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

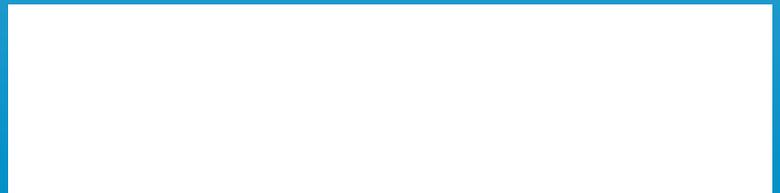
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015 VOL. 15 NO. 6



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Northern California Climate Mobilization



Saturday, November 21, 2015, 10:30 A.M.
Lake Merritt Blvd., Oakland, CA

10:30 A.M.—Gather at Lake Merritt Amphitheatre
12:00 Noon—March to Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza
1:00 P.M.—Rally at Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza

Event Hosted By NorCal Climate Mobilization

<http://www.norcalclimatemob.net/>

This event is part of the Global Climate March. On November 30th, world leaders meet in Paris to start negotiating the next global climate deal. That's why, the day before, people around the world will take to the streets and push leaders at every level of government to commit to 100 percent clean energy. Together, we can push the world towards a climate deal that gets us off dirty energy and unleashes clean energy for all. Let's make history!

<http://globalclimatemarch.org/en/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/516078015212179/>

The Situation in Paris

COMMUNIQUE OF THE NATIONAL SECRETARIES OF THE INDEPENDENT WORKERS PARTY (POI) OF FRANCE

November 14, 2015—The Independent Workers Party (POI) condemns in the strongest terms the horrible carnage in Paris on November 13.

Again, innocent and civilian victims are the ones bearing the brunt of the attacks; they are the victims of this barbarism.

The Independent Workers Party reiterates what it had stated in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris at the beginning of 2015: The struggle to ensure that these appalling acts do not recur requires the fight against war, of which this barbarism, now being extended to the entire world, is the natural child.

The Independent Workers Party reiterates its commitment to the fight against war, against all military interventions perpetrated in Syria, Iraq,

Afghanistan, Libya, and Central Africa by the governments of the major powers in the service of the multinational corporations and the capitalist class.

It's these war policies that tear nations apart and spread barbarism around the world.

For the Independent Workers Party, the struggle for peace, against barbarism, and for democracy is inseparable from the struggle of the workers, united with their organizations, against the policies of misery that are foisted upon them.

It is the same struggle for the defense of workers' rights, for democracy, for peace, for sovereignty, and human civilization against barbarism. This fight requires—more than ever in the dramatic situation that we are now facing—that the organizations that speak

in the name of the working class do not yield to the invitation that will be made to them to join the "holy union" with the government and the bosses.

Signed,

G rard Schivardi, Jean Markun, and Daniel Gluckstein

National Secretaries, POI



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Their Crimes and Our Punishments

BY BONNIE WEINSTEIN

If you fail to pay a traffic ticket or court fine for an offense—no matter how minor—all too often you can end up in jail. And if you do end up in jail or on probation you can be held responsible for those “costs” that kept you there—forever trapping you in a downward spiral of prison and more debt.

However, if you’re a wealthy corporate executive, like the heads of Volkswagen or General Motors, you can get away with killing people as long as it’s on behalf of increasing profits. At most, you may have to pay fines amounting to a slap on the wrist—what’s a couple of million dollars if you’re worth billions?

Their crimes

The title of an October 23, 2015 *New York Times* article by Jack Ewing and Jad Mouawad, “Directors Say Volkswagen Delayed Informing Them of Trickery,” says much about how capitalists look at things. They call the deeds of VW bosses who were caught not just falsifying emissions from their diesel engines, but actually designing devices to cheat the smog tests, “trickery.”

The word, “trickery” can imply an innocent joke as in “trick or treat,” but according to a September 28, 2015 *New York Times* article by Margot Sanger-Katz and John Schwartz titled, “How Many Deaths Did Volkswagen’s Deception Cause in the U.S.?” this “trickery” is much more deadly:

“The impact of smog and soot pollution on global health is substantial: A recent paper by Jos Lelieveld, at the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Germany, and colleagues estimated that air pollution causes some three million premature deaths a year, and that the number of deaths could more than double by 2050. ...The part of the country that has probably experi-

enced the most harm from the Volkswagen fraud is California, which already has the worst air quality in the nation. About 7,200 premature deaths a year are caused by air pollution there, according to the California Air Resources Board, and 73 percent of the state’s population, or 28 million people, live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.”

So far, no one from VW is in jail. So what about General Motors?

According to a September 17, 2015 *New York Times* article by Danielle Ivory and Bill Vlasic titled, “\$900 Million Penalty for G.M.’s Deadly Defect Leaves Many Cold,” not only did GM go bankrupt in 2009, and get a \$49 billion government (read taxpayer) bailout, their punishment for the 124 deaths they’ve caused, so-far, linked to their defective cars, is a drop in the bucket:

“In a settlement with prosecutors, no individual employees were charged, and the Justice Department agreed to defer prosecution of the company for three years. If G.M. adheres to the agreement, which includes independent monitoring of its safety practices, the company can have its record wiped clean. And even though General Motors will pay a \$900 million penalty, it was 25 percent less than the record \$1.2 billion Toyota agreed to pay last year.”

(Note: you need ten forklift trucks to cart around a billion dollars worth of hundred-dollar-bills; you only need a back pack to cart around a million dollars worth of hundred-dollar-bills.)¹

And these are just two of the most recent examples of capitalists getting away with murder while doing business as usual.

Our punishments

For us, things are very different.

In an October 23, 2015 *New York Times* article by Shaila Dewan titled, “Court by Court, Lawyers Fight Policies That Fall Heavily on the Poor,” describing that essentially, the poor must endure debtors’ prison if they can’t pay bail or fines:

“...groups as small as Equal Justice Under Law, founded by Mr. Karakatsanis and a fellow Harvard Law School graduate, Phil Telfeyan, and as large as the American Civil Liberties Union are waging a guerrilla campaign to reverse what they consider unconstitutional but widespread practices that penalize the poor. These include jail time for failure to pay fines, cash and property seizure in the absence of criminal charges, and the failure to provide competent lawyers.”

The inequality of the legal system of capitalism is pervasive. A \$69.00 parking meter fine is quite a hunk of money if you’re earning \$7.50-an-hour and only working 20-hours-a-week. And while it makes no logical sense at all, if you fail to pay the ticket, you go to jail and then you earn nothing! We are criminalized for being poor.

