

It's almost enough to make activists throw up their hands, shout an expletive or two, and walk away. Of course, one can simply jump into activity to make the world a better place while saying "to hell with all these stupid theories." But this could reduce chances of understanding the world well enough to be able to actually change it positively. Practical action can be most effective if it is guided by certain structures of understanding that correspond to the way the world actually works.

In what follows, controversies among Marxists will be touched on in a manner contributing—I hope—to the development of effective revolutionary socialist perspectives.

C. Wright Mills and structures of understanding

For many of us who developed intellectually in the English-speaking world during the early 1960s, the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills was an incredibly important influence. While his works—such as *The New Men of Power* (1949), *The Power Elite* (1956), *The Sociological Imagination* (1960)—seem dated in various ways in our own

time, their clarity, independence of spirit, and critical edge reward engagement half-a-century later. My own education as a Marxist was impacted when, in my mid-teens, I poured over his final work, *The Marxists* (1962).

Mills himself was not, strictly speaking, a Marxist. He had little patience with dialectics, was not inclined to fuss with the complexities of *Capital*, and concluded that the working class had—certainly by the 1950s—proved itself incapable of bringing about revolutionary change. Yet his own understanding of the world was structured, in large measure, through his own passionate engagement with the work of Karl Marx. As he put it,

"The history of social thought since the mid-nineteenth century cannot be understood without understanding the ideas of Marx... He contributed to the categories dealt with by virtually all significant social thinkers of our immediate past... Within the classic tradition of sociology, he provides us with the most basic single framework for political and cultural reflection. Marx was not the sole source of this framework, and he did not complete a system that stands closed and finished. He did not solve all of our problems; some of them he did not even know about. Yet to study his work today and then come back to our own concerns is to increase our chances of confronting them with useful ideas and solutions.¹"

The Marxists offered a stimulating discussion of Marxist theory and history, and excerpts from a diverse range of thinkers associated in one way or another with Marxism. In his critical presentation, Mills made distinctions between different kinds of Marxists. He was inclined to reject two of these—Vulgar Marxists who "seize upon cer-



tain ideological features of Marx's political philosophy and identify these parts as the whole," and Sophisticated Marxists who are "mainly concerned with Marxism as a model of society and with the theories developed with the aid of this model."²

Mills preferred what he termed Plain Marxists, who "in great travail... have confronted the world's problems" and are inclined to be "open' (as opposed to dogmatic) in their interpretations and uses of Marxism," and who do not shy away from confronting "the unresolved tension in Marx's work—and in history itself: the tension of humanism and determinism, of human freedom and historical necessity."³ This approach strongly influences the thinking in the present essay.

Underlying Mills's approach is an obvious distinction between (1) the infinitely complex swirl of that vast and amazing everything commonly referred to as reality and (2) the study of that reality, involving theoretical constructs, structures of understanding, that we utilize to make sense of reality. It is possible to use different terminologies and different conceptualizations to define the same complex aspects of reality—and nonetheless to come up with insightful and useful understandings of such reality. This outcome is also possible when two self-identified Marxists interpret and develop aspects of Marxist theory in very different ways.

One's analysis is not necessarily invalidated by the utilization of a different way of defining one or another Marxist term. While there may be validity to both approaches, however, one is superior to the other (as Marxism) to the extent that it conforms to all of the following criteria: (1) accuracy regarding realities being described; (2) clarity in communicating the understanding of reality; (3) coherence in relation to the totality of Marxist theory; (4) usefulness in practical efforts

to push back against oppression and to advance the cause of socialism.

This is the approach underlying the following discussion of the terms highlighted at the beginning of this essay. The purpose is to help structure our understanding of reality in order to strengthen practical efforts in the struggle for liberation.

Capitalism

Capitalism has been defined by some recent Marxists in a very particular way. For example, in his outstanding study *The American Road to Capitalism*, Charles Post has offered a definition that can be summarized as follows: an economic system in which private owners of the economy—the capitalists (the bourgeoisie)—control the means of production (land, raw materials, tools/technology, etc.) and buy the labor-power of basically property-less wage-workers (the proletariat), in order to produce commodities (products produced for the market, by labor-power being turned into actual labor) that are sold at a profit. A similar approach can be found in a number of other Marxist works—for example, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* by David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, which succinctly defines capitalism as "a wage labor system of commodity production for profit."⁴

This seems a reasonable description of what happens under capitalism. There is, however, a problem that develops when this definition is applied to history. For example, before the American Civil War (1861-1865) a majority of the labor force in the United States was not made up of wage-workers. The Southern economy was predominantly agricultural, and the bulk of the Southern agricultural labor force was made up of slaves. Combined with the large number of poor white farmers, the great majority of laborers consisted of those who did not sell their labor-power to capitalists—so by this definition, the Southern

economy could not be termed capitalism. For that matter, a majority of the Northern labor force from colonial times down to the Civil War was made up of small farmers, artisans and craftsmen, small shopkeepers—only a minority were wage-workers. By definition, it could be argued, capitalism simply did not exist in the United States until 1820s or 1840s or 1860s (which is the position of the aforementioned volumes).

The problem is that Marx and Engels themselves believed capitalism did exist in the United States not only after the Civil War, but before—and not only in the ante-bellum "free-labor" North but also in the slave-labor South. Of course, Marx and Engels were only human and could be wrong—although it seems ironic that those who first developed Marxist theory would be so fundamentally wrong in their understanding of how to apply that theory. The problem deepens when we realize that what was true in the United States was true in most of Europe as well, with the exception of England. This was the case when the two revolutionaries wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, when they were helping to organize the International Workingmen's Association, and when Marx was writing *Capital*. It could be argued their analyses of capitalism represented a forecast of the future rather than a prescription for the present—but this is not how they themselves characterized their work.⁵

An additional complication is posed by the question: if it wasn't capitalism, what form of economy was it? In the slave-plantation South the dynamics of the economy were different from those of the ancient slave economies, nor did they conform to the dynamics of feudalism. Was it some form of economy that Marx and Engels did not conceptualize? (Post thinks so, presenting it as a theoretically revised variant of what the late historian Eugene Genovese termed "pre-bourgeois civilization.")

The same question can be posed regarding the form of economy in the pre-Civil War North and in nineteenth-century Europe. (The above two volumes tag it as a non-capitalist economy of “petty-commodity production.”) It is possible to argue that there are better ways of understanding the world than the way Marx and Engels understood it in their day, that they were living—contrary to what they seemed to believe—in a fundamentally pre-capitalist reality. But this suggests a certain incoherence in how this particular definition of capitalism connects with the overall perspectives of Marx and Engels.

On the other hand, the problem may stem from the fact that a reasonable description of mature capitalism does not constitute a reasonable definition of capitalism. Capitalism involves an incredibly dynamic process of development, a process of capital accumulation, transforming the world over and over again, and itself taking on a variety of different forms as it remains true to its own dynamism.

It could be argued that a more useful definition of capitalism (perhaps more consistent, also, with the perspectives of Marx and Engels) might posit four fundamental elements in the capitalist economy, three of which are relatively simple: the economy (means of production combined with labor) is privately owned, more or less controlled by the owners (in the sense that they make decisions regarding economic policy), and the guiding principle of economic decision-making involves maximizing profits of the owners. The fourth element is far more complex: the economy involves generalized commodity production—a buying-and-selling economy, or market economy. Generalized commodity production means that more and more aspects of human needs and human life are drawn into commodity production, into the production of goods and services that are created for

the purpose of selling them, in order to maximize the profits of the capitalists over and over and over again. Capitalists are driven to develop technology and the production process to create more and more profits. And more and more people in society are forced to turn their ability to work (their life-energy, their strength, their intelligence, their abilities and skills) into a commodity, selling their labor-power in order to “make a living” (to be able to buy commodities they need in order to live, and additional commodities that they want in order to make life more tolerable). This more “open” way of defining capitalism allows for considerably more diversity in the form that capitalism takes, and it captures the incredibly fluid, dynamic “all that is solid melts into air” quality of capitalism referred to in the *Communist Manifesto*.

As the Civil War writings of Marx and Engels indicate, it is possible for peculiar variants of capitalism to develop which—for example—make the entire laborer (not just his or her ability to work) into a commodity to be bought and sold, as slaves (not just “wage-slaves,” as many free laborers dubbed themselves). The different variants of capitalism yield dramatically different social and cultural differences, just as they are intertwined with dramatically different economic policy needs (high tariffs versus low tariffs, *etc.*), as well as consequent dramatic differences in political goals, which combined to culminate in the bloody explosion of 1861-1865. Moving back further, as Adam Smith’s 1776 classic *Wealth of Nations* indicates, capitalism exists before a majority of the labor force is transformed into a wage-earning proletariat. And as Leon Trotsky’s theory of uneven and combined development suggests, different modes of production can combine in a variety of peculiar ways to create an unstable economic, cultural, and political mix, often with explosive

consequences, especially given capitalism’s incredible dynamism. To utilize a relatively simple definition of capitalism, then, does not necessarily whisk away complications and contradictions in reality with which serious theorists must wrestle.⁶

But we must see capitalism as a complex and dynamically evolving reality, a vast and contradictory process, assuming different forms in different moments of history and in different places on our planet. All this is inseparable from the relentless process of capital accumulation. The diversity of “capitalisms” cannot be defined by a single description. This is particularly true in regard to the shaping and reshaping of the working class, which is always in process, being composed and de-composed and re-composed by the dynamics of the capital accumulation process—over and over again being “pulled apart and pushed together,” as Kim Moody once put it. “The shape of the working class in all corners of the world has changed as capitalism itself has altered its geographic, organizational, and technological contours,” he noted near the close of the last century. “As old structures of the working class are altered, however, new ones arise.”⁷

This brings us to additional Marxist debates about yet another central Marxist category—the proletariat, or working class. (Or are these two terms really synonyms?)

The working class

Some Marxist theorists have introduced what appear to me to be unnecessary complications in the way the central category working class is to be understood. One of the best expositors of Marxism, Hal Draper, makes a distinction between the proletariat (which he defines as those whose labor creates surplus-value for capitalists, *i.e.*, those in the private sector of the economy) and a broader working class (those more simply selling their ability to

work). Nicos Poulantzas, in a similar manner but with different labels, makes a distinction between workers (those who produce surplus-value for capitalists) and a more inclusive category of those who are wage-earners (some of whom do not produce surplus-value and whom he designates as a “new petty bourgeoisie.”) Erik Olin Wright, highly critical of Poulantzas, developed the category of contradictory class locations, distinguishing between “pure” workers and those who have “mixed locations”—either workers who have a significant degree of autonomy over their labor and/or exploited workers who, nonetheless, have control over other workers. Wright sees these as a blend of proletarian and “petty bourgeois.”⁸

All of this is in contrast to the simple, more “open” definition offered by Frederick Engels in an 1888 footnote to the *Communist Manifesto*: “By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.”⁹

It is not clear why Engels’ identification of the class of wage laborers (working class) with proletariat is inferior to Hal Draper’s insistence upon a distinction. Among the problems with Poulantzas’s restrictive analysis are: (1) the fact that it seems to restrict, in our own time, the working class of advanced capitalist countries to a declining fraction of the labor force (which throws into question a key element of Marxism’s strategic orientation), and (2) the fact that historically it would read out of the ranks of the working class most of the leadership and the social base, for example, of the Paris Commune of 1871 (which throws into question the judgment of Marx and Engels, who hailed the Commune as an example of political rule by the

revolutionary working class). Even Wright’s conceptualization of “mixed-class locations” seems to collide with certain historical realities. For example, through Francis Couvares’s incisive study of Pittsburgh’s working class from 1877 to 1919, we can see that skilled workers who had both a significant degree of autonomy over their labor and at the same time had a significant degree of control over less-skilled laborers working under them, provided the leadership for the explosive insurgency of 1877 and the momentous Homestead Steel Strike of 1892.¹⁰

This is hardly meant to restrict class analysis to the simplicity of Engels’s 1888 definition—but keeping the definition simple might enable latter-day Marxist analysts and activists to develop more complex theorizations without violating theoretical coherence, historical accuracy, or the potential for strategic clout. It is here that identity, intersectionality, and class-consciousness come in.

Identity and intersectionality

The driving force in Marx’s theoretical work involved a belief in the need for a revolution that could replace capitalism with a new and liberating socialist society. Revolutions involve the active participation of masses of people, the overturn of established ruling groups and the creation of a new political and social order. How people actually see or identify themselves as they engage in social struggles, and the identities they seek to build on, or to foster, in order to bring about social change, is of central importance for the unfolding of any revolutionary process. The examination of such matters of identity is important for those wishing to understand such processes. Among the most potent identities in modern revolutionary movements has been that of class, and we have seen that a belief in the economic role and experience, and the potential power, of

the working class was central to Marx’s understanding of the revolutionary process.

To a very large extent in the late twentieth century, however, organized labor did not appear to play the militantly class-struggle role Marxists had expected of it—a point (we have noted) that profoundly influenced the thinking of radical intellectuals such as C. Wright Mills. Labor’s radical left wing dramatically deteriorated in many capitalist countries in the decades following 1950, with a significant radicalizing reversal in the late 1960s giving way to even more dramatic decline in the century’s final decades. This took place even as capitalist reality had increasingly negative impact on various social groups. Under the impact of such realities, over time a specialized concept of identity was developed—particularly by theorists influenced by the philosophical current known as post-structuralism—which focused on the way in which specific groups in society have been culturally identified and/or self-identified, a means for defining relationships with those around them. (Mills had died by this time, but he would have been quick to note similarities between this concept and sociologist Max Weber’s notion of status.)¹¹

One can begin an understanding of this conception by reflecting on the fact that each of us is conscious of having many different identities that are important to defining who we are. Among the variety of such identities—some of which seem more vibrant to us than others—are (in no particular order): our place within a particular family; our gender; our race and/or ethnicity; our nationality; our age; our religious orientation; our attitude toward specific political ideas; our sexual orientation and preferences; the foods we like; our musical preferences, the clothes we choose to wear, and other cultural inclinations; our favorite hobbies and pastimes; organizations that we happen to belong to; whether

we live in a city, a small town, or a rural area; our income level; our particular economic occupation and skill level within that occupation; and the *socio-economic class* we happen to belong to.

It can be argued that for most people there is not a natural inclination to “privilege” the final, italicized identity in the previous paragraph. The question can be raised as to why—if the critical points made by C. Wright Mills and others are valid—one’s class identity, particularly working-class identity, should be privileged. Some have argued that if one is concerned with revolutionary protest and change, a very different identity focus than class is far more relevant.

One Marxist response could be that the exploitation of a working-class majority by a capitalist minority—and the centrality of the working-class majority to the functioning of society as a whole—creates a social reality and revolutionary potential not duplicated by any of the other identities. This hardly dismisses the central importance of certain other identities—particularly race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality. Liberation struggles of oppressed groups (such as Blacks and women) are absolutely essential for social progress and for human liberation, and independent social movements (controlled by Blacks and women respectively) are indeed needed to advance such struggles.¹²

The fact is, however, that the majority of the people in such mass movements (regardless of how they consciously identify themselves) happen to be part of the working class, that such struggles are objectively in the interests of the working class as a whole, and that such movements and struggles can play a “vanguard” role in helping to radicalize the working class and lead it forward in the struggle against the capitalist *status quo*.

Yet the working class reality must be understood not simply as an abstract category but as a process, associated with

the ongoing dynamics of capitalism, through which the class is formed and re-formed from a massive body of people who are shaped by a variety of identities, subject to a variety of cultural and historical influences, involving a complex network of relationships and varying elements of consciousness related to these dynamic realities. We are shaped by the simultaneous influences of race, class, gender, sexuality, and more—many of which involve, in our historical context, various distinct and intense forms of oppression. Some activist-theorists have called this complex reality “simultaneity” or “intersectionality.”¹³

In terms of practical revolutionary strategy, the central category of working class must be understood in all of its vibrant intersectional diversity, with each struggle by its various component parts being understood as a vital and necessary element of the overall class struggle.

Class-consciousness, ideology and labor aristocracy

A Marxist theorist can insist that a variety of social struggles—the struggle against racism, for women’s liberation, for gay rights, against war, in defense of the natural environment, in defense of public spaces and services (such as parks, schools, transit systems, health-care, libraries), *etc.*—are really part of the overall class struggle of the proletariat. And such an assertion may arguably be absolutely true. But this does not mean that the working class as a whole, or those who make up the base of the various social struggles (most of whom happen to be part of the working class) will see things that way. This brings us to the vitally important notion, for Marxists, of class-consciousness.

To discuss this adequately, we must come to terms with another terminological kink within the Marxist tradition, having to do with the word ideology. Many Marxists, especially basing themselves on in-depth engagement with early philosophical texts by Marx,

give a distinctive definition to the term. For them, it basically adds up to “false consciousness,” that is, a set of ideas or belief system covering over the oppressive realities of the *status quo*, leading the oppressed and exploited and everyone else, in one way or another, to accept and help perpetuate an oppressive and exploitative system.

This is contrasted to a genuinely scientific and true—non-ideological—understanding of reality, represented by Marx’s thought. There are problems with this approach, one being what would seem a dogmatic assumption that Marxism alone represents the One True System of Understanding Reality (a fatally closed system of thought), thereby gliding over the possibility that Marx himself, and those closest to him (however that is determined), were no less human than the rest of us and therefore may have gotten some important things wrong, may have been deceived, or may be deceiving themselves, into believing false notions. There are other Marxists—most notably Lenin—who have used the term in a more neutral manner. This sees an ideology as simply a set of ideas, a belief system, which one utilizes to make sense of reality. That is how I prefer to use the term. An ideology may be “false” (I consider this to be the case with a diverse set of belief systems that include fundamentalist religions, vulgar Marxism, pro-capitalist liberalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, fascism, *etc.*), but not necessarily. It may yield some valid insights, it may provide a more or less adequate understanding of reality, it may be interpreted and utilized in foolish or invaluable ways, it may be blended fruitfully or chaotically with other ideologies, *etc.*¹⁴

With this neutral usage, Marxism itself represents an ideological perspective. If it is interpreted, developed, and utilized intelligently, and communicated clearly, it can play an invaluable role in contributing to the consciousness of the working class.

Which brings us to the meaning of the term class-consciousness. For Marxists, the term does not mean simply whatever happens to be in the mind of a worker. It suggests, instead, (a) understanding that there is a capitalist system that is oppressive and exploitative toward the working class to which one belongs, (b) that it is possible and necessary for workers to join together to advance the interests of themselves and the working class as a whole, (c) that this involves a power struggle with the capitalist class which can be won partially in the short term, and definitively in the longer term, (d) leading to an economic, social and political order that is truly democratic and in which the free development of each person will be the condition for the free development of all. This may seem a tall order, yet such class-consciousness has existed on a mass scale many times over the past century and a half.¹⁵

But this does not happen automatically. History shows that it is possible for broad sectors of the working class—due to their location in capitalist society and the “objective” conditions (living conditions, working conditions, experiences and relationships related to these) bearing down on them—to develop an accurate understanding of their situation, adding up to the kind of revolutionary class-consciousness described above. But it is not the case that workers always develop such consciousness. There is often a significant gap between the “ripeness” of objective conditions (the blatant oppressiveness and destructiveness of capitalism, intensified suffering among the masses of people who are part of the working class) on the one hand, and on the other hand the level of class-consciousness among a majority of workers. They may fail to grasp clearly the sources of their misery and what to do to end it. Many workers have an insufficient level of knowledge and revolutionary determination even under the most oppressive conditions. To the

extent that class-consciousness develops among workers, it does so unevenly. Some come to such insights and beliefs, which they share with others, some of whom are persuaded, and some of whom require more experience before such consciousness makes sense to them. There are some who never develop such consciousness.

This means that bad conditions are not inevitably reflected in an increasingly revolutionary consciousness of workers, that the problems of capitalism do not inevitably turn workers into socialists or revolutionaries. Historically, among the first layers of the working class to turn to socialism and labor action, assuming a vanguard position within the class as a whole, have not been the most oppressed unskilled workers, but rather the less downtrodden skilled workers. At the same time, this relatively “privileged” layer of the working class can become, and historically often has become, an “aristocracy of labor” that follows an utterly “opportunistic” policy, that sacrifices the basic interests of the mass of workers in favor of the temporary interests of a small number of workers.

Before going further, we need to come to terms with another terminological squabble among Marxist theorists—aristocracy of labor.

In a recent essay, Charles Post has challenged the theory of the labor aristocracy. Noting that variants have been offered by Marx and Engels, by Lenin and Gregory Zinoviev, and more recently by Max Elbaum and Robert Seltzer, he comments that all include two key points: (1) “working-class conservatism is the result of material differences—relative privileges—enjoyed by some workers,” and (2) “the source of this relative privilege (‘the bribe’) is a sharing of higher-than-average profits between capitalists and a privileged labor-aristocracy.” He argues that the second point appears true in some periods (for example,

“during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s certain branches of industry enjoyed stable, higher-than-average profits and wages,” corresponding to conservatized unions in those industries), but that profits then went down in those industries. (He seems to glide over the fact that, subsequently, the unions in question were largely pushed back and in some cases eliminated, partly due to dynamics deindustrialization/globalization). He argues that the first point—inevitable conservatism of more “privileged” workers—is disproved by the fact that, as we have also emphasized, the better-off skilled workers actually played a vanguard role in trade union and socialist struggles in much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶

Among, for example, the skilled metal workers in tsarist Russia, the influence of Lenin’s Bolsheviks was quite high. Of course, there were various tendencies, different levels of consciousness, within this stratum. One worker later recalled the early days of the Russian labor movement this way: “At that time, the difference between metal and textile workers was like the difference between the city and the countryside...Metal workers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers. Their occupations demanded more training and skill, and therefore they looked down on other workers, such as weavers and the like, as an inferior category, as country bumpkins: today he will be at the mill, but tomorrow he will be poking at the earth with his wooden plow.” Naturally, the highest percentage of women workers were among these lowly textile workers, allowing for male chauvinism to blend with the disdain for “bumpkins.” Yet later, a militant metal worker would express a different way of thinking: “Only a conscious working person can truly respect a human individual, women, cherish a tender child’s soul. We will not learn from anyone but ourselves. We, the conscious working peo-

ple, have no right to be like the bourgeois.” Noting the impulse of many conscious workers to reach out to their less fortunate class brothers and sisters, one observer wrote that “the spiritual process is an active one. Once the voice of the individual has begun to speak in the worker, he can neither sit under a bush...nor limit himself to words...The strength of this process is in its dynamism: the upward strata of the proletariat lift up the backward strata to its level.” This process was by no means automatic, but rather took years before coming to fruition. Without it, however, there would have been no Russian Revolution. It was this vanguard layer of the working class, as Lenin put it, that would be “capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie.”¹⁷

In contrast to this were the “opportunist” trends also existing in the labor movement, which Lenin denounced for training “the members of the workers’ party to be the representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the masses, ‘get along’ fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.” An example drawn from U.S. labor history would be skilled workers within the American Federation of Labor adopting a narrow “pure and simple” trade unionism that cares for the needs of a small number of organized workers (themselves) while excluding women, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, unskilled and unemployed workers, and in general rejects broader social concerns. There is nothing that inevitably pushes this layer in the direction either of opportunist labor aristocracy or principled revolutionary vanguard. What is deci-

sive is the ability of revolutionaries within this layer, as within the entire working class, to organize for the purpose of winning their workmates, and their sisters and brothers in the working class as a whole, over to a revolutionary understanding of what’s what and what’s needed.¹⁸

Practical action rooted in theory

The best that is in the tradition of Marxism is grounded in the serious study and understanding of history, economics, and society, and also in the practical experience—instructive mistakes and gains, defeats and victories—of working class struggles. Taken as a whole, this constitutes a body of Marxist theory, a way of understanding things. Theory becomes an invaluable guide to practical action. Yet it must remain open to evolving realities, new insights, new tasks. Revolutionary-minded activists, drawing on this rich and open and critical-minded body of thought, can and must reach out to various sectors of today’s working class—which in countries such as the United States includes the great majority of people: blue-collar and white-collar workers of various kinds, production workers and service employees in the public and private sectors, proletarianized “professionals” as well as impoverished agricultural laborers, not to mention family members and others dependent on the paychecks of those selling their labor-power, and the substantial ranks of both unemployed and retired workers.