We workers are taxed, fined, charged insane credit card and loan interest charges, *etc.*, at a percentage of income that’s astronomically higher than the percentage of the income of the wealthy. And we work hard for our money; their incomes are accumulated often as the result of mass murder for profit—their own, personal profit.

This is how the capitalist system is designed to work. It is designed to protect the assets of the wealthy and make the poor pay for everything else.

Workers are dispensable in the pursuit of profits. This is the purpose of all the laws, the government, the political structure, the police, and the military.

These are the tools of oppression necessary to maintain the capitalist power structure.

But it doesn't have to be this way—there is another way to live on this planet. It requires that we find all the ways we can to unite and fight the injustices we face every day. It requires that we put aside our differences and concentrate on our similarities because we have far more of them than differences.

We must not only find ways to solidify our unity and solidarity which will make our bond stronger; but come together to design and build a united struggle that will propel us to a socialist world.

¹ <http://investing.covestor.com/2012/07/the-difference-between-a-million-and-a-billion-dollars-graphic>

Kunduz Hospital Attack Was No Mistake

U.S. dispatched a murderous AC-130 airborne gunship to attack a hospital

BY DAVE LINDORFF

Evidence continues to mount that the U.S. committed a monstrous war crime in attacking and destroying a fully operational hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan on the night of October 3, killing at least 22 people including at least 12 members of the volunteer medical staff of *Medicine Sans Frontieres* (Doctors Without Borders), the French based international aid organization that operated the hospital.

This even as the U.S. desperately tries to bury the issue of its perfidy by offering “condolence payments” to victims of the attack, though without accepting blame beyond saying it was a “tragic mistake.”

The “mistake” claim looks increasingly shameless as it becomes clear that this was not, as the U.S. corporate

media continue to incorrectly report, a “bombing” gone wrong, but rather was a prolonged hour-long attack by an AC-130 gunship, the deadliest killing machine in the U.S. Air Force’s weapons catalogue. The aircraft, equipped with the latest night-vision sighting equipment, reportedly made five 15-minute assaults on the hospital’s main building housing the emergency operating room and recovery rooms, firing its array of howitzer

This is, in other words, not a precision targeting weapon, but a weapon’s system designed to spread death over a wide swath.

cannons, 30 millimeter machine cannons and other heavy weapons that included both high-explosive tips and anti-personnel rounds designed to scatter death in a wide pattern.

This is, in other words, not a precision targeting weapon, but a weapon’s system designed to spread death over a wide swath.

It explains why the building itself was not leveled, as happens when, for example, a drone first shoots Hellfire missiles at a building. Rather, the hospital was set on fire by incendiary weapons, and the people inside were killed by a spray of bullets and anti-personnel flechettes.

Bad enough to attack a hospital, but to attack it with a weapons system designed to slaughter as many people as possible is almost beyond comprehension.

The hospital in Kunduz was a well-known and long-established institution with a distinctive shape operating in a city that until recently was under full government control. That the



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U.S./NATO command did not clearly know the function of that structure is inconceivable, despite U.S. government efforts to claim that a specific provision of the hospital's coordinates to U.S. forces by *Medicine Sans Frontieres* days before the attack "must have" gotten waylaid somewhere along the way.

Here's what a military website says about the plane sent to wreak this havoc says:"

"Boasting a lethal number of mini-guns, cannons and howitzers, the AC-130 Gunship has earned a reputation as one of the deadliest combat weapons on the planet."

The website *Strategypage.com* offers the added information that the AC-130's 30 millimeter cannons fire "explosive anti-personnel rounds" as well as explosive ammunition.

If, as claimed by Pentagon officials and the top general in Afghanistan,

Army General John Campbell, there were Taliban fighters firing from some location in the hospital (a claim vigorously disputed by *Medicine Sans Frontieres*, which says there was no fighting going on near the hospital and that all people entering the hospital, Taliban victims included, had to surrender weapons at the door as a matter of policy) it still would not justify under any circumstances the use of a weapons system like the AC-130 with its array of industrial slaughter weaponry.

The U.S. has a lot to answer for, which explains why the White House has refused *Medicine Sans Frontieres'* demand for an independent investigation into this atrocity.

No independent investigation could end up exonerating the U.S. in this case.

As I wrote earlier, the U.S. response to calls for an independent investiga-

tion stand in stark contrast to U.S. complaints about Russia's refusal to participate or cooperate with a so-called international investigation into the downing of Malaysian Flight MH-17 over Ukraine two years ago.

One thing is clear. General Campbell's assurance after this atrocity that in continuing operations in and around the embattled city of Kunduz "As always, we will take all reasonable steps to protect civilians from harm," is utter bullshit.

As for his claim that his "thoughts and prayers are with those affected," I suspect they are really pleas to his god to protect him from being tried someday for mass murder."

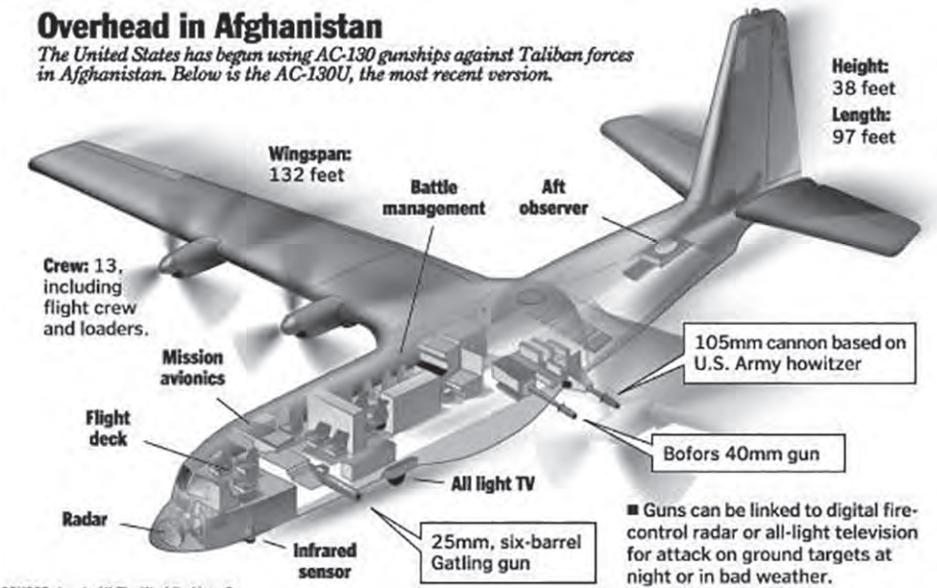
If the U.S. can send an AC-130 to provide "air-support" in the middle of an urban battle zone, and can use it to assault, for over an hour, a known hospital facility, nobody is safe from American military power.

This is a case that must not go away, that cannot be "paid off" by "condolence" money, and that should lead to some high-profile trials for war crimes.

The Kunduz murders must, as MSF is demanding, be investigated by an independent international body, not by the killers themselves in the U.S. military.

—OpEdNews.com, October 12, 2015

http://www.opednews.com/articles/Kunduz-hospital-attack-was-by-Dave-Lindorff-Afghanistan-Massacre_Doctors-Without-Borders_War-Crimes_War-On-Afghanistan-151012-962.html



What It Means to Be a Socialist

By CHRIS HEDGES

Chris Hedges gave this speech Sunday, September 19, 2015, at a Santa Ana, California, event sponsored by the Green Party of Orange County.

We live in a revolutionary moment. The disastrous economic and political experiment that attempted to organize human behavior around the dictates of the global marketplace has failed. The promised prosperity that was to have raised the living standards of workers through trickle-down economics has been exposed as a lie. A tiny global oligarchy has amassed obscene wealth, while the engine of unfettered corporate capitalism plunders resources, exploits cheap, unorganized labor and creates pliable, corrupt governments that abandon the common good to serve corporate profit. The relentless drive by the fossil fuel industry for profits is destroying the ecosystem, threatening the viability of the human species. And no mechanisms to institute genuine reform or halt the corporate assault are left within the structures of power, which have surrendered to corporate control. The citizen has become irrelevant. He or she can participate in heavily choreographed elections, but the demands of corporations and banks are paramount.

History has amply demonstrated that the seizure of power by a tiny cabal, whether a political party or a clique of oligarchs, leads to despotism. Governments that cater exclusively to a narrow interest group and redirect the machinery of state to furthering the interests of that group are no longer capable of responding rationally in times of crisis. Blindly serving their masters, they acquiesce to the looting of state treasuries to bail out corrupt financial houses and banks while ignoring chronic unemployment and underemployment, along with stagnant or declining wages, crippling debt peon-

age, a collapsing infrastructure, and the millions left destitute and often homeless by deceptive mortgages and foreclosures.

A bankrupt liberal class, holding up values it does nothing to defend, discredits itself as well as the purported liberal values of a civil democracy as it is swept aside, along with those values. In this moment, a political, economic or natural disaster—in short a crisis—will ignite unrest, lead to instability and see the state carry out draconian forms of repression to maintain “order.” This is what lies ahead.

We will, as Friedrich Engels wrote, make a transition to either socialism or barbarism. If we do not dismantle global capitalism we will descend into the Hobbesian chaos of failed states, mass migrations—which we are already witnessing—and endless war. Populations, especially in the global South, will endure misery and high mortality rates caused by collapsing ecosystems and infrastructures on a scale not seen since perhaps the black plague. There can be no accommodation with global capitalism. We will overthrow this system or be crushed by it. And at this moment of crisis we need to remind ourselves what being a socialist means and what it does not mean.

First and foremost, all socialists are unequivocal anti-militarists and anti-imperialists. They understand that there is no genuine social, political, economic or cultural reform as long as the militarists and their corporatist allies in the war industry continue to loot and pillage the state budget, leaving the poor to go hungry, workingmen and women in distress, the infrastructure to collapse and social services to be slashed in the name of austerity. The psychosis of permanent war, which infected the body politic after World War I with the internal and external

war on communism, and which today has mutated into the war on terror, is used by the state to strip us of civil liberties, redirect our resources to the war machine and criminalize democratic dissent. We have squandered trillions of dollars and resources in endless and futile wars, from Vietnam to the Middle East, at a time of ecological and fiscal crisis. The folly of endless war is one of the signs of a dying civilization. One F-22 Raptor fighter plane costs \$350 million. We have 187 of them. One Tomahawk cruise missile costs \$1.41 million. We fired 161 of them when we attacked Libya. This missile attack on Libya alone cost us a quarter-of-a-billion dollars. We spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion a year on war, far more than the official 54 percent of discretionary spending, or roughly \$600 billion. If we don't break the back of the war machine, profound change will be impossible.

We have been at war almost continuously since the first Gulf War in 1991, followed by Somalia in 1992, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, Serbia-Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, where we have now been fighting for 14 years, and Iraq in 2003. And we can toss in Yemen, Libya, Pakistan and Syria, along with Israel's proxy war against the Palestinian people.

The human cost has been horrendous. Over one million dead in Iraq. Millions more are displaced or are refugees. Iraq will never be reconstituted as a unified state. And it was our war industry that created the mess. We attacked a country that did not threaten us, and had no intention of threatening its neighbors, and destroyed one of the most modern infrastructures in the Middle East. We brought not only terror and death—including the Shiite death squads we armed and trained—

but power outages, food shortages and the collapse of basic services, from garbage collection to sewer and water treatment. We dismantled Iraq's institutions, disbanded its security forces, threw its health service into crisis and engineered massive poverty and unemployment. And out of the chaos rose insurgents, gangsters, kidnapping rings, jihadists and rogue paramilitary groups—including our hired mercenaries, like [the current army of] Iraq. Gary Leupp in an article in *Counterpunch* titled "How George W. Bush Destroyed the Temple of Baal" got it when he wrote:

"Bush destroyed the law and order which had permitted girls to walk to school, heads uncovered, in modern western dress. He destroyed the freedom of physicians and other professionals to go about their work and caused masses of them to exit their country. He destroyed neighborhoods whose residents were forced to flee for their lives. He destroyed the Christian community, which dropped from 1.5 million in 2001 to perhaps 200,000 a decade later. He destroyed the prevalent ideology of secularism and ushered in an era of bitterly contested sectarian rule. He destroyed the right to broadcast rock 'n roll music, or sell liquor and DVDs.

"He destroyed the stability of Anbar province by sowing the chaos that allowed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to establish—for the first time—an al-Qaeda branch in Iraq.

"He destroyed the stability of Syria when 'Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia' (now ISIL) retreated into that neighboring country during the 'surge' of 2007. By creating power vacuums and generating new chapters and spin-offs of al-Qaeda, he destroyed Yazidi communities and their freedom from genocide and slavery. By hatching the forerunner of ISIL, he destroyed the prospects for a peaceful 'Arab Spring' in Syria three years after his presidency ended.