We are many, but our success will be dependent upon a sufficient degree of class-consciousness among a substantial number of us. This class-consciousness, in our own time, must incorporate insights that reflect the realities associated with notions of identity and intersectionality. It must be said that this approach is not entirely new. “The Social-Democrat’s ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who

is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects,” Lenin insisted.¹⁹ The struggles we are engaged with encompass the human rights, the elemental democratic rights, of all sectors of our class, all “identities” within our class. Without the thoroughgoing struggle for such democratic rights, there can be no socialism. Again, Lenin was on the cutting-edge of comprehending such realities:

“The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, *i.e.*, by giving full effect to democracy and by linking with each step of its struggle democratic demands formulated in the most resolute terms. It is absurd to contrapose the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism to a single problem of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary program and tactics on all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of officials, equal rights for women, the self-determination of nations, *etc.* While capitalism exists, these demands—all of them—can only be accomplished as an exception, and even then in an incomplete and distorted form. Basing ourselves on the democracy already achieved, and exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the complete and all-round institution of all democratic reforms. Some of these reforms will be started before the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others in the course of that overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle, but a period covering a series of battles over all sorts of problems of economic and democratic reform, which are consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It

is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate every one of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary way. It is quite conceivable that the workers of some particular country will overthrow the bourgeoisie before even a single fundamental democratic reform has been fully achieved. It is, however, quite inconceivable that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie, unless it is prepared for that by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy.²⁰

This strategic orientation—an uncompromising struggle for thoroughgoing democracy flowing into an unstoppable upsurge toward socialist revolution—becomes effective only when it animates substantial sectors of our class, and this will not happen automatically. Those of us who share this vision must organize ourselves,

and join with other like-minded forces to organize struggles through which such revolutionary class-consciousness can assume mass proportions. As enough people in the diverse and multifaceted working-class majority become “conscious” workers, organized as a political force capable of bringing about a revolutionary power-shift, possibilities will open up for the flowering of a society of the free and the equal.

—LINKS, January 15, 2015

<http://links.org.au/node/4251>

1 C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (New York: New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), 34, 35.

2 Ibid. 96.

3 Ibid. 99.

4 Charles Post, *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class Structure, Economic Development and Political Conflict, 1620-1877* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 40; David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich

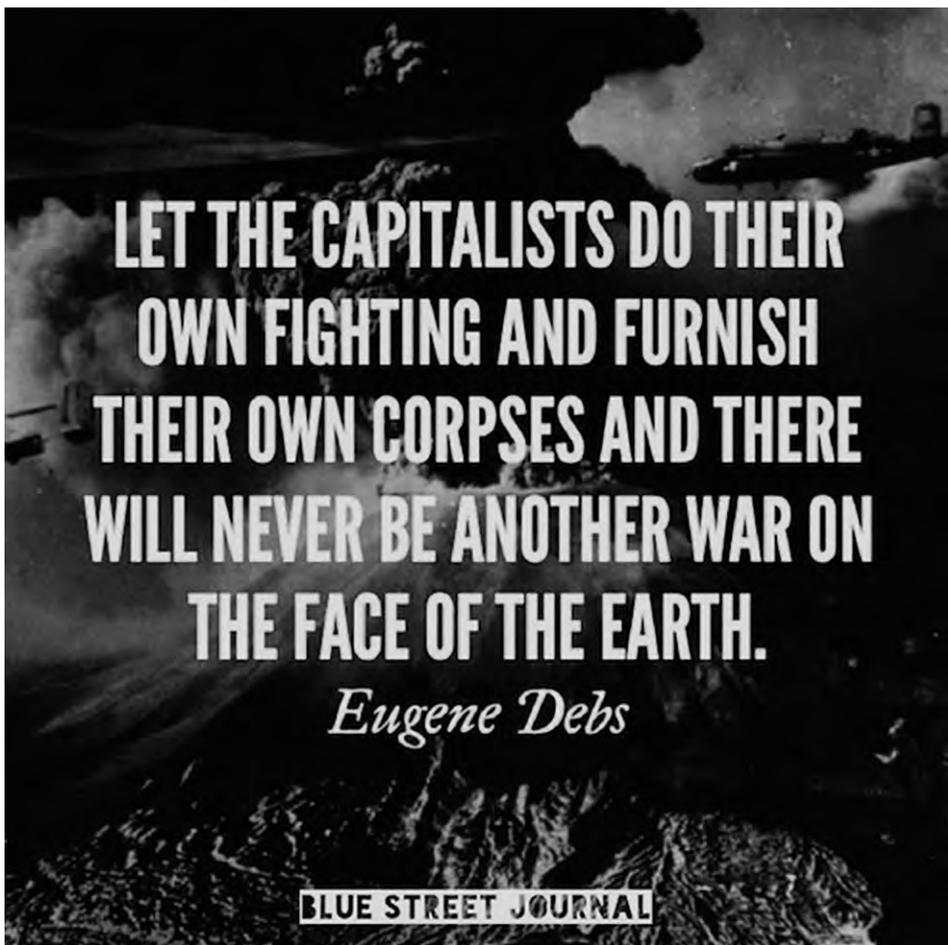
Segmented Work, Divided Workers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 18. Terminological differences aside, I consider each of these as extremely valuable contributions to the understanding of U.S. capitalism.

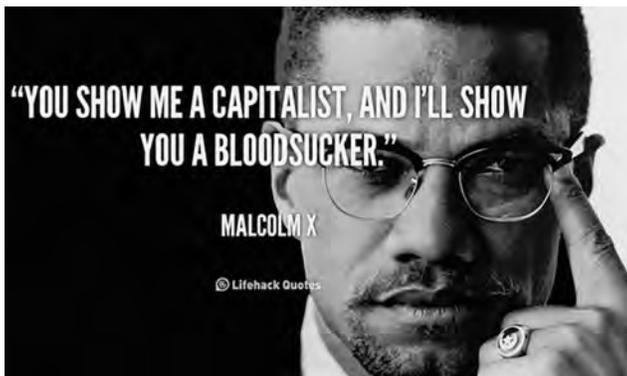
5 For Marx and Engels on U.S. capitalism, including in relation to the Civil War, see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx and Engels on the United States*, ed. by Nelly Romyantseva (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), August H. Nimtz, Jr., *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race in America: The “Absolute Democracy” or “Defiled Republic”* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), and Robin Blackburn, *An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln* (London: Verso, 2011). On social composition of the International Workingmen’s Association and Paris Commune see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: New American Library, 1979), 184, and Stewart Edwards, ed., *The Communards of Paris, 1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 28-29. On the nineteenth-century European working class, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg, eds., *Working Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). On what Marx and Engels believed they were doing, see David Riazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, An Introduction to Their Lives and Work* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), and August H. Nimtz, Jr., *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2000).

6 For a history of the U.S. working class written from this standpoint, see Paul Le Blanc, *A Short History of the U.S. Working Class, From Colonial Times to the Twenty-First Century* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999). For an application of Trotsky’s theory to European history, see Paul Le Blanc, “Uneven and Combined Development and the Sweep of History: Focus on Europe,” *International Viewpoint*, 21 September 2006 (<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1125>).

7 Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London: Verso, 1997), 178; also see Paul Mason, *Live Working, Die Fighting: How the Working Class Went Global* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010).

8 Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution, Volume II: The Politics of Social Classes* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 34-38; Nicos Polantzias, “On Social Classes,” in James Martin, ed., *The Polantzias Reader: Marxism, Law and the State* (London: Verso, 2008), 186-219; Erik Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State*





(London: Verso, 1979), 30-110. Petty bourgeoisie has traditionally meant small capitalists—owners of small businesses, independent artisans and professionals selling products and services, and independent small farmers. For some it has been common to include government employees, many or most “white collar” employees, etc. Sometimes it has also been conflated with the incredibly fuzzy term “middle class.”

9 Phil Gasper, ed., *The Communist Manifesto: A Roadmap to History's Most Important Political Document* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 39.

10 Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City 1877-1919* (Albany: State University of New York, 1984). On the Paris Commune, see n. 5 above.

11 This discussion draws substantially from my essay “Class and Identity,” in Immanuel Ness, et al, eds., *Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest, Volume II* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing/John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 776-783. Weber’s theorizations that correspond to aspects of “identity” conceptualizations can be found in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 180-195.

12 This point is made in Roger Lancaster’s brilliant anthropological study, *Life is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 282.

13 David Roediger, “The Crisis in Labor History: Race, Gender and the Replotting of the Working Class Past in the United States,” in *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working-Class History* (London: Verso, 1994), 76; also see Sharon Smith, “Black Feminism and Intersectionality,” *International Socialist Review*, Issue 91, Winter 2013-14, 6-24. This way of understanding the working class also owes much to Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 3-78, and *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*, ed. by Ira Berlin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 380-394.

14 See Jorge Larrain, “Ideology” in Tom Bottomore et al, eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Second Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 242-252.

15 This draws from Paul Le Blanc, “Spider and Fly: The Leninist Philosophy of Georg Lukács,” *Historical Materialism* 20-2 (2013), 47-75. More on class-consciousness can be found in Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, new edition (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 24-26, 30-33, 42-43, 45-46, 58-64, 65-67.

16 Charles Post, “Exploring Working-Class-consciousness: A Critique of the Theory of ‘Labor-Aristocracy,’” *Historical Materialism* 18.4 (2010), 6, 25. See also the exposition in one of Post’s targets, Max Elbaum and Robert Seltzer, *The Labor Aristocracy: The Material Basis for Opportunism in the Labor Movement* (Chippendale, NSW, Australia: Resistance Books, 2004). A criticism similar to that expressed here can be found in Alan Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony: Political Practice and Theory in the Class Struggle* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 265.

17 This is drawn from Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, 34-35, 292.

18 Ibid. 292. On the “pure and simple” ideology and practice that became dominant in the American Federation of Labor, see: Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume II: From the Founding of the American Federation of Labor to the Emergence of American Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume III: The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1909* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), and *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume V: The AFL in the Progressive Era 1910-1915* (New York: International Publishers, 1980). Also see Paul Le Blanc, *Work and Struggle: Voices from U.S. Labor Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

19 Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?” (1902) in V.I. Lenin, *Revolution, Democracy, Socialism: Selected Writings*, edited by Paul Le Blanc (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 143.

20 Lenin, “The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” (1915) in ibid. 233-234. For discussion of “cutting-edge” aspects of Lenin’s approach, also see Shandro (cited in note 15 above), and Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism, A Critical Study* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

Which brings us to the meaning of the term class-consciousness. For Marxists, the term does not mean simply whatever happens to be in the mind of a worker. It suggests, instead, (a) understanding that there is a capitalist system that is oppressive and exploitative toward the working class to which one belongs, (b) that it is possible and necessary for workers to join together to advance the interests of themselves and the working class as a whole, (c) that this involves a power struggle with the capitalist class which can be won partially in the short term, and definitively in the longer term, (d) leading to an economic, social and political order that is truly democratic and in which the free development of each person will be the condition for the free development of all. This may seem a tall order, yet such class-consciousness has existed on a mass scale many times over the past century and a half.

Greece: Austerity for the Bankers

TRANSCRIPT OF SHARMINI PERIES' INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL HUDSON

Sharmini Peries: Welcome to *The Real News Network*.

The four-month extension secured by the Greek finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, on Friday, February 20, 2015, came with the condition that Greece provide a list of measures to quell the concerns of its international lenders, especially the German banks represented by the finance ministers in Brussels, who feared that Athens might bail on the promises to cut spending and implement austerity measures. So, on Sunday, Athens provided that list.

Now joining us to discuss Syriza's tabled plan is Michael Hudson. He is a distinguished research professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. His upcoming book is titled *Killing the Host: How Financial Parasites and Debt Bondage Destroyed the Global Economy*.

Thank you so much for joining us, Michael.

Michael Hudson: Thank you.

Sharmini Peries: So, Michael, these international banks represented by the finance ministers now in Brussels, when they were in crisis and we, the public treasury, bailed them out, they had no problem with that. Why are they now refusing to assist Greece at a time of need when in fact some politicians and even the troika [the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB)] is being more receptive to what Greece is saying?

Michael Hudson: Because what's at issue really is a class war. It's not so much Germany versus Greece, as the papers say. It's really the war of the banks against labor. And it's a continuation of Thatcherism and neoliberalism.

The problem isn't simply that the troika wants Greece to balance the budget; it wants Greece to balance the budget by lowering wages and by imposing austerity on the labor force. But instead, the terms in which Varoufakis has suggested balancing the budget are to impose austerity on the financial class, on the tycoons, on the tax dodgers. And he said, okay, instead of lowering pensions to the workers, instead of shrinking the domestic market, instead of pursuing a self-defeating austerity, we're going to raise two-and-a-half billion from the powerful Greek tycoons. We're going to collect the back taxes that they have. We're going to crack down on illegal smuggling of oil and the other networks and on the real estate owners that have been avoiding taxes, because the Greek upper classes have become notorious for tax dodging.

Well, this defiance has infuriated the banks, because it turns out the finance ministers of Europe are not all in favor of balancing the budget if it has to be balanced by taxing the rich. The banks know that whatever taxes the rich are able to avoid end up in their vaults. So now the gloves are off and the class war is back. Originally, Varoufakis thought he was negotiating with the troika, that is, with the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the Euro Council. But instead they said, no, no, you're negotiating with the finance ministers. And the finance ministers in Europe are very much like Tim Geithner in the United States. They're lobbyists for the big banks. And the finance ministers said, how can we make sure that we treat Greece as an object lesson, pretty much like America treated Cuba in 1960?

Sharmini Peries: Hold on; hold on for one second, Michael. Let's explain that, Yanis Varoufakis, the finance minister of Greece, is very well-briefed and very well-positioned to negotiate all of this. Now, why did he think he was negotiating with the troika when in fact he was negotiating with banks.

Michael Hudson: Because officially he is negotiating with the troika. He went and he took them at their word. And then he found out—and yesterday, Jamie Galbraith, who went with him to Europe, published in *Fortune* a description saying that the finance ministers are fighting with the troika. The troika don't have their story straight. The troika and the finance ministers are all fighting among themselves over what exactly is to be done. And to really throw a monkey wrench in, the German finance minister, Schäuble, said, he will bring in the Spanish government, the Portuguese government and the Finnish government, and they've got to agree.

The position of Spain, for instance, is that they are in power, essentially a Thatcherite neoliberal party. If Greece ends up dumping austerity and saving its workers, then Podemos Party in Spain is going to win the next election. So the current Spanish government intends to make sure that Varoufakis and the SYRIZA Party is a failure, so that they themselves can tell the working class to look at what happened to Greece. It got smashed, and that is what is going to happen to you if you try to do what they do; if you try to tax the rich, if you try to take over the banks and stop the kleptocracy, there's going to be a disaster.

So, obviously, Spain and Portugal want to impose austerity on Greece.

And even Ireland now has chimed in and said: What have we done? We have imposed austerity for a decade in order to bail out the banks. Even the IMF has criticized us for going along with Europe, bailing out the banks and imposing austerity. If SYRIZA wins in avoiding austerity in Greece, then all of our sacrifice wrung from our peoples, all of the poverty that we've imposed, all of the Thatcherism that we've imposed has been needless. We didn't have to do it.

So there's a whole demonstration effect, which is why they're treating Greece almost as a symbol for—the class war as a symbol for labor saying, wait a minute; we don't have to allow austerity. We can collect taxes from the tax dodgers.

Remember a few years ago when Europe said, Greece owes 50 billion euros in foreign debt? Well, it turned out that the central bank had given to the Greek parties a list called the Lagarde list (for Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF) of all of the tax dodgers, Greek tax dodgers who had Swiss bank accounts. Well the Swiss bank accounts that the tax dodgers had added up to about 50 billion euros. So Greece could pay off the debt that it's borrowed simply by moving against the tax dodgers.

But, of course, this would be at the expense of the Swiss banks and the other banks. So in effect the banks would be paying themselves. And they don't want to pay themselves. They want to squeeze labor and let the tax dodgers and the Greek tycoons succeed in stealing the money from the government. So, in effect, the troika—not the troika—the finance ministers, really, are backing the tax dodgers and the crooks in Greece that SYRIZA is trying to move against, whereas the IMF is actually, for once, taking a softer position towards the whole thing. And even President Obama has chimed in by apparently calling German Prime

Minister Merkel and saying, look, you can't just push austerity beyond all reason, because you're going to push Greece out of the euro, and you'll be pushing them out of the euro on SYRIZA's terms, where SYRIZA can then turn to the Greek population and say: We did what we promised here. We stopped the austerity. We didn't withdraw from the euro; we were driven out as part of the class war.

Sharmini Peries: Michael, earlier you were also making an analogy between what's going on in Greece and what happened to Cuba.

Michael Hudson: Castro had an alternative social system. Castro wanted to spread the wealth around (it was a Marxist system) in his way. He wanted to get rid of the crooks around Batista who were actually running the country, the rich who didn't pay taxes, and he wanted to have a social revolution in Cuba. So the American government said: No you don't. If Cuba succeeds, then there will be revolutions all throughout Latin America. Latin Americans will realize that they can take over the American sugar companies, that they can take over the American banana companies, that they can make the rich pay the taxes and the corporations pay the taxes and the exporters pay the taxes—not simply the workers. The American government realized that if Cuba can educate labor, so could everybody, and that would be a disaster for the neoliberal plan. If labor's educated and has a program, then it will realize that there is an alternative to Thatcherism.

Well, this is the problem that Varoufakis wrote about in an article earlier this month in *The Guardian* on how he came out of the Marxist movement. He said, the whole problem that we're facing in Greece is that if we withdraw from the euro, if we're forced out, there's going to be an economic trauma, and the left wing throughout Europe, as in America, doesn't really

have an economic program. It has a political program, but not really an economic program. And the only alternative to SYRIZA with its economic program is the New Dawn movement and the neo-Nazis. Varoufakis is worried because he's not only contending with the European finance ministers on one front, but he's contending on the Greek front with the right-wing parties that are the nationalist parties, like Marie Le Pen in France, the parties that are saying: Yes, we have an alternative; withdraw from the euro. The kind of withdrawal and alternative that the far right would have is not at all what the left wing would have.

At this time, there really isn't yet much of a left wing in Greece, apart from the SYRIZA party, which is certainly not comparable to Papandreou's socialist party, and certainly not the nominally socialist party in Spain, which is a Thatcherite party, and it's certainly not the British Labor Party, which has gone the way of Tony Blair.

So the problem is that Varoufakis has about four months to educate the Greek public to the fact that: Yes, there is an alternative, here's what it is. The alternative to neoliberalism doesn't have to be right-wing nationalism. There is a socialist alternative, and we're trying to work out as many arrangements we can, so if we're driven out of the euro, if the banks go under, we do have a fallback plan. Varoufakis can't come right out right now and say this is the plan, because it has to be made very clear to the Greek people that it's the finance ministers of Germany, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Finland that are driving Greece out, not the IMF, not the European Central Bank, and not even centrist governments.

Sharmini Peries: Michael, thank you so much for joining us on *The Real News Network* today, and we'll be following this story at *The Real News*. So do join us very soon again.

Michael Hudson: It's always good to be here. Thank you.

Sharmini Peries: Thank you very much for joining us on *The Real News Network*.

Sharmini Peries is Executive Producer of The Real News Network.

Michael Hudson is a Distinguished Research Professor of Economics at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. His two newest books are *The Bubble and Beyond* and *Finance Capitalism and its Discontents*.

—*The Real News Network*, February 14, 2015

<http://michael-hudson.com/2015/02/greece-austerity-for-the-bankers/>

The problem isn't simply that the troika wants Greece to balance the budget; it wants Greece to balance the budget by lowering wages and by imposing austerity on the labor force.

Greek Reform Proposal

Preserves privatization commitments, ignores debt restructuring¹

TRANSCRIPT OF SHARMINI PERIES' INTERVIEW WITH DIMITRI LASCARIS

Sharmini Peries: I'm Sharmini Peries, coming to you from Baltimore.

The finance ministers of the Eurozone have approved reform proposals submitted by Greece. The Eurogroup have signaled that they will begin national procedures, which are parliamentary votes in euro states, to give the deal the final approval. The approval would mean that Greece will receive a four-month extension on its bailout and receive the next part of the loan, which would otherwise expire on Saturday.

Joining us now to talk about all of this is Dimitri Lascaris. Thank you so much for joining us, Dimitri.

Dimitri Lascaris: Thank you, Sharmini.

Sharmini Peries: So, Dimitri, while all these tussles and rustles are taking place in Europe with the finance ministers and the Greek government, what's going on on the ground? How is it being received by the very diverse coalition of the SYRIZA Party, and of course among the SYRIZA supporters, who actually voted them into power?

Dimitri Lascaris: I think we're just beginning to flesh out how people are responding to this. The proposals, the precise terms of them, were published, I think, earlier today. So it's taking some time to digest. But the reaction overall is not favorable thus far.

Two things stood out for me in observing how supporters of the party and people within the party in particular are reacting. One is that one of the more negative aspects of the proposals is that the government is now not going to unwind privatizations, even those that may have been done at fire-sale prices. It is not going to suspend

privatizations that are in progress but have not been completed either. And, in fact, it's not even committing to abandon privatizations that have not yet begun.

And one of the privatizations that is in progress—not completed, but in progress, and therefore caught up with in the commitment of the government to go forward with privatizations, is that of a subsidiary of the power company, a power grid operator. And the minister of energy, who is one of the leaders of the strong left-wing faction within SYRIZA, publicly stated quite clearly several weeks ago that that privatization was not going to go forward. So, effectively he's been hung out to dry. His name is Panagiotis Lafazanis. And, apparently, there was a cabinet meeting today where not only Mr. Lafazanis, but others, were expressing their heated objections to the proposals. And he in particular led the charge and is reported to have left the meeting livid. Quite apart from his reaction to what appears to have been his being hung out to dry, there are reports of 40 members of the SYRIZA parliamentary group circulating a petition demanding an emergency meeting of the central committee of SYRIZA to discuss what I think many within the party view as unacceptable compromises.

Sharmini Peries: Now, Dimitri, I found the Greek government's proposals to the finance minister, this particular component on privatization, somewhat carefully worded, in the sense that they will not undo ones that are already in progress, but they will also not go forth with more privatization. Is that not leaving the door open to not move forward?

Dimitri Lascaris: With their language, to the extent they've given themselves any wiggle room in this six-page letter; it's extremely narrow space.

So what they said—again, they’re committing not to unwind privatizations already completed, even if the terms were quite unfavorable and fairly unfavorable to the state. They are committing not to terminate privatizations that have begun. The only wiggle room is with respect to privatizations that have not yet begun. And what they’re saying there is that they will review the terms of those privatizations, not with the possible outcome of terminating them, but simply to ensure that they’re getting the best possible deal that they can get for the state. So, you know, as far as I can tell, this six-page letter essentially commits the government to the privatization commitments that the prior regime had made.

Sharmini Peries: Now, in being fair to the government, now, this is only a four-month extension. And did they in fact agree to this because they need the funds? Because the terms of the previous agreement expires on Saturday, and without it it’s going to be high and dry, what could it possibly have done otherwise?

Dmitri Lascaris: Well, I think that’s almost certainly true that it—I mean, it’s—and, by the way, it’s not just the privatizations where there has been an apparent capitulation. We can come back to that later. But sure, it’s undoubtedly true that they’re making these concessions in order to secure funding. The problem is that they’re going to be in precisely the same position in four months’ time. They’re always going to need funding unless there’s a dramatic debt restructuring and/or an exit from the Eurozone. So this exigency is not going away. And if you prefer to capitulate now, then you would probably be prepared to capitulate four months down the road or one year down the road. Where does it all end?

Sharmini Peries: Now, is it a capitulation? Or is it just buying of time?

Dmitri Lascaris: Well, again, I think they’re buying time, but to what end?

Because if they’re going to—you know, in four months’ time, they’re going to need additional financing. The only way they’re going to avoid this perpetual need for financing from the troika and other members of the Eurozone is to restructure the debt and to do so [in] a dramatic fashion. There’s nothing in this proposal, nothing at all about the restructuring of the debt. And, in fact there have been reports that at least in private conversations the Greek government has been assured that the 2012 memorandum requirement, that its primary budget surplus, be increased beyond 1.5 percent. There have been reports that that has been—there’s been a concession made to Greece in that regard and that it won’t have to increase its primary budget surplus beyond 1.5 percent, which would, of course, constrict further its ability to engage in social spending.

This six-page proposal says nothing about the primary budget surplus. In fact, it says something to the contrary. It talks about the measures to—unspecified measures—to relieve the humanitarian crisis. But it says quite clearly that they will not be taking those measures to the extent that they have a negative impact on the country’s fiscal position, which effectively means that the kinds of measures that one needs to see to dramatically ameliorate against the humanitarian crisis in the country cannot and will not happen.

Sharmini Peries: Dimitri, speaking of the humanitarian crisis, now things that the government committed to right after the election, mainly a minimum wage, rehiring of government workers that have been laid off, now this plan that they have tabled would mean unraveling some of those commitments. How is that faring on the ground?

Dmitri Lascaris: You know, this is—I think not at all well. I mean, this is one of the—the minimum wage commitment was one of the red lines which various members of the govern-

ment said the party would not cross. Now, it hasn’t clearly crossed that red line. What it said is that the goal of raising the minimum wage is now an ambition—that’s the word it uses—not a commitment; it’s an ambition—and it must be done in a way that safeguards competitiveness. And the language that’s in this proposal is that, quote, “The scope and timing of changes to the minimum wage will be made in consultation with (...) the European and international institutions,” *i.e.*, the Eurozone and the Troika. And, of course, they have all, almost to a person, articulated their ironclad opposition to any kind of alleviation of the humanitarian crisis, including the raising of the minimum wage. So with that kind of qualification built into the proposal to raise the minimum wage, it’s far from clear that you’re going to see any increase in the minimum wage, let alone to the level that had been discussed previously, any time soon within Greece.

Sharmini Peries: Dimitri, getting back to the emergency meeting that’s been called and the divisions within SYRIZA about this proposal, what do you think will be the next discussions there?

Dmitri Lascaris: Well, I think the government is—those who have authored this proposal—and again, I’ve said this before, and I’ll repeat: I understand they’re in a very difficult situation. And to their credit, their proposal, their six-page proposal, places great emphasis upon tackling corruption, tax evasion by the wealthy, and control of the economy by the oligarchy. For example, they’re now talking about having an auction process. They’ve committed to having an open, transparent auction process for the use of frequencies by media outlets at market rates, and these media outlets are owned by the oligarchy. They’re talking about beefing up the staffing for the units that are rooting out tax fraud and tax evasion by the wealthier

members of society. They're talking about augmenting inspections and risk-based audits. And you may recall, when I was in Greece, I said early on in our examination, our discussion of this topic of SYRIZA's rise to power, that if all it ever accomplished was to emasculate the oligarchy, it will have dramatically changed Greece for the better.

And the good part about this proposal is that it does commit the government down that path. It does give reasonably detailed insight into how it's going to go about doing that. And I think what you're going to be hearing from SYRIZA in the days ahead is an emphasis on that aspect of its proposals.

Sharmini Peries: Now, Dimitri, we know that that aspect of the proposal will require a great deal of civil servants in order to administer, and ministries and agencies to actually implement. And one of the commitments it made in the proposal is that it would reduce the number of ministries from 16 to ten, and also not be able to expand the civil service. Doesn't that put SYRIZA and the government in a strange predicament?

Dimitri Lascaris: It does indeed. In order to really dramatically improve the level of tax collection and dramatically reduce the level of tax evasion, you're going to need additional

...there are reports of 40 members of the SYRIZA parliamentary group circulating a petition demanding an emergency meeting of the central committee of SYRIZA to discuss what I think many within the party view as unacceptable compromises.

resources—informational resources, human resources. How the government is going to accomplish substantially increased collection and reduc-

tion of tax evasion with this further so-called rationalization of the civil service is a really good question, and the answer to that question is not remotely clear at this stage.

Sharmini Peries: Dimitri, as always, thank you so much for joining us and giving us this update.

Dimitri Lascaris: Thanks very much, Sharmini.

Sharmini Peries: And thank you for joining us on The Real News Network.

Sharmini Peries is Executive Producer of The Real News Network.

Dimitri Lascaris is a partner with the Canadian law firm of Siskinds where he heads the firms securities class actions practice. Before joining Siskinds, he practiced securities law in the New York and Paris offices of a major Wall Street law firm. Last year, he was named by Canadian Business Magazine as one of the 50 most influential business people in Canada, and was described by the Magazine as "the fiercest advocate for shareholder rights" in Canada. He is currently prosecuting numerous securities class actions in Canada, including the Sino-Forest class action in which his clients just negotiated the largest auditor settlement in Canadian history: a \$117 million settlement with the accounting firm, Ernst and Young.

—The Real News Network, February 25, 2015

http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=13287

1 "Greek Plan Submitted to Eurogroup Finance Ministers" (PDF)

<http://s.kathimerini.gr/resources/article-files/keimeno--3.pdf>



Greece: No More Retreats

The government must formulate an alternative collision plan with the blackmailers and their local lackeys, a plan that favors the working masses!

BY COMMUNIST TENDENCY OF SYRIZA

This is the February 19, 2015 announcement by the Communist Tendency of SYRIZA regarding the request for the extension of the current loan agreement.

The request to the Troika [the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB)] for a six-month extension of the loan agreement is a grave political mistake. According to the Greek government what was put on the table was "...a proposal that respects the verdict of the people, upholds the dignity of society and at the same time is acceptable to our negotiating partners. Our request also extends over the issue of the necessity to reverse the cost and impact of the crisis on society..."

The January 2015 elections demonstrated a popular mandate for an immediate end to austerity and the abolition of the Memoranda [IMF Letter of Intent, Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies, and Technical Memorandum of Understanding.] However, despite consecutive German ultimatums, and the united front put up by all the bourgeois Eurozone governments—north and south alike—the government insists that it is possible to achieve a "win-win agreement" with its creditors.

However, as reality makes abundantly clear, there have been no reciprocal concessions offered in order to reach a deal, only retreats on the part of the government, without our "partners" granting anything other than ultimatums! What we have before us is a caricature of negotiations where one side is "unilaterally negotiating." The other side is sitting and waiting for the Greek government's next retreat when

the party, which is in fact negotiating in good faith, is already humiliated by its many retreats.

There has been one big retreat after the other on the part of the Greek government. The aim to write off the debt has been abandoned, there is reconciliation with the predators of the Greek banking system, the TAIPED (state organization overseeing privatizations) is being maintained and so is the possibility of further privatizations. There has been an acceptance of the logic that a "primary surplus" must be achieved

There has been an acceptance of the logic that a "primary surplus" must be achieved before important social reforms can take place, which means that the government has accepted austerity and of cuts in the interest of servicing the debt.

before important social reforms can take place, which means that the government has accepted austerity and of cuts in the interest of servicing the debt.

A more severe retreat comes in the form of the government's request to extend the loan agreement for a further six months; this means the government would be undertaking the commitment to maintain "fiscal balance" for that period. In effect, the main mea-

sures contained in the Thessaloniki program¹ (*i.e.*, the watered-down party program of the pre-election period) would be postponed for at least another six months.

All these concessions—combined with the absence of a crucial "alternative plan" to handle the collision with our extortionists-creditors, a plan that was publicly announced as a means of safeguarding the interests of the working people—gravely compounds the situation for the Greek government.

The message they are sending to our "partners" is that if they wait a little longer, the government will be forced to capitulate to the blackmail. This would disappoint and demoralize those people that are currently supporting the new government in great numbers and who would be led to believe that an agreement on humiliating, extortionists terms is inevitable.

We, the Communists of SYRIZA, urge the government and the leadership of SYRIZA to accept the realities of a clash with the representatives of European Capital. There can be no "mutually beneficial" agreement with the creditors! The only agreement that could be signed today with our "partners" is one that recognizes the debt and affirms austerity as a method of repayment. It would be one that places Greece's fiscal affairs under creditor supervision, including such humiliating retreats that are entirely in contradiction with the program upon which the people brought SYRIZA to power, but also with the government proposals approved in the Greek parliament.

We call upon our comrade, the Prime Minister, and the leftist ministers, to formulate an alternative plan to



finance and implement the Thessaloniki program without relying on the loans of the extortionist “partners.” Announce this plan publicly, and call upon the workers and poorest social layers of Greek society to organize and fight for the implementation of this plan.

Our comrades in government must also call upon the workers of Europe—who are our only real partners—to conduct mass mobilizations in support of the Greek struggle against the aggression of their own bourgeois governments, and for a different, socially just, socialist Europe.

The Communist Tendency of SYRIZA considers that in order to find the necessary financial resources, a plan could and should include the following measures:

- Unilateral repudiation of the debt—when the creditors refuse even to marginally relax the “noose” it must be cut before it entirely asphyxiates the Greek people!
- Nationalization of Church property, to be utilized for the benefit of the people that have been struck by poverty and unemployment.
- Nationalization of the banking system (Nationalization under democratic workers’ control), that in any event functions entirely by the means of Greek

taxpayers’ money. Restrictions should be put in place over the deposits of the capitalists, and those with large incomes over a certain threshold, in order to protect small and medium depositors.

- The Nationalization of all profitable large enterprises in industry, trade and services without compensation for large shareholders. They have gained enough through the crisis, while the people, in their millions, have been impoverished and made unemployed! These business entities must then be integrated by sector and function on the basis of a democratic plan that will be formulated and controlled by the government and the mass labor and popular organizations.
- The imposition of workers’ control in all other large companies. Any business found to be tax evading or avoiding, or to not be implementing the tax and labor provisions of the Thessaloniki program, are to be expropriated immediately.
- Abolition of all privilege that state officers, officials, and employees may enjoy. The maximum salary and pension limit to be that of a skilled industrial worker.
- Suspension of all government spending and their direct re-examining by a “Nationwide Workers’ Control Committee” that the trade unions and other mass organizations of the working people are to set up.
- The imposition of a state monopoly on all foreign trade for the rational planning of exports and imports with regard to the actual needs of the country and the need for the adoption of mutu-

ally beneficial trade agreements with other countries.

- Exit from the Eurozone and the necessary issuance of a national currency aimed at a future economic and monetary integration of Europe states on a socialist basis. A currency that reflects a planned, nationalized economy which serves the actual needs of working people; this is far better than the current euro, which reflects the anarchy and the crisis of European capitalism the preservation of which is predicated on extreme austerity. There must be an exit from the European Union and NATO in order to, once and for all, effectively shake off the extortions of, and the commitments to, these capitalist economic, political and military blocs.

—*In Defense of Marxism*, February 20, 2015

<http://www.marxist.com/greece-no-more-retreats-the-government-must-go-on-the-offensive.htm>

1 The Thessaloniki Program is a manifesto adopted by the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA). The four pillars of the National Reconstruction Plan are: 1) Confronting the humanitarian crisis; 2) Restarting the economy and promoting tax justice; 3) National plan to regain employment; 4) Transforming the political system to deepen democracy.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thessaloniki_Programme

Ukraine After the Ceasefire

Contradictions pile up

BY BEN GLINIECKI

On Wednesday, February 18, 2015, the rebel forces in the east of Ukraine arrived in the key town of Debaltseve, control of which they have wrested from pro-Kiev forces after having encircled them and demanded surrender of the town, this advance took place after a new ceasefire was due to come into force on Sunday, February 15, 2015.

World relations and the desire for a ceasefire

This latest attempt at a ceasefire agreement was driven by Merkel and Hollande, who flew to Moscow in an attempt to draw up a “road map” to peace with Vladimir Putin. The resulting 13-point agreement, signed by Merkel, Hollande, Putin and Poroshenko, as well as the leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples’ Republics in Minsk on Thursday, February 12, 2015 was due to come into effect at midnight on Saturday, February 14, 2015. It included the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the front, an amnesty for prisoners on both sides, the lifting of restrictions on the Republics and some form of autonomous control for the eastern Republics.

Germany has a substantial economic interest in ending the conflict in Ukraine and the resulting hostilities with Russia because Germany receives one third of its gas from Russia, which is its eleventh largest trading partner. In addition, while Merkel is busy trying to deal with the Eurozone crisis and the new SYRIZA government in Greece, the problems in Ukraine are a headache she could do without.

For these reasons the Germans have always taken a softer, more diplomatic tone with Russia over the conflict in Ukraine, in contrast to the belligerent attitude of the USA whose direct eco-

nomic interest in the country is not large. Although Obama himself has remained aloof from this particular conflict, he has sent Joe Biden (who has direct economic interests in Ukraine, where his son is on the board of Burisma, the country’s largest private gas producer) or John Kerry to do the USA’s dirty work.

However, Obama no longer controls the U.S. Congress, which is dominated by the Republicans, many of whom are calling more loudly for the U.S. to arm Kiev, and he also has a lot on his foreign affairs plate already with the rise of the Islamic State. For these reasons Obama would not have concerned himself too much with the fact that the USA was not included as a party to this round of Minsk talks, although he may well have been pleased that a ceasefire was on the cards.

But Merkel has her own reasons for excluding the U.S. from the talks, beyond just the different economic relationships of Germany and the U.S. with Russia. Revelations that the U.S. intelligence services have been spying on Merkel and other senior German Establishment figures have soured the relationship between the two countries. And the U.S.’s meddling in Eurozone affairs regarding policy towards Greece has not gone down well with Merkel who sees such issues as the preserve of Germany. The combined effect of crises in all spheres is straining the relations between different capitalist powers.

Putin too has good reason for wanting a ceasefire in Ukraine. The West’s sanctions against Russia are hurting the economy, and coupled with the significant hit to the country’s currency reserves induced by the collapse in oil prices, means that Putin needs some

respite from the pressure that economic turmoil is putting on his administration.

Poroshenko and his backers were willing to sign a ceasefire agreement because, despite an offensive by Kiev’s troops in January, the rebel counter-offensive was gaining ground and, at the time of the agreement, had encircled up to 8,000 troops in the town of Debaltseve, which is a key transport hub for linking the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. Coupled with a growing movement in the West of Ukraine against conscription for the war in the east, and anger about continued corruption in the government, despite all of Poroshenko’s promises, Kiev also requires time to regroup.

A logic of its own

Despite these powerful interests in a ceasefire, the advance of the rebels did not stop after Sunday. On Tuesday, February 17, 2015, the rebels began to take Debaltseve and on Wednesday Kiev confirmed that its troops were retreating. From the point of view of the Republics, after having recovered control of the Donetsk airport, taking over Debaltseve would solidify its front line with Ukraine. They never considered Debaltseve as being covered by the Minsk II ceasefire. There was little Kiev could do about it, other than protest.

What Obama, Merkel and others fail or refuse to acknowledge is that this conflict, sparked by the Western-backed Maidan movement, with fascists at its core and antagonism of the people in the east in its program, has now taken on a logic of its own. Zacharenko, the leader of the Donetsk People’s Republic, was quick to point out after the ceasefire had been signed that it did not mention Debaltseve at all and therefore he considered it his right to continue the fight for that key

town. In a defiant statement he also said that the DPR would fight back against any provocation that came from the Kiev forces.

Meanwhile, Dmytro Yarosh, the Ukrainian MP who is also the leader of the fascist Right Sector and its paramilitary battalions, claimed that the ceasefire violated the Ukrainian constitution and vowed that his battalions would continue fighting for the unity of the whole of Ukraine.

The reality is that Putin does not have full control of what the rebel forces are doing on the ground. His standing in the eyes of many people in the east of Ukraine, who may at one time have had illusions in what he was capable of delivering in terms of higher living standards, *etc.*, has been greatly diminished. Many had the illusion that it would be enough for them to have a referendum to get decisive backing from Russia as with Crimea. Many people in the east no longer see the republics' integration into Russia on the agenda, and are accepting their future in formally independent republics.

The Russian government has always said that some Russian troops are fighting in Ukraine as volunteers and while Putin's insistence that this is entirely of their own accord is hard to believe, it seems certain that a mass invasion of the regular Russian army, as claimed by NATO and Kiev, has not taken place.

The OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier admitted as much recently when he said that he had seen Russian individuals but no Russian units fighting in the Donbas, and Putin himself has pointed out that if he wanted to he could take Kiev in a matter of weeks. In fact, the chief of Ukraine's General Military Staff, Viktor Muzhenko, even acknowledged that no Russian regular army units were fighting in the Donbas, but that he had information about civilian and military individuals who were present in the Republics. Ultimately though, the

Kremlin exercises a degree of control over the Republics as it controls their lines of supply over the border.

Similarly, Poroshenko does not have full control over the battalions of fascists he has been recruiting into the state apparatus ever since the central role they played in the Maidan movement. Now that these people have been legitimized by being incorporated into the military command, and their leaders being elected to parliament, they feel increasingly able to assert their own autonomous goals—namely the unification of Ukraine by force and the promotion of hardline reactionary Ukrainian nationalism. They will not stop until the rebel Republics are smashed and they will attack anyone, including Poroshenko, who stands in their way.

In fact, one member of the neo-Nazi Azov battalion told the *Guardian* newspaper that once the war in the East was over they'd "bring the fight to Kiev." "What are the police going to do?" he said, "they could not do anything against the peaceful protestors on Maidan, they are hardly going to withstand armed fighting units."

This leaves Poroshenko in a very difficult position because on the one hand he needs a ceasefire to allow the country to stabilize, and he recognizes that this must involve some degree of autonomy for the rebel Republics. But this is something the fascists will never accept, and if such a course is pursued then soon enough Poroshenko will find himself the subject of their anger and he will find himself with few elements of the state apparatus with which to defend himself.

The Poroshenko—Yatseniuk government relies heavily on the war rhetoric to remain in power and distract attention from the collapse of the economy and the brutal austerity policies it is implementing as dictated by the IMF. A real ceasefire would very soon reveal its weakness.

Will the U.S. arm Kiev?

Earlier in February U.S. officials were reported to be seriously considering sending "lethal aid" to Ukraine for use by the Kiev government. Right wing Republican senator John McCain is one of the main advocates of this line of action. Congress has authorized such a measure but Obama has thus far been reluctant to use it for fear of coming into direct military confrontation with Russia, who would inevitably retaliate to such an escalation on the part of the U.S. With the signing of a ceasefire, the threat of the U.S. arming Kiev seems to have receded. Although the continued fighting in Debaltseve appears to put a spanner in the works of the ceasefire, now that this town has been taken it may be that the ceasefire holds for a little longer, as it appears to be doing at all other points along the front between the republics and Ukraine.