"Through his actions he destroyed the border between Syria and Iraq. He destroyed the Tomb of Jonah in Mosul. He destroyed 3,300-year-old monuments, the glorious art of the Assyrians, in Nimrud. On August 23 while sitting in his home artist's studio in Crawford, Texas, he destroyed the 2,000-year-old Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra, Syria.

"The most complete structure in that gorgeous pearl of an ancient preserved city, a mix of Roman, Syrian and Egyptian artistic influences, is now a pile of rubble."

Foreign battlefields are laboratories for the architects of industrial slaughter. They perfect the tools of control and annihilation on the demonized and the destitute. But these tools eventually make their way back to the heart of empire. As the corporatists and the militarists disembowel the nation, rendering our manufacturing centers boarded-up wastelands and tossing our citizens into poverty and despair, the methods of subjugation familiar to those on the outer reaches migrate back to us—wholesale surveillance, indiscriminate use of lethal force in the streets of our cities against unarmed citizens, a stripping away of our civil liberties, a dysfunctional court system, drones, arbitrary arrest, detention and mass incarceration. The tyranny empire imposes on others, as Thucydides reminded us, it finally imposes on itself. Those who kill in our name abroad soon kill in our name at home. Democracy is snuffed out. As the German socialist Karl Liebknecht said during the First World War: "The main enemy is at home." We will destroy the engines of endless war and shut down the war profiteers or we will become the next victims; indeed many in our marginal communities already are its victims.

You cannot be a socialist and an imperialist. You cannot, as Bernie Sanders has done, support the Obama administration's wars in Afghanistan,

Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen and be a socialist. You cannot, as Sanders has done, vote for every military appropriations bill, including every bill and resolution that empowers and sanctions Israel to carry out its slow-motion genocide of the Palestinian people, and be a socialist. And you cannot laud, as Sanders has done, military contractors because they bring jobs to your state. Sanders may have the rhetoric of inequality down, but he is a full-fledged member of the Democratic Caucus, which kneels before the war industry and their lobbyists. And no genuine grass-roots movement will ever be born within the bowels of the Democratic Party establishment, which is currently attempting to shut down Sanders to make sure its anointed candidate is the nominee. No elected official dares to challenge any weapons system, no matter how costly or redundant. And Sanders, who votes with the Democrats 98 percent of the time, steers clear of confronting the master of war.

Sanders, of course, like all elected officials, profits from this Faustian pact. The Vermont Democratic Party leadership, in return for his deference, has not supported any candidate to run against Sanders since 1990. Sanders endorses Democratic candidates, no matter how much they push neoliberalism down our throats, including Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. And Sanders, carrying water for the Democrats, is the primary obstacle to the building of a third party in Vermont.

There is a reason no establishment politician, including Sanders, dares say a word against the war industry. If you do, you end up like Ralph Nader, tossed into the political wilderness. Nader was not afraid to speak this truth. And it is in the wilderness, I am afraid, that real socialists must for the moment reside. Socialists understand that if we do not dismantle the war industry, nothing, absolutely nothing, will change; indeed, things will only get worse.

War is a business. Imperial wars seize natural resources on behalf of corporations and ensure the profits of the arms industry. This is as true in Iraq as it was in our campaigns of genocide against Native Americans. And, as A. Philip Randolph said, it is only when it is impossible to profit from war that wars will be dramatically curtailed, if not stopped. No one sitting in the boardroom of General Dynamics is hoping peace breaks out in the Middle East. No one in the Pentagon, especially the generals who build their careers by fighting and managing wars, prays for a cessation of conflict.

War, wrapped in the cant of nationalism and the euphoria that comes with the giddy celebration of power and violence, is used by ruling elites to thwart and destroy the aspirations of workingmen and women and distract us from our disempowerment.

“Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. ...And that is war, in a nutshell,” the [five-time] socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs said during World War I. “The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles.”

Debs, who in 1912 received almost a million votes, was sentenced to ten years in prison for saying this. The judge who sentenced him denounced those “who would strike the sword from the hand of this nation while she is engaged in defending herself against a foreign and brutal power.”

“I have been accused of obstructing the war,” Debs said in court. “I admit it. I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone.”

Debs, who would spend 32 months in prison, until 1921, also delivered to many a socialist credo at his sentencing after being found guilty of violating the Espionage Act:

“Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I

was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a criminal element, I am of it. While there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”

The capitalist class and its doppelgängers in the military establishment have carried out what John Ralston Saul calls a *coup d'état* in slow motion. The elites use war, as they always have, as a safety valve for class conflict. War, as W.E.B. Du Bois said, creates an artificial community of interest between the oligarchs and the poor, diverting the poor from their natural interests. The redirecting of national frustrations and emotions into the struggle against a common enemy, the cant of patriotism, the endemic racism that is the fuel of all ideologies that sustain war, the false bonding that comes with the sense of comradeship, seduces those on the margins of society. They feel in wartime that they belong. They feel they have a place. They are offered the chance to be heroes. And off they march like sheep to the slaughter. By the time they find out, it is too late.

“Modern totalitarianism can integrate the masses so completely into the political structure, through terror and propaganda, that they become the architects of their own enslavement,” wrote Dwight Macdonald. “This does not make slavery less, but on the contrary more—a paradox there is no space to unravel here. Bureaucratic collectivism, not capitalism, is the most dangerous future enemy of socialism.”

“War,” as Randolph Bourne wrote, “is the health of the state.” It allows the state to accrue to itself power and resources that in peacetime a citizenry would never permit. And that is why the war state, like the one we live in, has to make certain that we are always afraid. Constant violence by the war machine, we are assured, will alone make us safe. Any attempt to rein in spending or expanding power will profit the enemy.

It was the militarists and the capitalists that at the end of World War II conspired to roll back the gains made by workingmen and women under the New Deal. They used the rhetoric of the Cold War to cement into place an economy geared towards total war, even in peacetime. This permitted the arms industry to continue to make weapons, with guaranteed profits from the state, and permitted the generals to continue to preside over their fiefdoms. The incestuous relations between the corporatists and the militarists see retired generals and officers offered lucrative jobs in the war industry.

The manufacturing of weapons systems and the waging of war is today the chief activity of the state. It is no longer one among other means of advancing the national interest, as Simone Weil pointed out, but has become the sole national interest.