The case for lethal U.S. intervention was slightly undermined recently by a farcical situation in which Republican Senator James Inhofe, a firm advocate of arming Kiev, showed pictures of Russian tanks, which he claimed were invading Ukraine. It later turned out that these pictures, provided to him by Ukrainian MP and commander of Donbas Battalion Semyon Semenchenko, dated from the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Such events will remind the American people all too clearly of how they were lied to about WMDs in Iraq as the pretext for intervention there. There is little appetite among ordinary Americans for embroiling their country in further conflict for no clearly discernable reason.

Perspectives for class struggle

But what is the position on the ground and the perspective for class struggle in the Republics and in Ukraine? In circumstances of civil war such as Ukraine is experiencing at present the military aspect takes precedence over social and economic elements. This means the subordination

of those initial, class based demands of the anti-maidan movement in what are now the eastern Republics, to the militaristic, opportunist and in some cases Russian nationalist and other suspect elements, which have taken over the leadership of the Republics.

This has led to the Communist Party being prevented from running in the republics' elections at the end of last year due to "irregularities in their paperwork." Furthermore four anti-fascist activists and communists, Maria Muratova, Alex Albu, Maxim Firsov and Victor Shapinov, who are members of the Marxist organization, Borotba, were arrested by one of the DPR battalions in December. They were eventually released thanks to both internal and international pressure, but in a statement upon their release they said:

"Some recent developments, including our arrest and deportation, give rise to legitimate concerns—whether the original spirit of the anti-fascist and anti-oligarchic revolt will be maintained, or will it be buried in favor of the commercial and political interests of the various groups operating in the country?"

However at the same time as this there are signs that the potential for class struggle is present. There remains a certain element of nostalgia for the USSR (United Soviet Socialist Republic) among people in the East who look back to a time when housing, jobs, food, clothing, education, *etc.*, were guaranteed. Indeed the DPR recently passed a memorandum on the principles of state building, political and historical continuity, which traces the republic's history back to the Russian revolution. It says:

"On February 12, 1918 at the IV Congress of Soviets of the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog basin based on the idea of economic integration created the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Republic (DKR). Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Republic did not formally cease to

exist, despite the German occupation, war and other social disasters. Its ideas lived on in the hearts and souls of millions of people."

Furthermore the Ghost Brigade, led by Alexei Mozgovoy has been pushing an anti-oligarch agenda throughout the conflict (though this has been mixed with Orthodox Slav nationalism.) In a video manifesto Mozgovoy explains that it is the oligarchs who are responsible for the destruction of Ukraine and that they would rather see death and chaos than the loss of their profits. He speaks about the need to expropriate the palaces built at public expense, to provide decent education and health-care and other social support to people in Ukraine, as well as pointing out that there is a lot of wealth in Ukraine that rightly belongs to the people who live there, not the parasitic oligarchs. Mozgovoy has also been in communication with some anti-oligarch elements in Kiev—notably Ukrainian lawyer and politician Tetiana Montian—who visited him in Alchevsk.

The Ghost Brigade were among the first to enter Debaltseve after it was taken by rebel forces. Within the Ghost Brigade there operates a Communist Battalion, whose commander entered the town wearing a traditional Eastern European fur hat with a red star and hammer and sickle emblazoned on the front of it. Mozgovoy's statements in favor of a class war of the people against the oligarchs and his association with traditional soviet imagery has an echo among many people.

Meanwhile in the West of Ukraine there is a growing movement against the fratricidal war in the East. One woman, a worker at an NGO in Lviv, said "[My husband] said he was ready to defend Ukraine. I have a lot of questions about who is defending whom. For me, this seems like a kind of sacrifice, one in which the Church also participates, by giving its blessing: those who have power over the people pluck up guys, and, whether or not you

want to, whether or not you can, you're sent to this dragon to be devoured."

Such sentiment is unsurprising when those who are forced to fight for Poroshenko and his cronies in the East are given little training or equipment. According to the *New Yorker* new recruits have to buy several thousand dollars' worth of supplies and equipment before the three-week training program, after which the conscripts are sent to the front. For those with families and little money such circumstances are a death sentence. One man told the journalists "I don't want to be cannon fodder" and there is a growing movement to mount legal challenges against the conscription on the grounds that Ukraine has not declared war. The feeling that has always existed on a certain level in the West of Ukraine—that this is not the people's war but that of the oligarchs and the politicians—is finding more fertile ground now and is beginning to develop.

For these reasons the morale of Kiev's troops is low even before they reach the front, but what they find when they get there only makes things worse. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense uses a standard military medical kit prescribed by the USSR in the 1970s, which has not been updated since. One man working at a medical center for wounded soldiers said

"This center has only enough supplies for fifty people. It's just a drop in the bucket. The Army is still on the level it was on during the Afghan war. There isn't enough of anything, and everything's getting figured out along the way. No one knew, at first, except maybe the occasional medic, what Celox was, and why it's needed to stop the bleeding on a torn-off leg." (Celox is a brand of hemostatic gauze.) "No one knew anything about night-vision goggles. Now they know. But it's all trial and error. People buy boots, for instance, and then find out they're fine for a checkpoint but not for running in



the snow. There was no coordination of donations—people bought the wrong things or the wrong quantities. You'd end up with a houseful of buckwheat at a checkpoint.”

Part of the reason for the poor state of the Ukrainian military is the rampant corruption in the government. Military aid passes through the Ministry of Defense where large portions of it are simply stolen. In September there were reports that the Kiev City 12th Battalion had been set up purely to steal equipment as it was delivered. In January an advisor to the government estimated that 20-25 percent of all money allocated to the Ministry of Defense was stolen by corrupt officials. The people at the front are being forced to fight a fratricidal

war, while those in whose interests they are fighting are getting rich by stealing essential supplies needed by the soldiers. Such a state of affairs cannot but expose Poroshenko and his allies as no better than Yanukovich or any other oligarch. There is potential for the class question to be brought to the fore.

But if Kiev is undermining the support from and morale of its own troops, the psychology of people in the East is on an entirely different level. From the very beginning, following the removal of Yanukovich, the Western-backed government in Kiev has been provoking people in the East. These provocations have escalated into a full-blown war against the Donbas. Kiev has blockaded Donetsk and Luhansk, cutting off access to money, medicine, food, electricity, pensions, as well as blocking humanitarian aid. The Kalininsky hospital in Donetsk is the largest in the region but only has supplies to treat its 90 dialysis patients for two to four more weeks—these people will die unless more supplies arrive. These actions by Kiev have hardened people's attitudes in the East towards

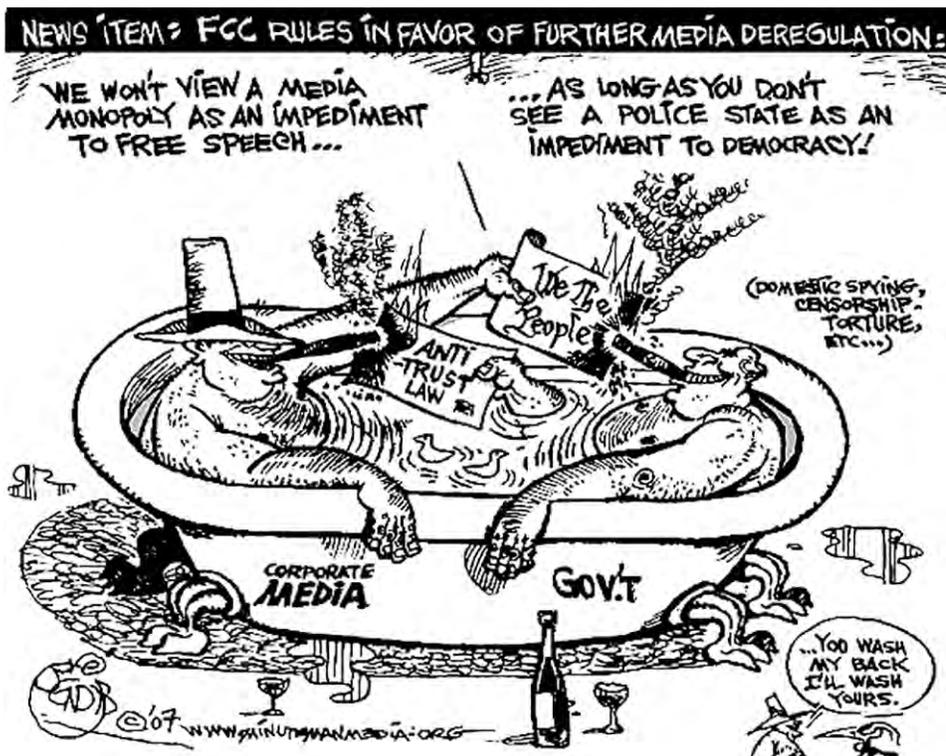
the government, many no longer consider themselves Ukrainian and see the war as a fight for their homes and families against a hostile government backed by fascists.

This feeling in the East is no longer possible to ignore, and it makes the argument that the conflict can be put down to Russian aggression harder to sustain, not least because 900,000 refugees from the conflict have fled to Russia, not to Ukraine. As much is even being admitted by a number of Western journalists, some of whom have been, up until now, staunchly pro-Maidan but who have recently visited the Republics and spoken to the people themselves.

One 15-year-old-boy, Sasha Vasin, explained why he had joined the rebel militia. “I wanted to do it from the first day. I couldn't look at people dying anymore” And another 20-year-old woman who was interviewed said: “Everyone here is against Ukraine. When you hear the cannonade, you look at things differently. You don't have to be a soldier to see where they're firing from.”

Such a change in consciousness explains much of the strength of the rebel forces. One soldier retreating from Debaltseve told the *Financial Times* that Putin must be controlling the rebels because otherwise how could a ragtag bunch of kids be winning against a professional army? This misses the point that the rebels, by and large, are fighting for a cause they believe in, whereas the Kiev forces are increasingly disillusioned with what they are fighting for. It is this fact, not a mythical Russian invasion that explains the relative strength of the two sides.

On top of all of this, journalists based in the West of Ukraine have been increasingly speaking out against the war. Ruslan Kotsaba, a well-known journalist, recently made a video in which he said:



“It would be better for me to spend two to five years in prison than to go into a civil war, to kill or help kill my countrymen in the east . . . I reject this draft, and I call on all sensible people to reject it.”

On February 8, 2015, Kotsaba was arrested by the SBU, the Ukrainian Secret Service, on suspicion of treason. The authorities are worried by this anti-war sentiment that is beginning to take root and are cracking down on those who try to nurture or encourage it. Kotsaba is still currently locked up, having been given 60 days pre-trial confinement with no bail. This is part of a wider assault by the government against democratic rights, arresting anyone who dares raise a voice against the war.

While the conflict rages on, the fundamental causes of the initial removal of Yakukovych and all the subsequent events have yet to be resolved, and are in fact, being aggravated further. The Euromaidan movement formally stood against the corruption of the oligarchs and Ukraine’s economic crisis. This is the result of capitalism, and its particularly virulent mafia form in Ukraine. What has happened since? The IMF recently granted Ukraine additional bailout money bringing the figure to around \$22 billion in total. Naturally this comes with strings attached to benefit the international bourgeoisie, and the IMF is brutally honest in how badly this is going to hurt Ukraine. The economy contracted by 7.5 percent in 2014 and the currency has collapsed over the last few weeks. The IMF is therefore demanding huge cuts in public spending and the break-up of the subsidized fuel prices for people, *via* the state owned company Naftogaz, which has, up till now, provided fuel at a cost of roughly 20-30 percent the cost of producing it, with four percent of GDP going to subsidize the rest. Wages and pensions are to be fixed, in a climate where inflation is very high, and price increases on fuel and some cuts are to be “front-loaded” so that they

happen very quickly and all at once—domestic gas prices are expected to increase fivefold in the next four years.

Under conditions of war and terrible living standards, to impose such a burden on the people of Ukraine is monstrous. No doubt the IMF is hoping to take advantage of the instability caused by the war to pile on extra cuts to living standards. But there is only so much that people can take and eventually there will be a straw that breaks the camel’s back. The Greek people are proving that they are not willing to accept these kinds of attacks. The Ukrainian people, whose living standards are far below those of the Greeks, will be even less able to bear the cost of the capitalist economic crisis, as well as the weight of the oligarchs’ war.

What does the future hold?

Having taken Debaltseve the rebels may be content to observe the fragile ceasefire, at least for a time, and this could be reciprocated by the forces in Ukraine. However, things are balanced on a knife-edge and there are so many

independent factors, not under the control of those who signed the Minsk agreement that things can change sharply very quickly.

However, what remains clear is that the potential for class struggle is there, both in the Republics and in Ukraine. The class contradictions in society are being brought to the surface, a process that will be accelerated by the actions of the IMF and by relative calm on the military front.

But what is lacking in Ukraine is an organization capable of uniting people across east and west on a class basis and under a socialist banner. Until an organization capable of challenging capitalism is present, the threats and reality of economic and military catastrophe will be ever present. The building of such an organization is the task of Marxists in Ukraine, and all over the world.

—*In Defense of Marxism*, February 24, 2015

<http://www.marxist.com/ukraine-after-the-ceasefire-contradictions-pile-up.htm>



Spain

Podemos threatens Spanish establishment

BY VICENTE NAVARRO

Something is happening in Spain. A party that was only founded a year ago, Podemos, with a clear left-wing program, could well gain a majority in the Spanish parliament if an election were held today. Following the victory of SYRIZA in the Greek general election on January 25, 2015, speculation has been raised as to whether Podemos could achieve a similar feat in Spain's parliamentary election later this year, but what is driving the party's success?

Support for Podemos is intricately linked to the policies pursued by the conservative People's Party government, led by Mariano Rajoy. These policies have included the largest cuts in public social expenditures (dismantling the underfunded Spanish welfare state) since democracy was established in Spain in 1978, and the toughest labor reforms pursued in the same period, which have substantially deteriorated labor market conditions.

Salaries have declined by ten percent since the Great Recession started in 2007, and unemployment has hit an all-time record of 26 percent (52 percent among the youth.) The percentage of temporary, precarious work has increased, becoming the majority of new contracts in the labor market (more than 52 percent of all contracts,) and 66 percent of unemployed people do not have any form of unemployment insurance or public assistance.

These measures have created an enormous problem in terms of a lack of domestic demand, a major cause of the long-term recession. It has only been recently that very limited growth has appeared, due primarily to the decline in the price of oil, a devaluation of the euro and the commitment by the European Central Bank (ECB) to buy public bonds. The Spanish government did not

have anything to do with any of these events, although it claims now that the short recovery is a result of its policies.

These policies were promoted by the European Union through the European Council, European Commission and the ECB, and by the International Monetary Fund (IMF.) They were carried out in Spain with the support and encouragement of financial capital, major business enterprises and their political instrument, the People's Party.

The Spanish right has arguably got what it had always wanted: the reduction of salaries and the weakening of social protection with a dismantling of the welfare state. These policies are what the participants at the latest G-20 meeting in Australia presented as a strategy for all countries to follow, championing Spain as a model country.

Why have the cuts happened

The reduction of salaries and of the number of people receiving salaries, as well as the reduction of public expenditures, has resulted in an enormous decline in domestic demand and, as a result, of economic growth. The waning of salaries meant increased indebtedness of families and of small and medium enterprises. Debt increased enormously.

This meant that banking also increased enormously (Spain has one of the largest banking sectors in Europe, proportionally three times as large as in the United States.) But the low profitability of the productive economy meant a large increase of banking investments in speculation, causing huge bubbles, the most important of which was the housing bubble.

When the bubble was still occurring, there was a feeling of euphoria among the political establishment.

Even the governing social-democrat leader, José Luis R. Zapatero, felt that, in a time of such exuberant growth, taxes should be reduced—his slogan at the time was that “reducing taxes should be an objective of the left.”

He reduced taxes enormously, primarily on capital and high incomes. He announced his slogan in 2005 and passed the Tax Reform Act including the tax cuts in 2006. And in 2007, when the bubble exploded, a huge hole appeared in state revenues: 27 billion euros. According to economists at the statistical office of the Ministry of Finance, 70 percent of this hole was due to the tax cuts and only 30 percent to the decline of economic activity at the beginning of the Great Recession.

This is how the cuts started, under the false argument that the country needed to face austerity measures because it was spending too much. In reality, when the crisis started, the Spanish state had a surplus. Spain's public expenditure is in fact far too low: much lower than its economic level of development would call for. The cuts demonstrate the political nature of these interventions.

Zapatero froze public pensions to save 1.5 billion euros, when he could have obtained 2.5 billion by recovering the property taxes that he had abolished, reversing the lowering of inheritance taxes (2.3 billion,) or reversing the reduced taxes of individuals making 120,000 euros a year (2.2 billion.) These cuts were expanded later by Rajoy, who cut six billion from the National Health Service, stressing, as Zapatero said before, that “there were no alternatives”—the most frequently used sentence in the official narrative.

There were alternatives, however. He could have reversed the lowering of taxes

on capital to large corporations that he had approved, obtaining 5.5 billion.

Indeed, I wrote, along with Juan Torres and Alberto Garzón, a book on this subject entitled *There are Alternatives* (*Hay Alternativas: Propuestas para Crear Empleo y Bienestar Social en España.*) The book showed, with clear and convincing numbers, that there were in fact other options to the policies pursued. It became a best-seller in Spain and was widely used by the Indignados movement.

The Indignados movement

The cuts to public social spending and the three labor market reforms carried out first by the social-democrat (PSOE) government, and later by the conservative (PP) government, angered many citizens, since not one of these measures had a genuine popular mandate. None of those policies had been mentioned in the electoral program of the governing parties. In response, the Indignados movement appeared and quickly spread all over the country.

Its slogans, such as “They, the political class, do not represent us” became widely popular. Consequently, state institutions started losing legitimacy, while the state responded by trying to repress the movement. That did not stop the Indignados, however: many of their leaders were young and therefore highly affected by the crisis.

The Indignados movement demanded a second transition, calling for an end to the 1978 regime (the political system established in 1978 when the dictatorship ended) and for the establishment of a new democratic order, explaining the need to substitute existing representative institutions with new ones, complemented by other forms of democratic participation such as referendums and/or popular assemblies.

The goal was to establish an authentic democratic system with forms of direct citizen participation such as referendums, plus indirect forms of par-

ticipation such as representative democracy, ensuring political parties would be much more democratic than they are today.

The movement had an enormous impact, with its starting point being a protest against the slogan “There are no alternatives.” In fact, the leadership of the Indignados showed our book, *Hay Alternativas*, in front of police who were trying to control a demonstration. The photograph of thousands of people displaying the book was widely distributed within the movement and published in the press. Their major aim was essentially to highlight that there were indeed alternatives, and to question the legitimacy of the state, which was imposing policies that did not have a popular mandate.

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Forming Podemos

The Indignados became aware that alongside protests they also had to intervene in the political arena, and this is essentially how Podemos began.

The leaders of Podemos were drawn from individuals who had played a leading role in the movement. Some are junior faculty members in the Department of Political and Social Sciences in the largest public university in Spain, Complutense. Many have been active in the youth movements of the Spanish Communist Party.

Regardless of where they come from, they all felt that the root of the

problem was the control of the state by a class of politicians, based primarily in the major parties—the liberal-conservative party (PP) and the social democratic (PSOE)—who were closely related and tied to the major financial and banking corporations that have corrupted state institutions.

They called for the establishment of a democratic state and a democratic Europe, “a Europe of the people, not the Europe of the bankers.”

They stood in the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 and received a much larger vote than they had expected. More importantly, the polls showed substantial growth in their support, to the point that at the end of 2014 it became clear they might even be capable of becoming Spain’s governing party—a situation they had never thought possible in such a short space of time.

The party’s message, “Vote against the caste: Throw all of them out,” has deeply resonated with the electorate. It is clear that the majority of people are fed up with the political and media establishments and have turned to Podemos for an alternative.

Nevertheless, at this stage the party still lacked a clearly defined structure. This created an urgent need to develop a party organization, based on an assembly model within a frame developed by the leadership. To prepare its program, they asked myself and Juan Torres (co-author of *Hay Alternativas*) to formulate an outline of the economic program that the Podemos government should implement if it is elected.

This outline would be the basis for a full discussion within the Party. The title, “The Need to Democratize the Economy in Order to End the Crisis and Improve Justice, Well-Being and Quality of Life: A Proposal to Initiate a Debate to Resolve the Problems of the Spanish Economy,” describes the intention of the document.

It was widely distributed by Podemos, under the new title “Un

Proyecto Económico para la Gente” (“An Economic Project for the People”) and has so far had an enormous impact.

The presentation of the proposal by the spokesperson of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, together with ourselves as authors, became a major event in Spain. The hostility of the mainstream and economic media, as well as the intellectuals and spokespersons of the major governing parties (PP and PSOE) has led to some notable attacks against the document—and indeed its authors.

In Europe, the president of the Bundesbank indicated that the proposals put forward in the document would be harmful to the Spanish and European economies. Alongside these unprecedentedly negative responses, however, it has also created considerable positive responses at the street level in Spain and has contributed substantially to altering the character of the economic debate by challenging the prevailing ideology.

Our document was not a budget for the future Podemos government, but rather the strategic lines to be followed. The analysis of the causes of the crisis focused on the enormous growth of inequality responsible for the financial, economic and political crisis. It puts at the center of the analysis the conflict of capital (under the hegemony of financial capital) against labor. This has led to an enormous decline of domestic demand caused by the decline of wages, increases in unemployment, and cuts of social public expenditures.

The proposals, therefore, aimed at reversing this growth of inequality by increasing domestic demand (*via* salaries and employment growth) and by expanding public expenditures and investments (in particular, the social infrastructure.) It also underlined the need to expand public banking, as a way of providing credit to families and to small and medium-sized enterprises.

It proposed reducing the working week to 35 hours and reducing the age

of retirement from 67 to 65, reversing policies approved by the PP and the PSOE. The impact of the program would strengthen labor at the cost of capital. Furthermore, it showed the clear need to correct gender inequalities as a way of increasing employment.

It also suggested how all the proposals could be funded, asking for substantial changes in the fiscal policies of the country and the reduction of tax fraud.

Behind Podemos’ success

It is easy to answer this question. There is enormous anger toward what Podemos calls “la casta” the caste. That includes the governing elites in the political establishment who have developed close complicities with the major financial and non-financial corporations that dominate the political and media institutions of the country. The call for “throwing all of them out” awakens general support among the majority of the Spanish people.

In addition, Podemos uses a language that people relate to, redefining class struggle as the conflict between those at the top and everyone else—a narrative that mobilizes a diverse support base.

Moreover, Podemos makes the call for democracy central to its strategy, redefining democracy to include different forms of participation, such as referendums (defined as the right to decide, *el derecho a decidir*) together with indirect or representative forms of democracy. It is because of this commitment to democracy that it has accepted the right of self-determination for the different nations that exist in Spain, breaking with the vision of Spain as a uni-national state.

This understanding of Spain as a “plurinational” state has been a historic demand of all left-wing parties (including the PSOE,) but it was abandoned during the transition to democracy by the PSOE because of the king (appointed by Franco) and the army.

The enormous popular demand by the Catalan population for the right of self-determination (not to be confused with the call for independence: 82 percent of Catalans support the first, 33 percent support the second) has created enormous tension within the central government and today is highly unpopular.

The success of Podemos has become a major threat to the Spanish (and European) establishment. Today, the Spanish financial, economic, political and media establishments are on the defensive and in panic, having passed laws that strengthen the repression. The heads of the major banks in Spain are particularly uneasy.

The chairperson of the Spanish banking group Santander, who died in September last year, indicated shortly before that he was extremely worried, noting that Podemos and Catalonia posed notable threats to Spain. He, of course, meant his Spain. And he was right. The future is quite open. As Gramsci once indicated, it is the end of a period without a clear view of what the next one will be. Europe, Spain, and Catalonia are ending an *era*. This is clear. What remains unclear is what will come next.

This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP—European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics. Vicente (Vicenç in Catalan) Navarro, is professor of public and social policy in the John Hopkins University USA and the Pompeu Fabra University Catalonia, Spain. He is also the director of the JHU-UPF Public Policy Center in Barcelona, Spain. He has written extensively about Europe and Spain and his book Bienestar Insuficiente, Democracia Incompleta: Sobre Lo Que No Se Habla En Nuestro País received the Anagrama Award (equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize in Spain.)

—GreenLeft.org, February 16, 2015

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/58280>

Cuba and the United States—New Age?

BY RICARDO ALARCON DE QUESADA

Last December 17th, the US president Barack Obama corrected an excessively long injustice, and simultaneously he changed the direction of history by releasing five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters who were in prison for more than 16 years.

By acknowledging the failure of anti-Cuban policies, re-establishing diplomatic relations, removing all possible restrictions at hand, proposing the complete elimination of the blockade and demanding a new age in the relation with Cuba, all in a single speech, he (Obama) surprised everyone, including brainy analysts.

The hostile policy set up by President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961)—before Obama was born—was followed by Democrat and Republican presidents of the U.S. It was later codified with the Helms-Burton Law, approved by Bill Clinton in 1996.

It was pretty successful in the early years. In 1959, with the Triumph of the Revolution, the U.S. was at the apex of its power. It exercised unchallenged hegemony over several countries of the world, especially in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. expelled Cuba from OAS and the island was isolated. Cuba was then helped by the Soviet Union, and its associates at the COMECON (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance) made of countries that signed the Warsaw Pact.

The falling of the so-called “real socialism” gave false hopes to those who believe it was also the end of the Cuban revolution.

They imagine the imminence of a long period of unipolar dominance. Gloating about good times, they do not notice the deep sense of things happening: the end of the Cold War opened new spaces for social struggles and made capitalism face new challenges to overcome.

The fall of the Berlin Wall prevented them from seeing that in February 1989, Venezuela was shocked by a social uprising called “El Caracazo,” sign of the blossoming of a new epoch in Latin America.

Cuba survived the collapse of former allies. Its resistance was a key factor for the deep transformation of the continent. The policy to isolate Cuba failed years ago since the U.S. ended by isolating itself, as stated by current Secretary of State, John Kerry.

The falling of the so-called “real socialism” gave false hopes to those who believe it was also the end of the Cuban revolution.

A new relation with Cuba was paramount for Washington. The U.S. needed to approach its relation with the continent, no longer its backyard. The achievement of such a goal is fundamental now. The U.S. cannot lead as it did before.

There is still a long way to go to reach that level of relation. First, the economic, commercial, and financial blockade must stop, as major sectors of the U.S. business world are urging.

However, to normalize relations it is essential to learn how to coexist with a different viewpoint and eradicate old dreams of domination. It would imply the respect of the sovereignty of people, a fundamental principle of the UN Charter, which is not convenient for the most powerful countries.

In relation to the freedom of the Cuban Five, all U.S. presidents have used—without exception—the power granted by Article II, Section 2, and Paragraph 1 of the Constitution. All of them have used it for more than two centuries and nothing has stopped them.

This paragraph in the Constitution authorizes the President to cancel the sentences and grant pardons, in cases of alleged crimes against the United States.

There were lots of reasons to demand executive clemency for the Cuban Five. In 2005, a judicial panel of the Appeals Court revoked the process against them—defining the case as a “perfect storm of prejudice and hostility”—and ordered a new trial.

In 2009, the same court determined the case has nothing to do with either espionage or national security in the United States. Both verdicts were approved with full consensus.

Regarding another important charge, that of “conspiracy to commit a murder” against Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo, his prosecutors admitted it was impossible to prove such a false accusation and they even tried to remove it in May 2001 in an unprecedented move. Such an idea came from the attorneys of former President George W. Bush (2001-2009).

Five years had passed and Gerardo awaited any response to his repeated appeals to the Miami court to free him, or at least revise his case, or order the government to present the “evidence” used to condemn him, or agree to listen to him about the extent of the money involved in such a media campaign to trigger that “perfect storm.”

The court never answered back. No words from bigger media groups were heard before that unusual paralysis of the judicial system. It was obvious it

was a political case and only a political decision could solve the situation. No one else but the President could do it.

Obama showed wisdom and determination when he faced with courage the basic problems rather than limiting himself to free any person. The Cuban Five saga was the consequence of an aggressive strategy and the best move was to put an end to both things simultaneously.

No one can deny the transcendence of the announcement of December 17th. It would be a mistake, however, to ignore that there is still a long, winding way to go. It will be necessary to advance firmly and wisely.

—CubaSí, January 15, 2015



Israel's Ugly Racial Holy War

As the incitement to violence by Israeli leaders ramped up, so did racist attacks by Israeli citizens.

BY DAVID SHEEN

The year 2014 will be remembered as a banner year for violence in Israel and Palestine; most of the casualties occurred in the Gaza Strip, and most of these were Palestinian civilians killed by the Israeli army. Six months later, however, these tragic deaths are almost forgotten, chiefly because the powerful propaganda of the Israel lobby is able to explain them away with a well-rehearsed narrative: "Israel only wants to live in peace with its neighbors, but the Palestinians hope to kick us all out of the country, so we have no choice but to retaliate." Zionist *hasbara* (public diplomacy in Israel) can be even further condensed, distilled down to just six words: "They hate us for our equality."

Within Israel, however, the messages emanating from the government have been nothing if not the diametric opposite of these platitudes. Anti-Palestinian incitement has always existed in Israeli politics, but in 2014 this racist discourse took a sharp turn for the worse. When three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered by Palestinian militants in June, Israeli political leaders did not call for the criminals to be caught and convicted. Rather, they demanded that mutilation and mass murder be visited on the general Palestinian population.

Prime Minister Netanyahu called for vengeance, and his coalition partners called for ethnic cleansing and genocide. Government faction whip Ayelet Shaked wrote: "Who is the enemy? The Palestinian people... are all enemy combatants... this also includes the mothers," while ruling party faction leader Moshe Feiglin wrote: "The civilian population will be concentrated" and "Gaza will become part of... Israel and will be populated by Jews."

Other public figures were even more specific, calling for sexual violence. A top Israeli academic announced that terrorism could only be averted by threatening to rape the mothers and sisters of Palestinian militants. The leader of the largest religious Jewish youth group in the world called for the Israeli army not only to kill at least 300 Palestinians, but to bring back their foreskins as war trophies. The Jerusalem councillor in charge of the city's security implored Jewish youth to "commit acts of Phineas," a coded call to kill Palestinians and the Jews who befriend them. (Phineas is a reference to the Biblical figure who is said to have murdered an interracial couple in the middle of love-making by skewering their intertwined genitals, some rabbis say.)

As the incitement to violence by top Israeli leaders ramped up, so did the racist attacks by regular Israeli citizens. Vigilante assaults on Palestinians have been the most common type of attack. A third of all Palestinian bus drivers working in Jerusalem for Israel's largest bus company Egged have left their jobs since the summer, because racist attacks on them have become a daily occurrence. Hardly any Palestinians venture into downtown Jerusalem at night anymore, for fear of being attacked by gangs of Jewish thugs who patrol the streets, looking for Arabs to assault. In July, Israelis kidnapped a Palestinian teenager, forced gasoline down his throat, and burned him to death from the inside out. The suspects later told police they were inspired by the acts of Phineas.

Another type of racist assault that has become increasingly common in Israel is attacks on Africans. Incitement against the 50,000 non-Jewish Africans who have sought asylum in Israel in

recent years, including top government officials comparing them to cancer and Ebola, has made them a popular target for racist ruffians in Tel Aviv. Locals report it is not uncommon for Israeli youths to throw dog feces at African mothers nursing their babies. In January, an Israeli man stabbed a one-year-old African baby in the head and later explained to police that he did it because “they said that a black baby, blacks in general, are terrorists.”

A third type of racist assault that is occurring with increasing frequency in Israel is attacks on public spaces which are shared by Jews and non-Jews. There are fewer than 10 integrated schools in all of Israel in which Hebrew-speaking and Arabic-speaking students learn together in the same classrooms, yet these have continuously been targeted with Hebrew graffiti reading “End the miscegenation,” “There is no coexistence with cancer,” and other racist messages. In November, Israelis vandalized the only mixed school in the Jerusalem area, torching schoolbooks and the first-grade classroom.

Increasingly, Jewish Israelis who protest the racist incitement and assaults are also subject to verbal and physical attacks on the streets of Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities. Although these pale in comparison to the threats against Palestinians, Africans and other non-Jewish groups, many of these liberal Israelis are now afraid to express themselves in public or even on the Internet, for fear of losing their friends, their jobs, or worse. Increasing numbers of Israelis are applying for second passports and job opportunities abroad, despairing over the direction the country is headed in and their inability to bring it back from the brink. Instead, they are seeking to save themselves and their families.

Despite painstaking efforts by mainstream media gatekeepers, word of Israeli incitement and racist attacks against non-Jews is finally starting to

seep out. Outside observers who had previously assumed that Israel’s war with Palestinians is based on age-old enmity and an intractable battle over land are starting to wonder if a Zionist drive for ethno-religious purity might actually be a main cause of the conflict.

Last year, the European Union announced it would specifically label goods made in Jewish-only settlements in the occupied West Bank, to distinguish them from other Israeli products. In recent months, one European parliament after another has voted in favor of officially recognizing the “State of Palestine”: Sweden, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In North America, progressive churches and labor unions have started supporting the BDS movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel until it treats all citizens equally, ends its military occupations, and solves the problem of Palestinian refugees. With anti-racist advocacy in the United States experiencing a resurgence, communities of color are re-establishing ties with global allies, including Palestinian activists.

The visions of average Americans for the future of Israel and Palestine are also starting to shift. A survey published earlier this month by The Brookings Institution found that a third of all Americans want Israel and Palestine to be a single state with equal rights for all, regardless of race or religion.

Asked which alternative would be preferable if the option of separate sovereign states of Israel and Palestine proves to be impossible, 71 percent of Americans surveyed (84 percent of Democrats and 60 percent of Republicans) said they would prefer that it become a single democratic state. Of the Jewish Americans and Jewish-Israeli Americans surveyed, 61 percent expressed the same preference; only 34 percent said they would rather Israel discriminate in favor of Jews and against non-Jews.

Though they have traditionally been one of the Jerusalem’s strongest sources of support, even Jewish Americans are starting to question the narrative of the Israeli government. A Pew Poll published in the fourth quarter of 2013 found that half of U.S. Jews think that Israel is not making sincere efforts to bring about peace with the Palestinians.

In recent years, fearful of losing these last bastions of unqualified international support, Israeli leaders turned to American marketing managers for guidance. The advice of these ad executives was to re-brand “crazy” Israel as “sexy” and “cool.”

To make Israel seem sexy instead of brutal, conventionally attractive Jewish Israeli women would be chosen to represent Israel, sometimes wearing elements of Israeli army uniforms, and often in various states of undress. To make Israel seem cool instead of racist, token Jewish African-Israeli success stories would be said to represent the rule in Israel, when they are only the few exceptions that prove the rule of state racism towards people of color.

I delineated these two tactics, called “sex-washing” and “black-washing,” respectively, in a series of lectures at Florida colleges in October. Israel’s strategic use of sex-washing and black-washing are misogynist and racist in and of themselves, to be sure, but they also harbor deep internal inconsistencies. The woman who best embodies the overlap between both campaigns, the first Black Miss Israel, perfectly illustrates this contradiction. During her *hasbara* tour of the United States in February, Yityish Aynaw used her limelight to defend Israel’s persecution of non-Jewish African refugees.

As the government rounds Africans, who have committed no crime except for requesting political asylum, off the streets of Tel Aviv into desert detention centers, Aynaw smeared them as rabid rapists, one of the oldest and most disgusting anti-black tropes. Israeli police

statistics show that African crime rates, including for violent crimes, are far lower than those of native Israelis.

Likewise, just as Israel's black-washing strategy contains the seeds of its own anti-blackness, its sex-washing strategy also contains the seeds of its own sexism. Top Israeli politicians smear all Palestinians and Africans as potential domestic abusers, while a long string of sex criminals and alleged sex criminals oozes out of their own ranks: multiple ministers, multiple directors of the Prime Minister's office and the Prime Minister's driver and multiple candidates for president and the former president himself, among others.

Rampant rape culture is not confined to political elites in Israel. Studies conducted in 2011 and 2012 found that 20 percent of Israeli men admit to having forced a woman to have sex, and 61 percent of Israeli men do not consider that forcing a woman to have sex constitutes rape—if she is a previous acquaintance.

The government makes no effort to combat this horrific phenomenon, for which it is at least partially culpable. Just the opposite: it multiplies the misogyny by promoting Jewish Israeli women as sex objects for its own political ends.

On one hand, the government markets the sexual availability of Jewish Israeli women in order to entice a male and mainly non-Jewish audience outside of Israel to support the state. On the other hand, inside the country, state-sponsored groups conduct witch-hunts against the few Jewish Israeli women that have the courage to date non-Jewish men, despite the avalanche of social pressure bearing down on these couples.

These developments may be disturbing, but sadly, they are not unique. In fact, sex-washing was used as a tactic by the official organizations of the Jewish settlement enterprise in Palestine even prior to Israel's existence. As dramatized in the 2011 British mini-series *The Promise*, the Yishuv trained Jewish

women to court the British soldiers stationed in the country and use their wives to convince them of the merits of the Zionist idea to establish a Jewish state. At the same time, the Jewish leadership condemned those women who struck up real romantic relationships with non-Jews and ostracized them as race-traitors. Many of these women were threatened and physically attacked, and some were even murdered by anti-miscegenation syndicates.

Israeli historian Daniela Reich first brought these facts to light in her masters thesis "Between National Mission and Social Ostracism," and she fleshed them out in an interview I conducted with her over the summer, just days after an ultra-nationalist mob protested a Jewish-Muslim wedding near Tel Aviv with chants of "Death to Arabs!"

With every passing day, far-right Members of Knesset are further emboldened, vying to enshrine state-sponsored discrimination in Israeli law, as it already is, *de facto*. With progressive parliamentarians only holding one-seventh of the seats of the nationalist camp—and this number is likely to drop even further in the next Knesset—there seems to be no force in Israeli society that can hold back this frightening tide.

If a coalition of foreign forces finally musters up the courage to call out Israeli leaders on their rampant racism, it will require the ability to see through the state's deceptive propaganda campaigns. Israel's friends must realize that the government's cynical use of Jewish women and people of color are not reasons to shield the regime from judgment, but rather to ramp up criticism of it and demand it end racist incitement and protect all populations, regardless of religion or gender.

—AlterNet, January 9, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/world/how-israel-covers-its-ugly-racial-holy-war?akid=12692.229473.qmykjA&rd=1&src=newsletter1030376&t=6>

When three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered by Palestinian militants in June, Israeli political leaders did not call for the criminals to be caught and convicted. Rather, they demanded that mutilation and mass murder be visited on the general Palestinian population.

Israel Forced Birth Control on Blacks

Israel admits to forcibly injecting Black immigrants with birth control

By APRIL V. TAYLOR

Israel has admitted that it forcibly and without consent gave birth control injections to Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, according to a report in *Haaretz*.¹ An investigative journalist uncovered the fact that most of the women who were given the birth control shots were not aware they were being given birth control and did not consent. Since that discovery, Health Ministry Director General Professor Ron Gamzu has acknowledged in a letter to Israeli health maintenance organizations that Black Jewish immigrants were given the shots.

Gamzu issued the letter after Sharona Eliahu-Chai of the Association of Civil Rights in Israel lodged a complaint on behalf of multiple women's rights and Ethiopian immigrant groups. The letter specifically instructed gynecologists in the HMOs "not to renew prescriptions for Depo-Provera for women of Ethiopian origin if for any reason there is concern that they might not understand the ramifications of the treatment."

Investigative journalist Gal Gabbay interviewed 35 Ethiopian immigrants along with Sava Reuben. Some of them reported that while they were still in transit camps waiting to complete the immigration process, they were intimidated and threatened into taking the Depo-Provera birth control shot. One woman stated, "They told us they are inoculations. They told us people who frequently give birth suffer. We took it every three months. We said we didn't want to." Another woman reported that she believed she had been given a flu vaccination. Shockingly, 25 of the 35 women interviewed were still receiving birth control shots at the time they were interviewed.

One woman, who declined to give her name, says that the only reason she

complied with receiving the birth control injections was because she was threatened with her immigration to Israel being blocked. These women represent a handful of the women affected by this unethical act. In just the last decade, more than 50,000 Ethiopian Jews have immigrated to Israel, with almost 100,000 immigrating since the 1980s.

According to a *New York Times* report, Israel has historically made birth rates and demographics a political issue as the country focuses on trying to promote Jewish birthrates in order to retain a Jewish majority. It is estimated that Israel's deceptive use of the birth control shots could be a significant factor in why the birthrate of Israel's Ethiopian community has dropped by some 50 percent. Sava and Reuben produced a documentary regarding this drop, instigating a popular outcry.

Six years prior to the discovery of the forcible use of the birth control, Women and Technologies Project head Hedva Eyal questioned the Israeli government about why Ethiopian immigrants were disproportionately receiving 60 percent of birth control shots in the country, but she was not given an answer. Speaking to the *Los Angeles Times*, Eyal states, "The ease with which a woman's testimony is dismissed—certainly that of a Black woman and a poor Black woman at that—is shocking."

Israel's health ministry has vehemently denied the forcible use of the birth control shots. A spokesperson for the department states, "The Israel ministry of health neither advises nor encourages the use of Depo-Provera injections and if they are

being administered this is in despite of our view."

Dr. Mushira Aboodia, a gynecologist with Jerusalem's Hadassah medical center, states, "This is a policy that no one will admit. No one in Israel will take responsibility for the treatment in the camps but someone must have instigated it and it would not be in Ethiopia's interests to treat women preparing to leave the country. Something is definitely wrong here." It is disturbingly ironic that Israel has engaged in something eerily similar to the dark eugenics experiments carried out during World War II against Jews.

This is not the first time the birth control shot Depo-Provera has been embroiled in controversy. In the United States, between 1967 and 1978, 13,000 impoverished women in Georgia were part of an experiment where they were given the birth control injections with many of them not being aware that they were part of an experiment. Half of the women in the study were Black.

—*Kulture Kritic*, February 15, 2015

<http://kulturekritic.com/2015/02/women/israel-admits-forcibly-injecting-black-immigrants-birth-control/>

¹ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israel-admits-ethiopian-women-were-given-birth-control-shots.premium-1.496519>



What's Left in Africa?

Reflections on the failure of left, working class movements to take root in most of Africa

BY FIROZE MANJI

The early 1950s witnessed an extraordinary sweep of popular mobilizations across the continent inspired by aspirations for emancipatory freedom—an end to the colonial yoke. Across the continent, nationalist parties convinced people that the path to freedom was through political independence. Since then, many of the gains of independence, which cost the blood and lives of millions in Africa, have been reversed with the privatization of the commons and public utilities, as well as by disposessions of land, by unemployment and by the increasing costs of food, rent and other necessities of life. In response, discontent has been growing across the continent, with spontaneous eruptions and mass uprisings that have in some cases resulted in the overthrow of regimes nurtured and nourished by imperialism (*e.g.* in Tunisia, Egypt and Burkina Faso). In such circumstances, one would have thought that there would have been fertile grounds for the emergence of strong left working class movements across the continent. But why has this not happened?

Left and communist parties of various sizes and influence have arisen in a number of countries across the continent over many decades, despite the terror of colonial repression that they faced. In many cases, the political strategy of these parties was to merge with the nationalist parties in the struggle for independence. This was in line with the prevailing dogma at the time: the “stagist” view of revolution according to which communists were required not only to support the emergence of a national bourgeoisie as part of the “national democratic revolution,” but to concede leadership to the nationalist movements—much as we have seen with the South African Communist

Party yielding to the leadership of the ANC since 1994.

On coming to power, most of the nationalist governments, often supported by the left, believed that all that was required to satisfy the demands of the masses was to take control of the state. But what they ignored was that the state was itself a colonial state, and set up to serve, protect and advance the interests of imperial power and its entourage of corporations and banks. That state had a monopoly over the use of violence. It had police forces, armies and secret police and it used force and, where necessary, violence, to protect the interests of the way in which capitalism operated in the peripheries.

Having occupied the state, independence governments essentially sought to make modest reforms consisting primarily by deracializing the state and modernizing it so that the economy could be more fully integrated with the new emerging international order that the U.S., Europe and Japan set about creating after the Second World War. The structures of state control, the police, army, and special forces—even the structures and powers of native authority established by colonial powers—all these were left fundamentally intact, albeit dressed up in the colors of the national flag. The structures of the capitalist state were left intact, even where regimes proclaimed an adherence to “Marxism/Leninism,” as in Mengistu’s Ethiopia.

Few understood the dangers of occupying, rather than creating alternatives to the capitalist state. Amongst those must be counted Patrice Lumumba (Congo), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) and Tomas Sankara (Burkina Faso). They had in common their commitment to building alterna-

tives to the colonial state. And tellingly, all three were assassinated by their own comrades, in collaboration with empire.