These corporatists and militarists are the enemy of socialists. They bankrolled and promoted movements in the early 20th century that called for reforms within these structures of capitalism—that spoke in the language of the “politics of productivism,” that eschewed the language of class conflict and talked only about economic growth and a partnership with the capitalist class. The NAACP, for example, was formed to lure African-Americans away from the Communist Party, the only radical organization in the early 20th century that did not discriminate. The AFL-CIO was [later] fed CIA money to help crush and supplant radical unions abroad and at home. The AFL-CIO, like the NAACP, is today a victim of its own corruption and bureaucratic senility. Its bloated leadership pulls down huge salaries as its dwindling rank and file is stripped of benefits and protections. The capitalists no longer need what they once called “responsible” unionism—which meant pliable unionism. And once the capitalists and the militarists killed off the radical movements and unions they finished

off the dupes who had helped them do it. And that is why less than 12 percent of our country's workforce is unionized and why we have such vast income disparities and chronic unemployment and underemployment. Surplus labor, desperate for work and unwilling to challenge the bosses to retain a job, is the bulwark of capitalism.

The radicals, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or Wobblies, founded by Mother Jones and Big Bill Haywood in 1905, were destroyed by the state. Department of Justice agents in 1912 made simultaneous raids on 48 IWW meeting halls across the country and arrested 165 IWW union leaders. One hundred one went to trial, including Big Bill Haywood, who testified for three days. One of the IWW leaders told the court:

"You ask me why the I.W.W. is not patriotic to the United States. If you were a bum without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west for a job, and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if you slept in a lousy, sour bunkhouse, and ate food just as rotten as they could give you and get by with it; if deputy sheriffs shot your cooking cans full of holes and spilled your grub on the ground; if your wages were lowered on you when the bosses thought they had you down; if there was one law for Ford, Suhr, and Mooney and another for Harry Thaw: if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up, railroaded you to jail, and the good Christian people cheered and told them to go to it, how in hell do you expect a man to be patriotic?"

"This war is a businessman's war and we don't see why we should go out and get shot in order to save the lovely state of affairs that we now enjoy."

The Wobblies once led strikes involving hundreds-of-thousands of workers and preached an uncompro-

misg doctrine of class warfare. It went the way of the passenger pigeon. The Socialist Party by 1912 had 126,000 members, 1,200 officeholders in 340 municipalities, and 29 English and 22 foreign-language weeklies, along with three English and six foreign-language dailies. It included in its ranks tenant farmers, garment workers, railroad workers, coal miners, hotel and restaurant workers, dockworkers and lumberjacks. It too was liquidated by the state. Socialist leaders were jailed or deported. Socialist publications such as *The Masses* and *Appeal to Reason* were banned. The assault, aided later by McCarthyism, has left us without the vocabulary to make sense of our own reality, to describe the class war being waged against us by our corporate oligarchs. And it has left us without the radical movements that, as Howard Zinn made clear, opened up all the spaces in American democracy.

We will regain this militancy, this uncompromising commitment to socialism, or the system the political philosopher Sheldon Wolin calls "inverted totalitarianism" will establish the most efficient security and surveillance state in human history and a species of neofeudalism. We must stop pouring our energy into mainstream political campaigns. The game is rigged. We will rebuild our radical movements or become hostages to the capitalists and the war industry. Fear is the only language the power elite understands. This is a dark fact of human nature. It is why Richard Nixon was our last liberal president. Nixon was not a liberal [personally]. He was devoid of empathy and lacked a conscience. But he was frightened of movements. You do not make your enemy afraid by selling out. You make your enemy afraid by refusing to submit, by fighting for your vision and by organizing. It is not our job to take power. It is our job to build movements to keep power in check. Without these movements nothing is possible.

"You get freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it," Malcolm X said. "When you get that kind of attitude, they'll label you as a 'crazy Negro,' or they'll call you a 'crazy nigger'—they don't say Negro. Or they'll call you an extremist or a subversive, or seditious, or a red, or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough, and get enough people to be like you, you'll get your freedom. ... So don't you run around here trying to make friends with somebody who's depriving you of your rights. They're not your friends, no, they're your enemies. Treat them like that and fight them, and you'll get your freedom; and after you get your freedom, your enemy will respect you. And I say that with no hate. I don't have hate in me. I have no hate at all. I don't have any hate. I've got some sense. I'm not going to let anybody who hates me tell me to love him."

The New Deal—which as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a charter member of the oligarchic class, said—saved capitalism, was put in place because socialists were strong and a serious threat. The oligarchs understood that with the breakdown of capitalism—something I expect we will again witness in our lifetimes—there was a real possibility of a socialist revolution. They were terrified they would lose their wealth and power. Roosevelt, writing to a friend in 1930, said there was "no question in my mind that it is time for the country to become fairly radical for at least one generation. History shows that where this occurs occasionally, nations are saved from revolution."

In other words, Roosevelt went to his fellow oligarchs and said hand over some of your money or you will lose all your money in a revolution. And his fellow capitalists complied. And that is how the government created 15 million jobs, Social Security, unemployment benefits and public works projects. The capitalists did not do this because the suffering of the masses

moved them. They did this because they were scared. And they were sacred of radicals and socialists.

George Bernard Shaw got it right in his play "Major Barbara." The greatest crime is poverty. It is the crime every socialist is dedicated to eradicating. As Shaw wrote:

"All the other crimes are virtues beside it; all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities, spreads horrible pestilences, strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then. What do they matter? They are only the accidents and illnesses of life; there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill-fed, ill-clothed people. They poison us morally and physically; they kill the happiness of society; they force us to do away with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss. Only fools fear crime; we all fear poverty."

We must stop looking for our salvation in strong leaders. Strong people, as Ella Baker said, do not need strong leaders. Politicians, even good politicians, play the game of compromise and are too often seduced by the privileges of power. Sanders, from all I can tell, began his political life as a socialist in the 1960s when this was hardly a bold political statement, but quickly figured out he was not going to have a seat at the table if he remained one. He wants his seniority in the Senate. He wants his committee chairmanships. He wants his ability to retain his seat unchallenged. This was no doubt politically astute. But in this process he sold us out.

Jeremy Corbyn, the new head of the [British] Labor Party, offers another example. He spent three decades mar-

ginalized even within his own party because he held fast to the central tenets of socialism. And as the lie of neoliberalism, championed by the two ruling parties in Britain, became apparent, people knew whom they could trust. Corbyn never made an astute career move in his life. And that is why the establishment is so frightened of him. They know they cannot buy Corbyn off, any more than you could buy off Mother Jones or Big Bill Haywood. Integrity and courage are powerful weapons. We have to learn how to use them. We have to stand up for what we believe in. And we have to accept the risks and even the ridicule that comes with this stance. We will not prevail any other way.