Cabral was emphatic: “It is our opinion that it is necessary to totally destroy, to break, to reduce to ash all aspects of the colonial state in our country in order to make everything possible for our people.”

While the repressive arms of the state may have been dressed in new uniforms, their role—that of protecting the interests of capitalism in the (former) colonies—remained unchanged. And as the emerging middle class and party officials who now occupied the neo-colonial state realized the potential for private accumulation and looting that access to the state provided, so their interest in transforming the state waned. “Africanization”—or in South Africa’s case “Black Economic Empowerment”—was the battle-cry of the emerging national bourgeoisie that would legitimize their access to sources of private accumulation. The growing presence of transnational corporations and international financial institutions, and the growing interest in “investing”—principally in the extractive industries—provided too many lucrative opportunities for them to even consider making changes to economic power. The state became a honey-pot, and therefore frequently a terrain of conflict between different factions of the emerging class. In some cases, leading members of the left joined the ranks of the national bourgeoisie, just as we have seen in the case of Cyril Ramaphosa and others in South Africa.

As Fanon put it: “The national bourgeoisie discovers its historical mission as intermediary...its vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically

serve as a conveyor belt for capitalism, forced to camouflage itself behind the mask of neocolonialism. The national bourgeoisie, with no misgivings and with great pride, revels in the role of agent in its dealings with the Western bourgeoisie. This lucrative role, this function as small-time racketeer, this narrow-mindedness and lack of ambition are symptomatic of the incapacity of the national bourgeoisie to fulfill its historical role as a bourgeoisie.”

In fulfilling its function as an agent of the Western bourgeoisie and “as a small-time racketeer,” this class turns upon the left that aided its path to power, and slaughters it, imprisons it, exiles it or marginalizes it. Slaughter was the case with one of the strongest communist parties in Sudan when, in 1971, Gaafar al-Nimriy launched a campaign that resulted in almost the total elimination of the party. Even where the organized left was not strong, the post-independence period witnessed assassinations of radicals: for example in Kenya with the assassination of Tom Mboya, Pio Gama Pinto and JM Kariuki, or in South Africa with the assassination of Chris Hani and, more recently, of members of NUMSA and Abahlali base Mjondolo. “African Socialism” was *fêted* as the answer to the continent’s underdevelopment in the early post-independence years, but in every case, this was combined with the requirement of that there be only one legitimate party. Whatever the actual political color of the regimes, it was not uncommon for nationalists to proclaim an allegiance to socialism, albeit to an “African” version.

Kwame Nkrumah was perhaps the most radical of the nationalists, but even in Ghana, no attempt was made to dismantle the colonial state. As a result, radicalization spread amongst the population. In 1961, railway workers organized a national strike, but the state became increasingly authoritarian and independent political organization

was repressed—until eventually a one-party state was declared. Nkrumah’s political writings became much more radical after the *coup d’état* that overthrew him in 1966.

Similarly, Julius Nyerere established his own particular brand of socialism—Ujamaa—in the aftermath of the revolution in Zanzibar, in which he orchestrated the repression of Abdulrahman Babu’s Umma Party. Nyerere’s Arusha Declaration declared a one-party state, preventing the independent organization of left, working class organizations. A once ardent trade unionist, Ahmed Sékou Touré led Guinea to independence in 1958, and in 1960, declared his party, Parti démocratique de Guinée, the only legitimate party. The combination of repressive one-party states that proclaim themselves “socialist,” the establishment of Stalinism in the Soviet Union with its own form of repression and one-partyism, and its final demise in the collapse of the Berlin Wall—all these have contributed to the discrediting of the idea of “socialism” as a progressive force. In many countries, the word “socialism” is a dirty word that has been lost in every-day vocabulary.

Another factor that has inhibited the development of the left in Africa needs to be considered. The last thirty years of neoliberal policies have resulted not just in material dispossession, but also in the dispossession of memory. Many people born or raised in the aftermath of the implementation of structural adjustment programs have lost connection with their own histories in an environment of *CNN* and MacDonaldis culture.

As Milan Kundera put it: “The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history, then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world

around it will forget even faster...The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. There remains today the challenge of building strong left, working class movements. Whatever the constraints that we may have inherited from our history, the reality is that after independence our national bourgeoisies have failed to deliver on their promises.”

Thirty years (or some twenty years in the case of South Africa) of neoliberal policies willingly imposed by this class have resulted in conditions for the majority that are in many ways worse than they were at independence. Today discontent is growing, especially among the youth. But there is also a more widespread disenchantment with post-colonial governments that derives from their loss of credibility and legitimacy. Serious questions are increasingly being raised concerning the ability of this class to lead the way to emancipation.

The objective conditions offer, at least potentially, good conditions for building a left movement. But that cannot be done on the basis of the forty-year-old analysis of the nature of capitalism and imperialism to which much of the left has become accustomed. There is work to be done in deepening our understanding of the changes that have occurred in both the nature of today’s financialized capital and its operation in the “peripheries.” Such an analysis is necessary if we are to appreciate the fact that the workplace is not the only site where accumulation by dispossession occurs—it also occurs through the extraction of income and wealth through rents, the privatization of health and social welfare, education, land, water, power, *etc.* All of these are subject to speculation.

—*International Viewpoint*, February 5, 2015

<http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3853>

Colonial Pollution

Hints of colonial pollution hidden in Andean ice cap

BY MEGAN GANNON

Traces of air pollution from 16th-century Spanish¹ silver mines were discovered deep inside an ice cap in the Peruvian Andes, scientists announced on February 9, 2015.

The researchers said it's the first clear evidence of man-made air pollution in South America from the time before the Industrial Revolution.

Though the imprint of metal-rich smog was discovered in Peru, the pollution likely originated hundreds of miles away, in what is now Bolivia, at the Potosí mountaintop silver mines.

"There is a long pre-industrial history of mining in Peru and Bolivia," said study author Paolo Gabrielli, a research scientist at the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center at Ohio State University. But most of the previous evidence linking these activities to atmospheric pollution had been found in natural archives, such as lake sediment cores, which were located very close to the old mines, Gabrielli told *Live Science* in an email.

"Our study demonstrates that since the colonial time, mining and metallurgic activities performed by the Spanish did also have an impact on very distant areas," Gabrielli said.

Famed mines of Potosí

At an altitude of about 13,120 feet (4,000 meters), the city of Potosí is designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, because of its rich industrial history. The Incas had been extracting and refining silver from Potosí for generations before the Spanish arrived. But during the colonial period, mining activity boomed, and Potosí became known as the largest source of silver in the world. By the 17th century, about

160,000 colonists lived in Potosí alongside about 13,500 indigenous people who were forced to work the mines under a system of mandatory labor, according to UNESCO.

The success of the mines depended largely on amalgamation, a new technology that the Spanish introduced in 1572 to speed up silver production. That refining process involved grinding lead-rich silver ore into a powder and mixing it with mercury. Thick clouds of lead-laden dust were likely released into the atmosphere during milling, a key part of the amalgamation process, the researchers said.

"Colonial-era sources show that officials, both political and technological, were aware of possible pollution from the refining processes," said Kendall Brown, a history professor at Brigham Young University in Utah, who was not involved in the study. For instance, Francisco de Toledo, who governed the Viceroyalty of Peru from 1569 to 1581, ordered that amalgamators at Potosí build higher chimneys for their ovens to reduce the workers' risk of contamination, Brown said in an email.

Some of that pollution was apparently swept some 500 miles (800 km) northwest, where it settled on the Quelccaya Ice Cap in the Andes Mountains in southern Peru.

Quelccaya ice core

In 2003, Gabrielli and his colleagues pulled a long ice core from the Quelccaya Ice Cap to study the climatic changes in South America during the past 2,000 years. The researchers did not see a section of the ice core from the colonial era that was stained with soot; the ice actually looks translucent

white. But a chemical analysis revealed that just before 1600, the Quelccaya started catching much larger quantities of metals, especially lead. This pollution persisted until the early 1800s, when the mining industry stagnated during the Latin American Wars of Independence, the researchers said.

"Until now, what we knew about pre-industrial atmospheric pollution was limited to the Northern Hemisphere," Gabrielli said. For example, he noted that "hardly detectable" 2,500-year-old traces of lead and copper in a Greenland ice core had been linked to mining by the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations.

"Our Peruvian record provides the first clear evidence of a large-scale pre-industrial signal of anthropogenic [human-caused] origin in the atmosphere of the Southern Hemisphere," Gabrielli said.

The colonial-era level of pollution, while significant, was still several times lower than the level of pollution during the 20th century—when people performed mining operations in huge open pits and when fossil fuel combustion changed the South American atmosphere more dramatically, Gabrielli said.

When did the Anthropocene begin?

Some scientists think humans have altered the planet so much—though agriculture, mining, fossil fuel production and other industrial activities—that we're now living in a new geological time period, dubbed the Anthropocene.

The starting point for this era, however, is debated. Sometimes it's thought

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Explosive Rates of Mass Incarceration

Major civil rights issue of our time

By SARAH LAZARE

The disproportionate mass incarceration of people of color in the United States, particularly of Black men, is no accident, finds a new report from the Economic Policy Institute. It stems from deep racism in U.S. society—enacted through public policy, policing, a dual court system, media representations, and more—and constitutes “one of the most pressing civil rights issues of our time.”

Entitled “Where Do We Go from Here? Mass Incarceration and the Struggle for Civil Rights,”¹ the analysis

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to be the Industrial Revolution. Gabrielli said his team’s findings demonstrate how difficult it is to define the Anthropocene, and the study’s results suggest “this new epoch emerged discontinuously through space and time during human history.”

Brown had a similar take.

“Clearly, colonial Spanish American mining was industrial in scale, and the belief that a dramatic man-made impact on the environment only began in the 18th century is a Euro-centric construct,” Brown said in an email.

The findings were published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

—*LiveScience.com*, February 09, 2015

<http://www.livescience.com/49740-potosi-silver-mines-ice-pollution.html>

¹ “How the Spanish Mercantile Empire Paved the Way for Modern Capitalism,” By Chris Kinder

Socialist Viewpoint, July/August 2012, Vol. 12, No. 4

http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/julaug_12/julaug_12_44.html

was written by Robynn J.A. Cox, assistant professor at Spelman College. Published Friday, January 16, 2015, the report comes amid mounting nationwide protests to reclaim the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. in the lead up to the federal holiday, at a time of protracted and large-scale movements to declare Black Lives Matter.

“As we prepare to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy, it’s essential that we acknowledge how a biased criminal justice system and the subsequent mass incarceration of African Americans is wreaking havoc on the Black community and preventing us from reaching King’s dream,” said Cox.

“For example, although the right for Blacks to vote has been enforced since the Voting Rights Act of 1965, mass incarceration policies have effectively taken this entitlement away from numerous African Americans,” Cox continued. “It is painfully obvious that the dream for civil rights has yet to be fully realized and cemented.”

Over the past 40 years, U.S. incarceration has exploded, the report notes, not due to a corresponding increase in severe crimes, but due to society’s “collective choice to become more punitive.” As is well-documented in numerous studies, including a landmark report from the National Research Council (an arm of the National Academy of Sciences) released last year, people of color have been disproportionately targeted by such punitive measures.

According to EPI’s report, the tough-on-crime laws responsible for this spike “could be maintained only because of the dual legal system developed from the legacy of racism in the United States.” This deep racial bias “allowed for society to avoid the trade-off between society’s ‘demand’ to get tough on crime and its ‘demand’ to

retain civil liberties, through unequal enforcement of the law.”

“In essence,” the report continues, “tying crime to observable characteristics (such as race or religious affiliation) allowed the majority in society to pass tough-on-crime policies without having to bear the full burden of these policies, permitting these laws to be sustained over time.”

Furthermore, the report describes how racism has caused society to respond to poverty and inequality using punitive criminal justice measures, rather than public policies to invest in disenfranchised and marginalized communities. “At the same time,” states the analysis, “many communities attempted to benefit economically from mass incarceration by using prisons as a strategy for economic growth, making the incarceration system eerily similar to the system of slavery.”

“Systemic racial bias has led to the development of a dual criminal justice system, which is at the root of our mass incarceration epidemic,” said Cox. “Without racial bias, it is unlikely that the United States would have seen such unprecedented growth in incarceration.”

“Failure to address the legacy of racism passed down by our forefathers and its ties to economic oppression will only result in the continued reinvention of Jim Crow,” Cox added.

—*Common Dreams*, January 16, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/01/16/explosive-rates-mass-incarceration-called-major-civil-rights-issue-our-time>

¹ “Where Do We Go from Here? Mass Incarceration and the Struggle for Civil Rights,” By Robynn J.A. Cox

<http://www.epi.org/publication/where-do-we-go-from-here-mass-incarceration-and-the-struggle-for-civil-rights/>

Prisons and Profits

Business is booming thanks to the prison-industrial complex

BY ALEX HENDERSON

It's no coincidence that the United States now imprisons more of its people than any other country in the world: mass incarceration has become a giant industry in the U.S., resulting in huge profits not only for private prison companies, but also, for everything from food companies and telecoms to all the businesses that are using prison labor to cut their manufacturing costs. The prison-industrial complex even has its own lobbyists: according to a 2011 report from the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), the U.S.' largest private prison company, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), and their competitor the GEO Group have both spent hundreds-of-thousands of dollars lobbying for longer prison sentences. And the American Bail Coalition has been lobbying for the bail bond industry for 23 years.

One of the main reasons so many people are imprisoned in the U.S. (which now has 25 percent of the world's prisoners even though it comprises only five percent of the world's population) is the war on drugs, which has brought with it draconian sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. In a 2013 report on Americans serving life without parole for nonviolent offenses, the American Civil Liberties Union found that 79 percent were incarcerated for drug-related convictions. Three-strikes laws, which mandate life without the possibility of parole after a third felony conviction, have also done a lot to expand the prison-industrial complex.

Reform is at odds with the agenda of many powerful industries. It's well-known that private prison companies draw their profits from mass incarceration, but they're not the only ones. Here are nine industries that are profiting quite handsomely from the prison-industrial complex and mass incarceration in the U.S.

1. Food Supply Companies: Supplying food for prisons can be extremely profitable. Just ask the Philadelphia-based Aramark Corporation, which brings in millions of dollars bringing food to around 600 prisons in North America. Aramark's profits continue to roll in even when the company does a terrible job. In 2014, Aramark received fines of \$98,000 and \$200,000 from the state of Michigan for a long list of infractions, including meal shortages, unsanitary conditions (maggots found in the food, for example) and Aramark employees smuggling contraband into prisons. But such fines were a small price to pay in light of the fact that, in December 2013, Aramark signed a three-year, \$145-million contract with the state of Michigan. Aramark has had problems in other states as well, including Kentucky (where corrections officers said poor food service led to a prison riot in 2009), Florida (where state officials ended a contract with Aramark after accusing the company of boosting corporate profits by skimping on meals) and Ohio (where Aramark employees have been fired for having sex with inmates).

2. Telecommunications: Although corporatists love to describe themselves as believers in free-market competition, the reality is that many of them do everything they can to rig the game, avoid competition and become monopolies. One telecom company that operates as a monopoly in many prisons is Global Tel* Link (GTL). The company has

been making \$500 million annually in profits thanks to its exclusive contracts with a long list of prisons. When prisoners make collect calls *via* GTL, the person accepting the call pays inflated rates of up to \$1.13 per minute. GTL can get away with charging those rates because it doesn't have to compete with other telecom companies in the prisons where it has exclusive contracts.

3. Healthcare Companies: Inside American prisons, decent healthcare is hard to come by. Corizon, a company that specializes in prison healthcare, is making an estimated \$1.4 billion annually despite doing an abysmal job caring for those they are paid to treat. In 2012, seven sick prisoners died in a Louisville, Kentucky jail where Corizon was in charge of healthcare; the city of Louisville later canceled its contract with Corizon. In the video, *Prison Profiteers*, a Tucson, Arizona woman whose incarcerated son had hepatitis C was told by Corizon employees that they had "no protocol for treating" the disease, which is rampant in prisons.

4. Telemarketing and Call Centers: Many American corporations have moved their call centers to India, the Philippines, Honduras and other countries where they can get away with paying slave wages. But some American corporations in need of call centers have found an even cheaper source of labor: American inmates. *USA Today* reported in 2004 that 2,000 or more prisoners in the U.S. were working in call centers. About 80

of them were in Snake River Prison in Oregon, where inmates were being paid around \$120-\$185 a month for working full-time. When companies can get people to sell and promote products, handle customer service or make hotel reservations for 75-cents-an-hour, there is much incentive for keeping the prison-industrial complex alive.

- 5. Clothing Manufacturers:** Prisoners are making a lot more than license plates these days. A wide variety of products are being manufactured in U.S. prisons, from office furniture and bedding to sinks, toilets and clothing. All kinds of clothing is made in American prisons: shirts, hats, pants, shoes, jackets, you name it. Even Victoria's Secret has profited from the prison-industrial complex: in the 1990s, Victoria's Secret subcontractor Third Generation hired 35 female inmates in North Carolina to sew lingerie.
- 6. The Technology Sector:** Back in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, unionized manufacturing and packaging jobs were great for the American middle class. But that was before so many of those jobs were outsourced to Pakistan, Bangladesh, China and other countries with ultra-low wages and terrible working conditions. Some corporations, however, have found a source of ultra-cheap labor right in the U.S.: inmates, whose pay can be as low as 35-cents-an-hour. The technology sector has been willing to make use of prison labor. Exmark (a Microsoft subcontractor) used prisoners in Washington State for shrinkwrapping Microsoft products (including mice and software) in the 1990s, and in 2003, Dell used federal prisoners for recycling desktop computers.

7. The Bail Industry: According to research by the ACLU and the *Nation*, the bail industry now pulls in \$2 billion in revenue annually. They described the practices of bail bondsmen like Eric Amparan, who keeps ten percent of a bail amount as a non-refundable fee even if the person is found innocent. The higher the bail amounts set by judges, the more bail bondsmen stand to make—and *Prison Profiteers* reported that between 2002 and 2011, the American Bail Coalition (a lobbying group for the bail industry) spent \$3.1 million lobbying for judges to set higher bail amounts. *Prison Profiteers* also noted that average bail amounts increased substantially with the growth of the prison-industrial complex, going from \$39,800 in 1992 (the year ABC was founded) to \$89,900 in 2006.

8. Food Processing and Packaging: The prison-industrial complex not only uses companies like Aramark that bring food to prisoners, it can also use prison labor to process food for people on the outside. In 2008, *Mother Jones'* Caroline Winter reported that in California alone, prisoners were processing “more than 680,000 pounds of beef, 400,000 pounds of chicken products, 450,000 gallons of milk, 280,000 loaves of bread, and 2.9 million eggs.” Winter reported that Signature Packaging Solutions, a Starbucks subcontractor, was using prisoners to package holiday coffees.

9. Agriculture: With more states fining farmers for hiring undocumented workers and fewer agricultural workers coming in from Mexico, the prison-industrial complex has been using more prisoners as a source of farm labor. This is happening every-

where from Georgia to Arizona to Idaho, where in 2014, State Senator Patti Anne Lodge (a Republican) sponsored a bill allowing agricultural employers to hire prisoners. The bill was quickly signed into law by Idaho's Republican governor C.L. Otter.

Alex Henderson's work has appeared in the L.A. Weekly, Billboard, Spin, Creem, the Pasadena Weekly and many other publications.

—AlterNet, February 18, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/9-surprising-industries-profitting-handsomely-americas-insane-prison-system?akid=12811.229473.PuqK6X&rd=1&src=newsletter1032159&t=4>

The prison-industrial complex even has its own lobbyists: according to a 2011 report from the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), the U.S.' largest private prison company, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), and their competitor the GEO Group have both spent hundreds-of-thousands of dollars lobbying for longer prison sentences.

Corey Walker, Innocent of Murder

Targeted in war on drugs

BY RACHEL WOLKENSTEIN



Rachel Wolkenstein and Corey Walker

For over two years I have been an advocate and supporter of the Campaign to Free Lorenzo Johnson. Beginning in September 2014 I began representing co-defendant Corey Walker in his appeal to overturn his conviction on grounds of actual innocence, police and prosecutorial misconduct and ineffective assistance of counsel. Less than two months later, the Pennsylvania Attorney General asked the judge in the case to vacate my admission to practice pro hac vice¹ as Corey Walker's lawyer. Both the post-conviction appeal proceeding and the Attorney General's motion to remove me from the case are pending.

This is an introduction to the case of Corey Walker who was framed for a December 1995 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania murder. The case of his also innocent co-defendant Lorenzo Johnson is more well-known. These men were sentenced to life imprisonment without any possibility of parole. In 2013 over 49,000 men and woman were imprisoned in what Mumia Abu-Jamal has bluntly described as “slow death row.”

Corey Walker and co-defendant Lorenzo Johnson are two of the estimated 100,000 actually innocent men incarcerated in the United States. They are part of the generation of young Black men imprisoned in the “war on

drugs” that led to the mass incarceration of some 2.3 million men and women, of whom 60 percent are Black or Hispanic.

The Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General established a multi-jurisdictional Municipal Drug Task Force providing millions of dollars in federal and state funds to police for overtime and specialized surveillance. Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson were targeted as New York drug dealers, who the Dauphin County Drug Task Force called “New York N-----s.”

The murder charges brought against Walker and Johnson resulted not from any connection to the Harrisburg murder of Tarajay Williams, but from their refusal to “cooperate” and give false testimony on drug cases. Walker and Johnson insisted on their innocence and fighting the false murder charge. They rejected offers of plea deals. At the time of the shotgun killing, Walker was in a nearby bar and Johnson was in New York City. They each had numerous alibi witnesses. Until the jury rendered its guilty verdicts and the judge immediately sentenced them to life without parole, they hadn't believed that innocent men could be convicted of murder.

Now eighteen years later, the evidence of state misconduct, extending from the Harrisburg Police and Dauphin County District Attorney's office through the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office, is nakedly exposed in the Pennsylvania state post-conviction appeals (PCRA) filings by Lorenzo Johnson and Corey Walker.