As a socialist I am not concerned with what is expedient or what is popular. I am concerned with what is right. I am concerned with holding fast to the core ideals of socialism, if for no other reason than keeping this option alive for future generations. And these ideals are the only ones that make possible a better world.

If you will not call for an arms embargo along with the boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, you are not a socialist. If you will not demand we dismantle our military establishment, which is managing the government's wholesale surveillance of every citizen and storing all our personal information in perpetuity in government computer banks, and if you will not abolish the for-profit arms industry, you are not a socialist. If you will not call for the prosecution of those leaders, including George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who engage in aggressive acts of pre-emptive war, which under post-Nuremberg laws is a criminal act, you are not a socialist. If you will not stand with the oppressed across the globe you are not a socialist. Socialists do not pick and choose whom among the oppressed it is convenient to support. Socialists understand that you stand with all the

oppressed or none of the oppressed, that this is a global fight for life against global corporate tyranny. We will win only when we stand together, when we see the struggle of workingmen in Greece, Spain and Egypt as our own struggle.

If you will not call for full employment and unionized workplaces you are not a socialist. If you will not call for inexpensive mass transit, especially in impoverished communities, you are not a socialist. If you will not call for universal, single-payer healthcare and a banning of for-profit healthcare corporations you are not a socialist. If you will not raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour you are not a socialist. If you are not willing to provide a weekly income of \$600 to the unemployed, the disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly and those unable to work you are not a socialist. If you will not repeal anti-union laws, like the Taft-Hartley Act, and trade agreements from NAFTA to the TPP and CAFTA, you are not a socialist. If you will not guarantee all Americans a pension in old age you are not a socialist. If you will not support two years of paid maternity leave, as well as shorter workweeks with no loss in pay and benefits, you are not a socialist. If you will not repeal the Patriot Act and Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act as well as halt government spying on citizens, along with mass incarceration, you are not a socialist. If you will not put into place laws that prohibit all forms of male violence against women and criminalize the trafficking and pimping out of prostituted girls and women, while not criminalizing the exploited girls and women, you are not a socialist. If you do not support a woman's right to control her own body you are not a socialist. If you do not support full equality for our LGBTQ community you are not a socialist. If you will not declare global warming a national and global emergency and divert our energy and resources to sav-

ing the planet through public investment in renewable energy and an end to our reliance on fossil fuels you are not a socialist. If you will not nationalize public utilities, including the railroads, energy companies and banks, you are not a socialist. If you will not support government funding for the arts and public broadcasting to create places where creativity, self-expression and voices of dissent can be heard and seen you are not a socialist. If you will not terminate our nuclear weapons programs and build a nuclear-free world you are not a socialist. If you will not demilitarize our police, meaning that police no longer carry weapons when they patrol our streets but rely on specialized armed units that have to be authorized case-by-case to use lethal force, you are not a socialist. If you will not support government training and rehabilitation programs for the poor and those in our prisons, along with the abolition of the death penalty, you are not a socialist. If you will not grant full citizenship to undocumented workers you are not a socialist. If you do not declare a moratorium on foreclosures and bank repossessions you are not a socialist. If you will not provide free education from day care to university, and forgive all student debt, you are not a socialist. And if you will not provide free, state-run mental healthcare, especially for those now caged in our prisons, you are not a socialist. If you will not dismantle our empire and bring our soldiers and Marines home you are not a socialist.

Socialists do not sacrifice the weak and the vulnerable, especially children, on the altars of profit. And the measure of a successful society for a socialist is not the GDP or the highs of the stock market but the right of everyone, especially children, never go to bed hungry, to live in safety and security, to be nurtured and educated, and to grow up to fulfill his or her potential. Work is not only about a wage, it is about dignity and a sense of self-worth.

I am not naive about the forces arrayed against us. I understand the difficulty of our struggle. But we will never succeed if we attempt to accommodate the current structures of power. Our strength lies in our steadfastness and our integrity. It lies in our ability to hold fast to our ideals, as well as our willingness to sacrifice for those ideals. We must refuse to cooperate. We must march to the beat of a different drum. We must rebel. And we must grasp that rebellion is not carried out finally for what it achieves, but for whom it allows us to become. Rebellion sustains in an age of darkness hope and the capacity for love. Rebellion must become our vocation.

“You do not become a ‘dissident’ just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career,” Vaclav Havel said when he battled the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. “You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society. ...The dissident does not operate in the realm of genuine power at all. He is not seeking power. He has no desire for office and does not gather votes. He does not attempt to charm the public. He offers nothing and promises nothing. He can offer, if anything, only his own skin—and he offers it solely because he has no other way of affirming the truth he stands for. His actions simply articulate his dignity as a citizen, regardless of the cost.”

These neoliberal forces are rapidly destroying the earth. Polar ice caps and glaciers are melting. Temperatures and sea levels are rising. Species are going extinct. Floods, monster hurricanes, mega-droughts and wildfires have begun to eat away at the planet. The great mass migrations predicted by climate scientists have begun. And

even if we stopped all carbon emissions today we would still endure the effects of catastrophic climate change. Out of the disintegrating order comes the nihilistic violence that always characterizes societies that fall apart—mass shootings at home and religious persecution, beheadings and executions by individuals that neoliberalism and globalism have demonized, attacked and discarded as human refuse.

I cannot promise you we will win. I cannot promise you we will even survive as a species. But I can promise you that an open and sustained defiance of global capitalism and the merchants of death, along with the building of a socialist movement, is our only hope. I am a parent, as are many of you. We have betrayed our children. We have squandered their future. And if we rise up, even if we fail, future generations, and especially those who are most precious to us, will be able to say we tried, that we stood up and fought for life. The call to resistance, which will require civil disobedience and jail time, is finally a call to the moral life. Resistance is not about what we achieve, but about what it allows us to become. In the end, I do not fight fascists because I will win. I fight fascists because they are fascists.

—*Truthdig*, September 20, 2015

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/what_it_means_to_be_a_socialist_20150920

**If we do not dismantle
global capitalism we will
descend into the
Hobbesian chaos of
failed states, mass
migrations—which we
are already witnessing—
and endless war.**

The Trumpocalypse

Democrats rule Blacks by fear

BY GLEN FORD

Donald Trump, the real estate developer who plays a billionaire on television and in real life, has added new levels of sleaze and maniacal white Know-Nothingism to the U.S. electoral farce—which makes him a very useful man, indeed. Republicans can blame Trump for pulling the bar of their party’s racial discourse down to sewer levels. “Some party leaders worry that the favorable response Mr. Trump has received from the Republican electorate is luring other candidates to adopt or echo his remarks,” wrote Jonathan Martin, in Monday’s *New York Times*. “It is a pattern, they say, that could tarnish the party’s image among minority voters.”