Their cases provide textbook examples of suppression of exculpatory evidence², police coercion and prosecution promises to “witnesses” to secure false testimony, conflicts of interest

and deliberate prosecutorial manipulation and manufacturing of evidence. This is established by new witness statements, newly disclosed police records, and the existing trial record:

- The prosecution's trial evidence was entirely circumstantial: There was no eyewitness to the shotgun murder, no weapon, no fingerprints, and no blood evidence.
- Contrary to the police trial testimony, it is now known that the police had “identifiable fingerprints.”
- Shortly after the murder, witnesses identified other men on the street with the victim. There is no record of these men being investigated.
- The first detective assigned to investigate the case was the father of Corey Walker's girlfriend. Six months later when Walker was arrested for the murder he immediately stated he was innocent and feared for his life at the hands of that detective.
- The two main witnesses manufactured false evidence under coercive influence from the police and prosecution. Both women were drug addicts and low-level dealers.
- The main witness was a suspect, and detectives worked her over for months until she “told the truth.” Her transcribed pretrial interview that contradicted her trial testimony was suppressed.
- The lead detective had a close family-like relationship with the woman who became the “motive witness” on the eve of trial. The detective “protected her” when she was arrested on drug charges

or thefts. She had been one of Johnson's alibi witnesses.

- This "motive witness" was promised sentencing leniency in an unrelated robbery conviction in exchange for her testimony. Ten days after Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson were convicted she received probation rather than the mandatory five years imprisonment.
- Police threatened or offered favors to witnesses to change their testimony.

Unlike most criminal cases, in which the prosecutor is the county district attorney, this case was removed to the Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General for trial and all subsequent appeals and legal proceedings. The putative reason was a conflict of interest with the District Attorney's office on the grounds that Corey Walker had placed a "hit" on Dauphin County District Attorney John Cherry. This was a totally fabricated story, made by a major drug task target threatened with criminal drug charges that carried life sentences. (He recently submitted a sworn statement recanting that allegation.) Corey Walker was arrested by a federal and state swat team at his mother's home in Yonkers, New York on June 5, 1996. The swat team told his mother they were sent because of the "hit" allegations. But nothing was said about this supposed "hit" at the extradition hearing. The Harrisburg detectives who traveled to Yonkers in an attempt to interrogate Walker included an investigator in the murder case and a chief detective of the Drug Task Force. Nothing was asked about a supposed "hit." Nor were any charges based on this allegation brought against Corey Walker.

The career prosecutor assigned to the case was Deputy Attorney General E. Christopher Abruzzo, newly arrived from the Dauphin County District Attorney Office.

- The Attorney General's office, with full resources of the state, did not conduct an independent investigation, relying on the investigation conducted by Harrisburg detectives who had conflicts of interest and had not investigated suspects identified shortly after the murder.
- At trial Deputy Attorney General Abruzzo presented a totally different motive and a new "motive witness" from that presented at the earlier preliminary hearing, which had been handled by the district attorney's office, charging Lorenzo Johnson.
- Deputy Attorney General Abruzzo knew, or should have known, that testimony given at trial by prosecution witnesses was false.
- Deputy Attorney General Abruzzo placed the lead detective who coerced witnesses and had the close family relationship with the "motive witness" at the prosecutor's table throughout the trial.
- In his trial summation, Deputy Attorney General Abruzzo misrepresented the trial testimony, repeatedly encouraged the jury to discount the alibi witnesses and other conflicting evidence and vouched for his witnesses, saying they had no motive to lie. This while knowing the main witness was a named suspect and the "motive witness" faced a five-year prison sentence on a robbery conviction.

Christopher Abruzzo went on to become Chief Deputy Attorney General in the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, supervising the Drug Strike Force Section. Following this he was Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Tom Corbett, overseeing the activities of nearly 20 commonwealth agencies and commissions, and then a Secretary in Tom Corbett's gubernatorial cabinet until Christopher Abruzzo recently

resigned as part of the pornography email scandal involving members of the Office of the Attorney General.

The corruption, conflict of interests, police coercion of witnesses and prosecutorial suppression and manipulation of evidence and witnesses that led to Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson's convictions are not unique to this case. In fact they are in varying degrees the norm. Prosecutorial misconduct is often described as "rampant," "pervasive" and "endemic" in literature on criminal justice and in the media, i.e., Epidemic of Prosecutor Misconduct, Center for Prosecutor Integrity, December 2013; "Rampant Prosecutorial Misconduct," *New York Times* Editorial, January 4, 2014. The operations of U.S. criminal prosecutions are that of a racist and class-biased "frame-up system."

The routineness of the prosecutorial misconduct in securing the convictions of Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson does not make it any the less outrageous. They are acts of impunity by prosecutors who are rarely, if ever, held to account to due process standards as written in legal texts. Moreover, the practice of the Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General is to vigorously defend police and prosecutorial conduct, including by persistent appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse prisoner legal wins striking down convictions gained by prosecutorial misconduct, as evidenced in Lorenzo Johnson's case.

Lorenzo Johnson's legal roller coaster and nightmare have been widely publicized. After 16 years of non-stop legal challenges he won a federal 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals dismissal of his conviction on grounds of insufficiency of evidence and was released from prison. This was the equivalent of a judicial acquittal. The Pennsylvania Attorney General's office submitted a late-filed petition and the United States Supreme Court re-instated of Johnson's

conviction in a *per curiam*³ decision. Lorenzo Johnson drove himself back to prison after less than five months out, to fight for his freedom and exoneration.

A few months later, in November 2012, I first met with Lorenzo at SCI Mahanoy. Since then I have been an active supporter of his campaign for freedom and exoneration.

From August 2013 to November 2014 Lorenzo Johnson and his lawyers filed a new Pennsylvania state petition followed by three supplemental petitions to reverse his conviction, including 32 legal claims and statements from over twenty witnesses supporting his innocence and police and prosecutorial misconduct. During this period, the Attorney General's office asserted it was "interested in justice" and would investigate the new evidence.

After a year of so-called investigation, the Attorney General's 94-page response filed on December 24, 2014 requested the judge dismiss Lorenzo's legal claims as "time barred," gave no credence to his new evidence, and denied there was any suppression of evidence by the prosecution. As is clear from the Attorney General's own words, the prosecution's fundamental objection is Johnson's exposure of misconduct of the prosecutor and the lead detective.

"Perhaps most disturbing, however, is the fact that Johnson has recklessly unleashed the hounds of defamatory hell, publicly accusing and branding the career prosecutor and career police detective primarily responsible for his prosecution as corrupt and malevolent."

At the urging of friends of both men, in May 2014, I met with Corey Walker at SCI Dallas and then began helping him prepare his *pro se* petition and supplemental petition incorporating evidence uncovered by Lorenzo Johnson and his lawyer as well as Walker's own independent investigation.

In September 2014, after a sponsoring motion by J. Michael Farrell, noted

Pennsylvania trial and appellate attorney I was admitted *pro hac vice* as Corey Walker's attorney in his new post-conviction appeal proceeding to overturn his conviction on grounds of actual innocence, police and prosecutorial misconduct and ineffectiveness of counsel.

I made a detailed request to the prosecutor, the office of Attorney General of Pennsylvania, for voluntary discovery of information concerning the police falsification of the evidence against Corey Walker, the retaliatory purpose of the prosecution and the complicity of the office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General in presenting false evidence. I also made a motion to be able to file an Amended Petition on behalf of Corey Walker.

Pennsylvania Attorney General attacks Corey Walker's lawyer for her political views

The Pennsylvania Attorney General did not respond to the substance of Corey Walker's already filed *pro se* petitions, or to the discovery requests. Instead, the Attorney General filed a 123-page motion to President Judge Todd A. Hoover of the Court of Common Pleas, who presides over this case, to vacate his order admitting me to practice and thereby prevent me from continuing as Corey Walker's lawyer.

The Attorney General's motion alleges that I practiced law without a license in Pennsylvania, violated the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct ("Rules") for not having "candor" to the Court disclosing my assistance to Corey Walker with his *pro se* filings, and that Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson have a conflict of interest in their legal cases. Incorporated into the Attorney General's motion are dozens of pages referencing dates and length of time of phone calls and visits I had with Lorenzo Johnson and Corey Walker. The purported legal and factual bases for these allegations are non-existent and/or contrary to actual Pennsylvania law and untrue.

The Attorney General's motion is explicit that its objection to my representation of Corey Walker is political. He claims that it is "intolerable" for an attorney who is opposed to, and publicly critical of, the class and race bias integral to the U.S. justice system to practice in the courts of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Attorney General's motion is explicit that it is my political views that make it "intolerable" to for me be a lawyer and advocate for my client in Pennsylvania courts. The Attorney General's legal filing contains quotes from speeches I made on Mumia Abu-Jamal's case that are posted on my web page.

The sine qua non of my alleged abuse of authority practicing *pro hac vice* in Pennsylvania is that the notorious, "prosecutor in robes" Judge Albert Sabo ordered me handcuffed and taken out of the courtroom during the 1995 Post Conviction Relief Act [PCRA] hearings in *Commonwealth v. Mumia Abu-Jamal* while I was co-counsel for Mumia. My apparent offense was responding to Judge Sabo's denial of a subpoena for the court administrator to testify, which would have provided the factual record for Mumia's challenge to the jury pool. I got only as far as saying, "Your Honor, your Honor..." when Judge Sabo had the bailiff remove me from the courtroom.

The purpose of the Attorney General's motion is to stop Corey Walker from continuing his investigation and to thwart his legal claims exposing the gross and deliberate prosecutorial misconduct underlying his conviction. It was also intended to divert and delay the Court from proceeding to the merits of Walker's PCRA petition, which compels a reversal of his conviction and dismissal of charges.

Moreover, this action by the Office of the Attorney General of Pennsylvania is an attack on the Sixth Amendment rights of a prisoner to counsel of his choice and access to the courts, and the

First Amendment rights of an attorney. A win for the Pennsylvania Attorney General on its motion to remove me as counsel has ramifications beyond that effecting Corey Walker's defense and my ability to represent him and potentially others in Pennsylvania.

Judge Todd Hoover has not yet instructed the office of the Attorney General to file an answer to the Corey's post-conviction petition. The Attorney General is not required to do so unless ordered to do so by the judge per Pennsylvania law governing post-conviction proceedings. Until then Corey Walker's challenge to his conviction is in legal limbo.

However, Judge Hoover did order me to file an answer the Attorney General's motion to remove me as counsel, which I did after first filing a new Second Supplemental Petition on behalf of Corey Walker. This Supplemental Petition expands and states in detail the deliberate acts of misconduct by Deputy Attorney General Christopher Abruzzo in convicting Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson of a murder they did not commit.

At stake in this case are, first and foremost, the lives of Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson, who are innocent men, as well as their families. This frame-up prosecution has taken nineteen years from them. They have no recourse except to continue to fight to overturn their convictions. In Pennsylvania, a sentence of life imprisonment is life; there is no possibility of parole.

Despite the existing evidence of the gross state misconduct that put these innocent men in prison it is an uphill battle to obtain exoneration and freedom in the courts. Along with mass incarceration, new laws were passed with the purpose of undermining if not destroying a prisoner's ability to challenge his conviction by means of habeas corpus in the federal courts. The Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), a Clinton

administration law passed in April 1996 has set series of time bars and requires various forms of "deference" to state court juries and judges that must be overcome for a federal court to consider a state prisoner's challenges to his conviction, even on grounds of innocence and state misconduct, all of which make appeals of state convictions extremely difficult.

As Corey Walker states in his "Call for Justice:"

"I am driven not just by the fact that I am innocent. This injustice is not unique to me and my family. It could be your father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter, not to mention you. I ask for your help because I, and other prisoners, we can't breathe!"

This is an appeal for your support and publicity and for future action on behalf of both Corey Walker and Lorenzo Johnson.

Write to Lorenzo Johnson:
Lorenzo Johnson #DF1036
SCI Mahanoy
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932

Write to Corey Walker:
Corey Walker DF 1014
SCI Dallas
1000 Follies Road
Dallas, PA 18612-9515

www.FreeCoreyWalker.org; www.FreeLorenzoJohnson.org

—Rachel Wolkenstein, February 2, 2015

<http://www.rachelwolkenstein.net/innocent-of-murder-targeted-in-war-on-drugs.html>

1 "Pro hac vice" is Latin for "this time only." This refers to the application of an out-of-state lawyer to appear in court for a particular trial, even though he/she is not licensed to practice in the state where the trial is being held. The application is usually granted. I am an attorney

admitted to practice in the State of New York and in various federal district courts and in the United States Supreme Court. I was previously admitted *pro hac vice* in Pennsylvania in the case of *Com. v. Mumia Abu-Jamal* and was co-counsel for Mumia from 1995-1999 in his PCRA proceeding.

2 "Exculpatory evidence" in legal terms, as defined by landmark Supreme Court decisions *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83 (1963) and *Kyles v. Whitley*, 514 U.S. 419 (1995) is evidence of innocence, but *Brady* also includes more than direct evidence that the defendant did not commit the crime. Evidence favorable to a defendant is also information or material that might lead a jury to conclude that the defendant should be found not guilty of the crime charged. This includes evidence that impeaches or otherwise casts doubt on the truthfulness of the testimony of a prosecution witness, such as a reason to lie, or other aspects of the prosecution case, including its forensics reports. Such information, potentially favorable to the defense, in the possession of the police or prosecution must be turned over to the defense as part of the prosecutor's due process obligations. This is referred to as *Brady* material.

3 "*Per curiam*" is Latin for "by the court." This refers to an opinion from an appellate court that does not identify any specific judge who may have written the opinion. Until relatively recently *per curiam* decisions issued by the U.S. Supreme Court tended to be short, without substantial discussion of the issues of the case. This is no longer the case, as in Lorenzo Johnson's case in which the U.S. Supreme Court did not allow his lawyers the usual practice of a full legal briefing and oral argument before deciding the case on substantive grounds, reversing a federal Court of Appeals ruling.



Jails, Torture and False Confessions

Victims who were tortured into giving false confessions by Chicago police are now asking the city for reparations.

BY TERRELL JERMAINE STARR

Meet American torture victim Darrell Cannon. On the morning of November 2, 1983, Cannon, then 32 years old, was tortured while in the custody of the Chicago Police Department. Officers escorted him from his Southside home at 7:30 A.M. and took him to a local precinct where they shocked him in the testicles and the mouth with an electric cattle prod and struck his knees with a baton, trying to force him to confess to a murder he didn't commit. Cannon gave a false confession around 2:00 P.M. that afternoon.

He spent the next 24 years in prison until he was exonerated and released in 2007. While serving his sentence, Cannon sued for damages in connection with the torture; he was awarded the paltry sum of \$3,000 and left with \$1,247 after costs and legal fees were deducted.

He has been diagnosed with PTSD as a result of the physical abuse he endured, and he still carries memories of what the cops did to him that day.

"I think about it continuously, even though it's been over 20 years," Cannon told *AlterNet*. "I still remember it as if it happened yesterday."

According to the Chicago-based People's Law Office, members of the Chicago Police Department carried out hideous acts of torture against more than 120 Chicagoans, mostly African-American men. The abuse, which took place inside of police stations, lasted from 1972 until the early 1990s, and was instigated by police commander Jon Burge. Burge and his detectives subjected suspects to cattle-prodding of the mouth and genital areas, hours-long beatings, suffocation, and other forms of abuse to force them to confess to crimes of which they were often innocent. Most of the torture was carried out against residents of the

city's predominantly African-American Southside neighborhood.

Burge was fired from the force in 1993 for "mistreating a suspect" but it took until 2010 for him to be convicted on perjury charges for lying about using Chicago's jails as torture chambers; as of 2015, he has not been convicted for torturing any of his victims. Burge was released from prison into a halfway house in Florida in October. Though the statute of limitations has expired for most of his victims to sue for damages, Burge still collects a \$4,000-per-month pension and has cost the city and Cook County more than \$100 million in legal fees and settlements. Approximately 20 of his victims have received \$67 million in settlement money in connection with the torture they endured.

Because many of the victims aren't able to sue for damages, local activists are pursuing reparations. They argue that the damage Burge caused can't be fixed with money alone. Joey Mogul, a partner at the People's Law Office, drafted a reparations ordinance that is under review by the city council's financial committee. The ordinance seeks, among other things, \$20 million in damages for the victims of Burge's torture; a mental health clinic to be built on the Southside that will help the city's underserved people; the introduction of courses into the city's public school curriculum to teach students about the police department's history of torture; free tuition for torture victims and their families at city colleges; and public evidentiary hearings for victims who suffered at the hands of Chicago police officers—including those who are locked up.

Mogul, who has defended dozens of police brutality victims over the years,

said she and her firm are seeking reparations specifically because of the profound damages caused by members of the Chicago Police Department.

"We are using that term because we see it as a term that goes well beyond just financial compensation," she told *AlterNet*. "It looks at a whole panoply of redress that the survivors and those affected by this need. It's because the American judicial system is so limited and all we think about is money. We really had to find a term that would really encompass the holistic type of redress we wanted to provide in this case."

Standish Willis, a Chicago lawyer who has been credited with pursuing reparations for torture victims as a legal defense, was a partner at the People's Law Office in the late 1980s when it defended a man who claimed Burge had tortured him into confessing to the murder of two police officers. The People's Law Office took the case. It didn't take long before his office got more calls from people, mostly black men, claiming to have been tortured by Burge and his detectives.

"It was a kind of torture that we had never heard of," Willis told *AlterNet*. "We'd known about police brutality, police beating the suspects and not giving them food or water for days, and they end up confessing. [But] they were using electrical shock devices. They were using suffocation techniques. They had cattle probes that they would use on the victim's body. All kinds of stuff that was really very unique."

Willis founded Black People Against Police Torture as a means of galvanizing the support of the African-American community. He says it was essential that the movement to seek legal recourse for torture reflect the faces of the police's victims.

Buying and Selling Black People

Here's how America continues to buy and sell Black people

By DARRELL PADGETT

As for the ordinance, it has been held up in the finance committee run by Alderman Edward Burke. Mayor Rahm Emanuel went on record during a 2013 city council meeting to apologize for Jon Burge's deeds, calling them "a stain on the city's reputation" that Chicago has to move past.

Mariame Kaba, an activist in Chicago and founder of Project NIA, told *AlterNet* that Emanuel has been giving the same lip service to the issue for a while. She said it's time for the mayor to make the city accountable to the people its police officers abused.

"I think it's fine to talk about the fact that terrible things have happened to people, but you also have a responsibility to address the thing that was left at your doorstep," Kaba said. "Rahm Emanuel was not mayor when these torture cases were taking place. But when he came into power he inherited the issues that came before him too."

There's no telling when or if the city council will approve the ordinance, though Darrell Cannon, now 64, is hopeful he and other victims will be awarded reparations for the torture they endured.

"I'm optimistic that it most certainly can happen," he said. "Whether it will happen is another matter. That's why we're pushing as hard as we are now for the mayor to take care of this. It may not have happened during his reign but he is the caretaker today. Therefore, he has to clean up the problem that he inherited."

Documentation of the torture of Darrell Cannon and more than 100 other black men and women can be viewed on the Chicago Torture Justice Memorial page organized by the People's Law Office.

Terrell Jermaine Starr is a senior editor at AlterNet.

—*AlterNet*, February 13, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/decades-chicago-police-used-city-jails-torture-chambers?akid=12796.229473.8SXZe7&rd=1&src=newsletter1031917&t=3>

As a project for a master's course, I selected an assignment that required me to research sentencing reform over a period of 50 years. But because of my inquisitive nature, I stuck my nose into the latter part of the nineteenth century—immediately succeeding the prohibition of slavery in 1865.

During this period, I recognized that slavery did not actually end! In fact, slavery morphed into the criminal justice system as authorized by the same mechanism, which purportedly prohibited slavery—the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Thus, the 13th Amendment gave birth to convict leasing laws through the "except" clause of the amendment.

Some forms of convict leasing laws permitted whites to take custody as creditors of Black prisoners by paying criminal fines that were imposed by the legal system against the prisoners for violating Black Codes. As a consequence, the prisoners were forced to perform hard labor for their creditors. Black Codes were laws that were specifically designed to target the existence of Black life during that time.

As I conducted this research, I could not deny the similarities of the foregoing to the enactment of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 (crack law) by U.S. Congress. During the infancy of the enforcement of the crack law, approxi-

mately 98 percent of the defendants that were prosecuted were African Americans.

Even though Congress has reformed the injustice of the crack law that made a 100-to-1 distinction in the penalties for crack and powder cocaine sentencing based on the inclusion of a household product that is known as baking soda, today hundreds of crack law prisoners remain incarcerated. Because of their court imposed fines, many of the crack law prisoners are required to work in the federal Bureau of Prisons' "slave



factories," wherein the beginning hourly pay is \$0.23. Freedom! Convict leasing! Black Codes! All in the 21st century!

Darrell Padgett was sentenced to prison for 37.5 years after he was arrested for the distribution of one gram of crack cocaine. He served more than 20 years in federal prison before he won his freedom. Darrell is now a graduate student pursuing a Master of Criminal Justice Administration degree. He is also a Criminal Justice consultant and the owner of Insight Into Prison Consultants.

—*Financial Juneteenth*, February 11, 2015

<http://financialjuneteenth.com/darrell-padgett-heres-how-america-continues-to-buy-and-sell-Black-people/>

Daring to Fight the Whirlpool Corporation

Reverend Edward Pinkney imprisoned for fighting the Whirlpool Corporation

BY VICTORIA COLLIER AND BEN-ZION PTASHNIK

“Here, Whirlpool controls not only Benton Harbor and the residents, but also the court system itself. They will do anything to crush you if you stand up to them. That’s why it’s so important to fight this. I’m going to fight them until the end. This is not just an attack on Reverend Pinkney. It’s an attack on every single person that lives in Benton Harbor, in the state and around the country.”—Reverend Edward Pinkney

“My case represents a direct attack on democracy. This is an issue around the world, and especially here in the U.S. It shows what the corporate power structure will do.

“This struggle is really because of the economy. We must find a solution. We can no longer allow a society that cannot feed, clothe and house people. That society must be overturned.

“We have to show them we are not willing to lay down and let them walk all over us. This is why I don’t mind being in the prison system. I don’t mind even this horrible food. I don’t mind that I came up here in a cold bus, shackled; it took two days. I don’t mind because I know we are going to win in the end. I know this because the poorest workers stood up in my trial. They told the truth and were not intimidated by the sheriff and prosecutor. It was so profound. It gives me hope. All this is not for nothing. All this is just the beginning of something bigger than Reverend Pinkney.” —Reverend Pinkney, Marquette, Michigan State Prison, December 16, 2014

On December 15, 2014, Reverend Edward Pinkney, a leader in the struggle for social and economic justice for the residents of Benton Harbor, Michigan, was sentenced to serve up to ten years in prison, on the basis of thin circumstantial evidence that a few

dates had been altered on a recall petition against the city’s mayor, James Hightower. The recall was prompted by the mayor’s continued support for tax evasion by the Whirlpool Corporation, the Fortune 500 company and \$19 billion global appliance manufacturer, headquartered in Benton Harbor.