To the unaided eye and ear, this election cycle’s GOP lineup is not demonstrably more, or less, racist than the 2012 crowd, but this time they can blame it on The Donald. The devil (Trump) made them do it (behave like the white supremacists they are, including Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Ben Carson).

Trump is even more useful to liberals and Democrats of all kinds. He is the Trumpocalypse, the guy who makes the other evils appear lesser. In this week’s *New Yorker*, Evan Osnos’ article “Trump and the White Nationalists” informs us: “Ever since the Tea Party’s peak, in 2010, and its fade, citizens on the American far right—Patriot militias, border vigilantes, white supremacists—have searched for a standard-bearer, and now they’ve found him.”

That may or may not be true, but the Democrats have surely found their “trump” card in The Donald, whose singular rhetorical non-flourishes make them look MLK-like in comparison. Electoral politics in the United States is comparison-shopping at its

most vulgar and pointless, with Wall Street vetting the choices offered by both parties.

One of them must be The White Man’s Party. This function had been performed by the Democratic Party and its predecessors since the days of Thomas Jefferson. When the Republican Party emerged in the decade before the Civil War, the Democrats made sure to label it the “Black” party, for the sake of racial-political continuity, even though Abraham Lincoln and many, if not most, of his colleagues would have preferred that free Blacks be deported from the country, rather than elevated to full citizenship. The Democrats retained their status as the White Man’s Party in the South through the Franklin Roosevelt New Deal years until 1948, when South Carolina’s Strom Thurmond briefly bolted the party to protest the dilution of their brand by northern members pushing a civil rights plank in the platform. The Dixiecrats rebelled again in 1964, opting for Goldwater Republicanism. Richard Nixon sealed the deal in the 1968 election with his “southern strategy,” effectively transferring the White Man’s Party brand to the Republicans.

There is no Black people’s party. There have been some brief efforts at independent Black electoral politics, but they have all become imprisoned in the bifurcated muck of the Democratic Party vs. The White Man’s (Republican) Party, with Wall Street reigning over both.

If Black people in significant numbers were so foolish as to invade the Republican Party—as they did the Democratic Party in the South, following the Voting Rights Act—the GOP would repel them like foreign organ-

isms, or create a new organization (Tea, anyone?) to reclaim the coveted White Man’s Party brand. The White Man’s Party will be a permanent contender for national electoral dominion as long as white supremacy remains the dominant ideology among white people in the U.S. (White majorities have not voted for the Not-Entirely-White Man’s Party [Democrats] in national elections since the burning baton was handed to the GOP, in 1968.)

The racial bifurcation of what is actually a Rich Man’s electoral duopoly makes the Democratic Party a trap for Black people. The subtext of the Black electoral conversation, since the founding of the Republic, has always been about protection: which party is more willing to protect Black people from the worst excesses of the most aggressive white supremacists? Certainly for the last half-century, the Democrats have won that argument largely by default, since race hate is the Republicans’ barely-muffled sales pitch.

It is fear of Republicans that holds Black people captive to the Democratic Party, not high ideals or a shared worldview or a Democratic track record of service to the group that makes up about a quarter of its members—and a lot more in the South. In the end, it all boils down to fear of the “crackers” that gather under the Republican brand.

Of course, a small Black elite actually derives some benefits from ties to the Democratic Party, in the form of patronage jobs, contracts, discretionary grants, *entrée* to corporate boardrooms, *etc.* They are the most fearful of all—afraid of losing their precarious privileges, and terrified of the instability that might result if the masses of

poor Black people, especially the youth, lost their fear. The Black elite—and those that aspire for membership—cling to the Democratic Party like a lifeboat, and curse those who might abandon the vessel. They want all of us trapped in the hold.

But, that ship—like the ones that brought us to these shores—is not, and cannot possibly be, bound for freedom. Black Democrats know this full well, but they have signed on with Captain Clinton, or whomever the Party assigns, in dread of Donald Trump and the rest of the Republican pirates. The same thing will happen, with different captains, the next election cycle. Independent Black politics is forever postponed.

Maintenance of the Democratic Party amounts to preservation of the racially bifurcated Wall Street duopoly in perpetuity—and to perpetual fear. All our efforts must be dedicated to building a mass Black movement that is not just independent of the two corporate parties, but opposed to them. In the process, we will forge allies that are similarly opposed to the rule of Wall Street, here and abroad, and are respectful of our right to self-determination.

Take time to go see *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*. It will remind you of a time when some of us conquered our fear.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 9, 2015

http://blackagendareport.com/trumpocalypse_democrats_rule_by_fear

Electoral politics in the United States is comparison-shopping at its most vulgar and pointless, with Wall Street vetting the choices offered by both parties.

If This is a War, Then Black Lives Matter is Losing

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

“*Plus ça change...*” say the French; or “The more things change, of course, the more they stay the same.”

That thought, with all its despair and wisdom, resonates with particular power when we look at the Black Freedom Struggle, which, despite its ebbs and flows, has a sameness that seems to suspend it in its own time, akin to a Biblical narrative that exists in its own realm, strangely separate from our day-to-day immediacy, yet existing in consciousness.

But this is not a metaphysical discussion.

No.

It is existential. It is blood and bullets. It is the hard bricks and cold steel of prison. And it's not just the sameness of things for extended spaces of time, nor its sinister intensification of repression, but the incessant nature of such repression as a bipartisan expression of American hegemony over and antipathy towards, the Black Freedom Struggle that gives it its malevolent character.

For generations, Black leaders and organizations have been in search for some solution to our oppressions, some appealing to the international community, as expressed in William Patterson's *We Charge Genocide* of 1951 (a charge supported by the late Malcolm X.) Some 15 years later the Black Panther Party would produce a list of grievances, called the Ten-Point Program, decrying the police state's violence against Blacks, slumlords exploiting Black home renters, and the bane of Black imprisonment, among other concerns. Seven years thereafter, the Black National Political Convention convened in Gary, Indiana, where it denounced the two capitalist parties, Democrats and Republicans, the continuous police violence against Blacks, and called for the formation of a National Black

Independent Political Party to give voice to the needs of Black people

The foundational documents of these Black activists and organizations, if read today, would seem to have been written today—instead of 50 or 60 years ago.