As we wrote December 12, 2014 in depth, the politically motivated prosecution against Pinkney killed the petition to recall Hightower, who many believe would have been ousted due to his ongoing protection of Whirlpool’s interests at the expense of impoverished Benton Harbor, which is over 90 percent African-American.

There was absolutely no evidence to convict Pinkney, and, legally, the altering of a petition document should have been a misdemeanor offense. Instead, they charged him with felony forgery—though no signatures were forged and all signatories testified that they signed willingly on the correct day. A forensics expert for the prosecution testified that there was no way to determine who changed the handful of dates. Incredibly, the all-white jury was urged by the prosecutor to believe that direct evidence was not required; they only had to “believe” that Pinkney was motivated to cheat and that he “could” have changed the dates while circulating the petitions.

Witnesses backed Pinkney

Mary Alice Adams, a Benton Harbor commissioner stated, “Reverend Pinkney was accused of writing and changing my date on a petition when, in fact, I wrote my own date and changed it after realizing I had put the wrong date down.” The jury at Pinkney’s trial rejected Adams’ testimony.

Witness after witness stood up to the prosecutor who put not only Pinkney on trial, but also his community organization, BANCO. The prosecutor hounded the witnesses to “confess” that somehow the dates were altered, and questioned if they were card-holding members of the BANCO organization. The scene held shadows of a McCarthy-era House Un-American Activities Committee witch-hunt.

Pinkney had helped organize the petition to unseat Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower, who residents consider a “yes-man” for Whirlpool. Instead of supporting a tax that would make Whirlpool pay its fair share for city services and employees, the mayor signed a \$3.2 million loan that the residents of Benton Harbor, one of the poorest cities *per capita* in the United States, would now have to pay. Meanwhile, Whirlpool pays absolutely no income taxes to the federal government or to Michigan.

Pinkney was also a leader in the fight against what he called an “illegal” ceding of a Benton Harbor public park to Whirlpool and a development firm which privatized the park and gentrified that prime real estate into a golf course and wealthy gated community on Lake Michigan—excluding the people that the property was deeded to serve. Pinkney led a protest against the PGA Senior golf tournament at the private new golf course, sponsored by Kitchen-Aid, a division of Whirlpool.

And so, with the complicity of a white, “highly political” right-wing prosecutor, Whirlpool reached into the court system and publicly “lynched” the town’s most prominent and outspoken Black community activist who dared to stand up to the powerful company and the state’s elite. Pinkney’s sentencing is

as blatant a kangaroo court as seen since Hurricane Carter, a black power advocate, was framed by New Jersey prosecutors decades ago—a typical case of the white power structure icing an “uppity Negro” with trumped up charges. In Carter’s case, the witnesses were two men facing charges for burglary, who were enticed to provide false testimony with reduced charges.

Pinkney says he was similarly set up to take a fall for a paltry smattering of election fraud charges in 2006 during an attempt to recall a city commissioner. He was finally convicted of possessing four absentee ballots, but pointed out that the women who fingered him—all members of a family—mysteriously avoided jail time for the multiple criminal charges they were facing, including a drive-by shooting and kidnapping.

“I’m not angry with them for doing that,” Pinkney said. “It’s a deal that’s hard to pass up.”

Quoting the Bible was dangerous

Pinkney was put on probation at the time, until he had the audacity to quote a particularly scathing section of Deuteronomy to the judge, who then sentenced him to three to ten years in prison. During his seven months in the county jail and four months in prison, Pinkney ran for a seat in the U.S. House and received more than 3,500 votes as a Green Party candidate. The American Civil Liberties Union finally got him released on an appeal bond, and he was allowed to return home under house arrest. Later the appeal court overturned Pinkney’s conviction, and reversed his sentence of three to ten years for quoting verse 28:15 of the Fifth Book of Moses.

But if Pinkney is a man who’s hard to keep down, his enemies are just as determined to put him away for good.

“It’s a modern day lynching,” said Adams, the Benton Harbor commissioner, of Pinkney’s latest conviction.

“After hearing the ‘evidence’ it would seem that the decision was made before the trial began. They are looking at Michigan as a glove for dictatorship. And the predominantly Black communities are the test tubes. When you stand up against the largest manufacturer of appliances in the world, of course there will be a backlash.”

Pinkney was straightforward in his description of his conviction:

“Here, Whirlpool controls not only Benton Harbor and the residents, but also the court system itself. They will do anything to crush you if you stand up to them. That’s why it’s so important to fight this. I’m going to fight them until the end. This is not just an attack on Reverend Pinkney. It’s an attack on every single person that lives in Benton Harbor, in the state and around the country. We got to fix this jury system. There was not one person from Benton Harbor, not one person from Benton Township on the jury. Anytime a Black man is sitting inside that courtroom and the jury is all white, that is a major problem.”

Michigan is a state where virulent racism followed the Great Migration of southern Blacks into northern industrial states in the 20th century. With more than two dozen racist hate groups still active in the state, Michigan has essentially turned into the Mississippi of the North. In fact, Pinkney organized his community against the KKK when they began to hold rallies in Benton Harbor in the 1990s.

Class war

Pinkney points out how class intersects with race, when it comes to the oppression of the people of Benton Harbor. “It’s a class war,” he said. “It’s us against them. Rich against poor. That’s what it adds up to. The point is we have to take a stand. It’s about you, your children, and your grandchildren. I never thought for a minute that the system could be this broken and would

go to this extreme. They could care less about you, me or anybody else. They only have one thing in mind. That is to make sure they protect the rich.”

Judge Schrock denied Pinkney’s lawyer’s request for release pending his appeal. Pinkney was handcuffed and hauled off to jail from the county courthouse as his wife, Dorothy, and supporters stood aghast, having witnessed U.S. justice for an African-American minister at its racist best.

Concerned activists and clergy associated with People Demanding Action, a national social justice organization, are circulating a petition to ministers and various organizations. The petition is to be forwarded to the U.S. Justice Department and Attorney General Eric Holder, asking for an investigation into the circumstances of Pinkney’s trial and sentencing.

To sign the petition in support of the Reverend Edward Pinkney, log on to: tinyurl.com/ps4lwyn.

Support for Reverend Edward Pinkney’s appeal should be sent to his organization: BANCO, 1940 Union Street Benton Harbor MI 49022

—Truthout, December 16, 2014

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/28050-whirlpool-corporation-sentences-edward-pinkney-to-prison-with-no-evidence>



Reverend Edward Pinkney

There Comes a Time

BY KEVIN COOPER



Kevin Cooper

History has shown over and over again that there comes a time when people who have been historically oppressed must, for their own survival, and that of their kin and kind, start to look at things in a whole new light.

Things such as redefining certain words and the meaning of those words. Especially when the people who first wrote and defined those words have been proven to be hypocrites, because those words do not apply to the people who are being oppressed!

Words like democracy, equality, justice, liberty, humanity, inclusiveness and all the words within the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution, just to give some examples.

The old meaning of these and other words have been proven to be extinct, and most, not all, but the majority of the people who brought those words to life have been oppressors.

There comes a time when oppressed people get tired of hearing things such as, "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game" that really matters. When we all know in truth and from personal experience that the game is rigged, and rigged against us minorities especially. If the past helps to make the present, we must make damn sure that this present doesn't make our future!

Our present, just like our ancestors' past, is all messed up for us oppressed people, and we are collectively catching

hell! So there comes a time when oppressed people do get tired from not just being oppressed, but also for all the different forms of oppression that we each face and have to deal with in our everyday lives. The scapegoating, being murdered in the streets, tortured and executed in death chambers, being victims of police brutality and murder, being Cointelpro-ed, Patriot Act-ed on, sent to inferior schools, and not given a real opportunity to make it within this classist and racist society. Being the last hired and the first fired, being unemployed, and underemployed. As well as all of the rest that happens to the poor people and minority people in America! People are tired of living in rundown houses that are for the most part unlivable, but it's all they can afford. Tired of being homeless and then being blamed for being homeless, even when it's not their fault. Tired of being hungry in a land of plenty, and on and on and on.

Yes, there comes a time when the *status quo* has to go, when these oppressed people can't take being disrespected anymore by anyone! They get tired of false hope and empty promises, and they see that things aren't getting any better, and in some cases only getting worse for them and theirs. When they see with their own eyes that history is repeating itself to their detriment, and the powers that be continue to ignore their plight and act like nothing is wrong, and if there is something wrong it doesn't make any difference to them.

There comes a time in each and every one of these oppressed people's lives when they just can't, or won't, take it anymore! When these people get tired of praying, pleading, begging, crying, reaching out to the empty hearts of the powers that be, a change is going to come!

If anyone honestly opens their eyes, hearts, minds and ears and truly sees, feels, learns and hears exactly what's going on in this country today and understands why, they will have to get involved to make this country a much better place for everyone!

When that time finally arrives, and it will arrive if it hasn't already, the movements that are starting, growing, protesting, demonstrating by the concerned people of this land of different cultures, skin colors, religions, sex, sexual orientations, classes, will continue to get larger, stronger, louder and more determined to make this country live up to all it claims to be!

This country doesn't have to worry about others coming from other countries to hurt us. This country is hurting itself already from within, with all of its isms and prejudices in all their various forms! America is doing itself more harm than good by hurting its own citizens, which is making them turn against this country.

There must come a time when America changes its way and includes all of its people and not just the chosen few. America is once again faced with a Shakespearean question, and we once again want and need to know how to answer it since its reality has again been exposed for all to see.

"To be, or not to be? That is the question."

To be all that you said when you put it on paper all those years ago! To be true to your word that all of us are created equal!

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin's Death Row in California. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S.

Write to Kevin Cooper at:

Kevin Cooper C-65304, 4 EB 82

San Quentin State Prison

San Quentin, CA 94974

Mumia Abu-Jamal

A Black radical who matters for our time

BY JOHANNA FERNANDEZ

Two years ago, the *New York Times* featured an illustrated article on the discovery of a manuscript penned by hand in a dank, 19th century cell by a Black prisoner, Austin Reed. Ignored in his lifetime, Reed's memoir elicited great interest among contemporary historians, activists, scholars of African American literature, and the general public. The Yale professor who is editing the manuscript celebrated the singularity of Reed's message and its "lyrical quality" in the American canon. But Reed's text is also significant because it forms part of a body of searing Black prisoners' narratives on freedom that destabilize, through their humanism, the demonization reserved for the "Black outlaw" in American history. Reed's writing exemplifies what Cornel West calls the Black prophetic voice in American history—voices committed to illuminating the truth about Black oppression and its systemic causes, and to advancing the project of justice and freedom without compromise.

Because they speak uncomfortable truths, Black prophetic voices, while they are alive, are vilified and violently persecuted by repressive agents of the state. And they are swept under the rug by those who, in West's words, are "well-adjusted to injustice." This hard reality has defined the lives of those we celebrate today during Black History Month, from Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass to Angela Davis and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In our lifetime one American, not unlike Austin Reed, articulates uncomfortable truths—about the centrality of Black oppression to the project of American capitalism and empire, the unbridled racism of the U.S. justice system, the unfinished project of American democracy, the horrors pro-

duced by war, and the possibilities of a liberated society not just for Black people at home, but for everyone, everywhere. He seeks to give ordinary people a sense of their own power and to inspire those on the margins of society to stand up and fight. From the solitude of a prison cell, he has dedicated thousands of hours contributing to the Black prophetic tradition and enriching the canon of African American literature with his writings. The conditions under which he has written seven books and produced thousands of short, incisive and elegantly rendered commentaries are likely not much better than the abysmal setting under which Austin Reed penned his memoir 150 years ago.

This man is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia is a former Black Panther and imprisoned radio journalist who was framed by the Philadelphia police, railroaded in the courts and wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death for the killing of Daniel Faulkner, a white police officer in Philadelphia. In the 1990s, he came dangerously close to execution, first on August 17, 1995 and again on December 2, 1999. Had it not been for the mass international movement that mobilized in the streets to save his life, we would know less of the quiet power behind the person that the world knows, simply, as Mumia.

In his essay "The Meaning of Ferguson," Mumia quotes the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Illich Lenin: "There are decades when nothing happens, there are weeks when decades happen." In that piece he describes how government repression sowed the seeds of a deeper understanding of the relations of power and a deeper rebellion. "The government responded with the tools and weapons of war," writes

Mumia, "they attacked them as if Ferguson were Fallujah, in Iraq." In struggle, the people of Ferguson "learned the wages of Black protest... the limits of their so-called 'leaders,' who called for 'peace' and 'calm' while armed troops trained submachine guns and sniper rifles on unarmed men, women and children." He concludes his *ode* to the heirs of the Black radical tradition with a call to build independent, radical organizations: "Ferguson may prove a wake-up call. A call for youth to build social, radical, revolutionary movements for change."

The clarity and humanity emanating from Mumia's voice shatters the official narrative of him as monster and unrepentant cop-killer. And in a society that views the incarcerated as both depraved and disposable, his sober critiques of the nation and his voice's warm temperament raise questions about the entire apparatus that has imprisoned not just him, but the more than two million mostly Black and Brown others in the sprawling U.S. prison system.

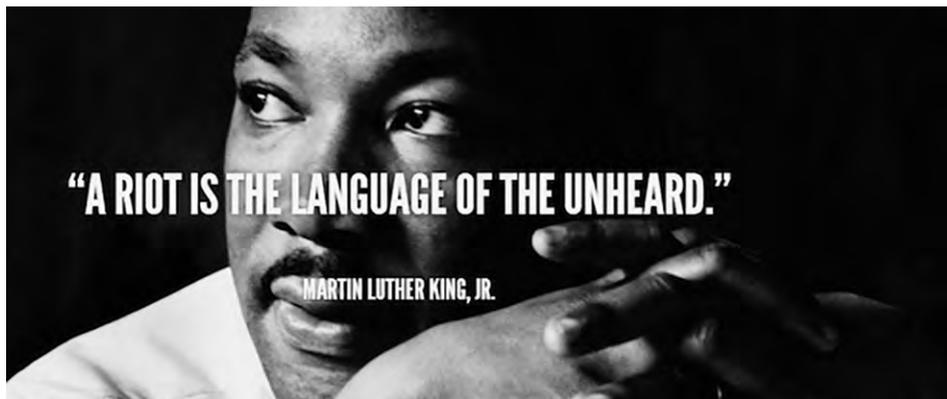
Mumia's voice is quiet and defiant and his message has always been dangerous to those in power. Today, in this moment of renewed upsurge against racist state violence, his voice is more dangerous than ever.

The main entity seeking Mumia's execution, the Fraternal Order of the Police (FOP), has historically marshaled the law, lobbied the Department of Corrections and the courts, and manipulated public fears to enact rules designed to stifle his voice. In October 2014, when the FOP failed to prevent Mumia from giving a pre-recorded commencement speech at his *alma mater*, Goddard College, the Pennsylvania State legislature passed a

vindictive gag law, the Revictimization Relief Act. The unconstitutional law threatens to dramatically curtail the free speech of all Pennsylvania prisoners and sue those who help amplify their voices under the pretextual claim that such speech produces “mental anguish” among crime victims and their families. The Abolitionist Law Project and the ACLU have each filed challenges; their plaintiffs include prisoners, university professors, journalists, newspapers, and advocacy groups.

Since his incarceration, 33 years ago, Mumia has authored seven books and produced thousands of written commentaries. His critically acclaimed best seller, *Live From Death Row*, humanized death row from the inside and exposed its racist character. In his unrelenting commitment to revolutionary literacy, study, and the fostering of connections among people fighting injustice the world over, Mumia continues to resist the system’s attempts to censor his message and criminalize his speech.

The Fraternal Order of Police knows that there is danger in the widespread discovery of Mumia by today’s powerful generation of young Black and Brown activists. Indeed, their serious engagement with the political analysis, challenges, and lessons of struggle waged by Black radicals last time—a significant number of whom are political prisoners today—would be a beautifully dangerous thing. It would catapult the Black Lives Matter movement, and our nation, closer to revolution.



And for the leading Black prophetic voice of our time, that would mean freedom, indeed.

Johanna Fernandez is a professor of History at Baruch College (CUNY).

—Huffington Post, February 6, 2015

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johanna-fernandez/mumia-abujamal-a-Black-rab_6621946.html?1423150814

A World of Mess

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It’s been over a decade since the U.S. launched its “crusade” against the Forces of Evil in the East, and it has only succeeded in creating disaster after disaster, and more enemies than we could count.

It has consistently backed governments in the Arab world that could double as the Mafia that rule by repression, torture and the “divine right of kings.”

It has mouthed words of democracy, and just as quickly swallowed them whole, as their chosen allies have ridden roughshod over their people, fighting them like foreign enemies.

Israel has been armed and unleashed to torment Palestinians into submission to so-called “peace deals” that would make the Vichy-French (collaborators with the Nazis during World War II) blush with shame.

And while they have spent over a trillion-bucks to stitch together their bevy of indigenous “allies,” things bubble on a caldera of lava, and social forces rage with contempt and hatred for their rulers.

Things are not well either in the Middle East or at home, for the crowns of neo-colonialism do not sit easily on the heads of U.S. allies.

The wasted billions, and hundreds-of-billions; the thousands of soldiers dead—equally wasted; and the wasted hopes of the invaded and occupied, have been the payment for this mad mission to “remake the Middle East.”

Wars have a way of returning home, in the most unexpected of ways.

We have seen that tragically in France.

Perhaps we shall see similar events here, at home.

—PrisonRadio.org, January 7, 2015



Obama and Black History Month

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

As the Obama Administration winds down, what is its relationship to Black History Month—2015?

Of course, the election of an African-American was indeed an historic event, and history books will record this fact.

But it was also an attempt by the Democratic Party to lock in a constituency that would fuel its political ascendancy for generations.

In symbol, the election of President Barack Obama was a shock to the system. In substance, it was a lot less so, for beside this symbol stood a reality that Black life was under siege.

In 2014, summer broke with Black protest from coast to coast, led by youth; young people who knew in their heart-of-hearts, the White House could not protect them from a peculiar American practice of police terrorism, when cops could harass, intimidate, beat, choke, kick, stomp—and kill kids, boys and men—with perfect impunity.

Symbol, shining and bright; met substance, of blood and tears, and one shattered the other.

Tens-of-thousands stormed the streets in over 200 cities, to howl at

injustice, and to demand—now—finally—“justice.”

For them, Ferguson became their Selma—and they faced automatic weapons and mad cops, with courage and fury.

Symbols are powerful things, yes; but Reality is more powerful still.

—*PrisonRadio.org*, February 8, 2015

Frankenstein's Monster

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Every generation for the past 200 years can vividly picture the Frankenstein monster.

Tall imposing, usually mute, this creature is alive and not alive—mobile, but haltingly so, that we, the more nimble can escape his perilous embrace.

Yet, who is the real monster; the one who designed and constructed this being—or the one who was built?

One wonders of such things when we see the sudden slaughters, bombings and beheadings happening in many parts of the cities of Europe and the Middle East and beyond.

We hear of ISIS—and of Nigeria's “Boko Haram.”

But guess where it all began?

In 1979 an Afghan warlord, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was hired by

Pakistani intelligence as a gift to the U.S. CIA. Hekmatyar was a ruthless dude, who hated both the U.S. and the Soviets.

His Pakistani backers told him his job was to kill Russians—Communists actually—who want to back Najibullah, the Afghan president. While the CIA was quietly calling the guy a “fascist” and “scary,” then President Ronald Reagan called them “freedom fighters,” and invited them to the White House.

Hekmatyar, then head of something he called the Islamic Party, built a military machine he called Mujahideen.

This would be the seed of the Taliban, al Qaeda, now ISIS, and hundreds more across the world: trained, armed and aimed at Western targets and now—aimed at the West itself.

Mary Shelly Wollstonecraft, the author of the 1818 science fiction novel, *Frankenstein*, had the scientist say the following words: “I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created.”

Who was the real monster—the maker—or the made?

—*PrisonRadio.org*, February 15, 2015

Write to Mumia at:
Mumia Abu-Jamal AM-8335
SCI-Mahanoy
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,

In Wisconsin Governor Walker is planning to run for President of the United States. He's now giving his job interviews to the bosses of the U.S. about his past and future achievements. His biggest achievement was his cutting of teacher's wages, destroying their union contracts and firing them. His next achievement was to do this to all public workers; next, the cutting of public education from kindergarten through university. In the future, he

promises his bosses, the big capitalists, to destroy all union contracts. Also, he plans to deeply cut Wisconsin's well-regarded system for compensating injured workers. This will be a direct attack on all workers, unionized or not, well paid or poorly paid; and indirectly, an attack on the unemployed and children. The money saved will be diverted to the rich and super-rich capitalists.

There is, however, organizing going on in Wisconsin for a general strike. Now a real, lasting general strike is

extremely difficult to do, but it must be done now. It is possible now because the Democratic Party in Wisconsin is extremely weak, having no real support. The Democrats have, in the past, stopped the movement towards a general strike by diverting it to political votes for them. This they cannot do now.

In the spirit of Crazy Horse, we shall win!

Comradely,
Joe Johnson

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or organization.

Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by a group of revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.



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Here at home we face unprecedented attacks on labor, immigrants, the poor and oppressed; a massive and racist prison-industrial complex; the increasing militarization of the police and an epidemic of police abuse as in Ferguson, Mo.; widespread domestic spying and an expanding "national security state"; trillions of dollars spent on the military to police the world and bail out the corporate 1 percent while we face severe attacks on the basic necessities of life.

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www.UNACpeace.org UNACpeace@gmail.com Ph: 518-227-6947



Blacks have the right to police themselves, and not to be subject to the coercive power of hostile forces. Read *Black Community Control of Police* on page 4.

On the Front Cover: Terrance Wise, a low-paid fast-food worker, leading a one-day strike last year at a Burger King in Kansas City, Missouri. Read *Hard Times in America, Five facts that show half of America is seriously struggling* on page 29. ▶



Israel forcibly and without consent gave birth control injections to Ethiopian Jewish immigrant women. Read *Israel Forced Birth Control on Blacks* on page 61.



Slavery has morphed into the criminal justice system. Read *Buying and Selling Black People* on page 73.