That tells us that our conditions—our real material conditions—have not changed substantially for over half-a-century—over 60 years.

Indeed, in many ways, those conditions have worsened, such as the phenomenon of mass incarceration.

Why? Because the material conditions of millions of Black folk have changed due to de-industrialization, the resultant loss of the tax base, the corporatization of the public school systems, and the explosive expansion of the imprisonment industry—the creation of what I call the White Rural Jobs Program—prisons.

From the earliest days of Black arrival in what would one day become the United States; Africans were seen as resources to be exploited for white profit. And despite relentless rhetoric in the mouths of the Founders of the State, there existed a nightmarish reality of un-freedom and state-supported terror waged against Black life, proving the white words of freedom were little but lies.

For under the sweet nothings of liberty lived a world of repression, targeting, isolating and destroying the Black Freedom Movement and its leaders. From Dr. Martin Luther King to Malcolm X; from the Black Panther Party to Black actors and artists, agents of state power sought to weaken and neutralize Black freedom and Black Nationalist movements, using every means—fair and foul.

This wasn't episodic meanness—random attacks on Blacks because of official distaste of Blacks.

No.

There's method in this madness—the same madness, which animated lynchings during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Such repression served to instill fear and apprehension in the minds of millions. State terrorism turned people away from the Nationalist and self-determination road towards more acceptable and less critical roads of political acquiescence with dominant capitalist parties.

The State thus canalized Black thought into the sterile roads of the personal instead of the collective, into the parties of personality instead of the programmatic. It also de-radicalized Black response to state terrorism.

That, in a nutshell, is the essence of the governments' Cointelpro (Counterintelligence Program) initiative, where the U.S. government functioned as both race police—and political police.

These actions of alienation of a population continued, ironically enough, under the play of Black votes (or should we say, “the ploy of Black votes?”) who voted overwhelmingly for Bill Clinton, who ran on “hope” and “change.” “Change” it might've been; but change doesn't necessarily mean better.

Elected by a plurality of narrow percentages, Clinton, in the name of bipartisanship would prove the architect of a prison expansion boom that would be the beginnings of the mass incarceration that we see today.

This neoliberalism in politics required an operative of considerable skill, one in which Blacks, the most loyal and consistent voting bloc within the Democratic coalition, voted for a candidate who would promote and vote for a series of positions against Black interests, while simultaneously voting for white anxieties, fears and longings for white supremacy.

Clinton demonstrated that expertise.

As the late historian Howard Zinn (1922—2010) has written in his book *The Twentieth Century*:

“...despite his lofty rhetoric, Clinton showed, in his eight years in office, that he, like other politicians, was more interested in electoral victory than in social change.

“To get more votes, he decided he must move the party closer to the center. This meant doing just enough for Blacks, women, and working people to keep their support, while trying to win over white conservative voters with a program of toughness on crime, stern measures on welfare, and a strong military.” (Zinn, 428)

The neoliberal Clinton regime ushered in a program of repression that included the scuttling of *habeas corpus* via the anti-terrorism and effective death penalty act; the closing of the courthouse doors to prisoners via the Prison Litigation Reform Act; and the notorious 1996 Crime Bill, which spent billions on new prisons, and added some 60 new death penalties to the books.

The emblems of Clintonism that emerged after two terms in power were the empty factories and the overcrowded prisons—overcrowded with Black men and increasingly, women.

We referenced earlier Patterson's *We Charge Genocide*; note that the charges in the book were written as a petition, and filed in the U.N. charging the U.S. with genocide against Negroes. The UN neither acted on, nor decided the petition. Rather, the media focused on Paul Robeson, and using charges he was a communist, demonized the petition, as he was one of its authors. For, in the public mind, to be communist was akin to being crazy.

Blacks, absent an independent politically representative entity, were—and are—voiceless in spaces like the UN.

So, after many, many years, protest again rages against the repression of the state, a fuse lit by the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. These protests have spread across the country like kudzu in summer.

And now you see the corporate media trying to conspire to denounce Black Lives Matter as some kind of hate group engaged in an alleged “war on cops!”

But, here again, there's some method to their madness. The point that the corporate media serves the capitalist state couldn't be clearer in this instance. For the BLM throws words at cops who've beaten, shot and killed almost countless Blacks, Latinos—and even poor whites!

Guess how many people cops have killed in 2015?

Over 800. Over 800!

If this be war, the BLM is losing.

Over 150 years ago one of our most revered ancestors tried to convince his fellow abolitionists to continue to struggle. You see, the Civil War had ended, and slavery was legally dead.

Frederick Douglass warned them; “...You and I, and all of us, had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth.”

He was right then. He is right now.

We must be mindful of the old snakes in new skin amongst us.

The struggle continues!

Mumia Abu-Jamal is the author of Writing on the Wall.

Reference: The Twentieth Century, Howard Zinn, New York: MJF Bks, 1980-2003

—Counter Punch, October 16, 2015

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/16/if-this-is-a-war-then-black-lives-matter-is-losing/>

America's Secret Army

Deployed in an astounding 135 countries

BY NICK TURSE

You can find them in dusty, sun-baked badlands, moist tropical forests, and the salty spray of third-world littorals. Standing in judgment, buffeted by the rotor wash of a helicopter or sweltering beneath the relentless desert sun, they instruct, yell, and cajole as skinnier men playact under their watchful eyes. In many places, more than their particular brand of camouflage, better boots, and designer gear sets them apart. Their days are scented by stale sweat and gunpowder; their nights are spent in rustic locales or third-world bars.

These men—and they are mostly men—belong to an exclusive military fraternity that traces its heritage back to the birth of the nation. Typically, they've spent the better part of a decade as more conventional soldiers, sailors, marines, or airmen before making the cut. They've probably been deployed overseas four to ten times. The officers are generally approaching their mid-thirties; the enlisted men, their late twenties. They've had more schooling than most in the military. They're likely to be married with a couple of kids. And day after day, they carry out shadowy missions over much of the planet: sometimes covert raids, more often hush-hush training exercises from Chad to Uganda, Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, Albania to Romania, Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, Belize to Uruguay. They belong to the Special Operations forces (SOF), America's most elite troops—Army Green Berets and Navy SEALs, among others—and odds are, if you throw a dart at a world map or stop a spinning globe with your index finger and don't hit water, they've been there sometime in 2015.

The wide world of special ops

This year, U.S. Special Operations forces have already deployed to 135

nations, according to Ken McGraw, a spokesman for Special Operations Command (SOCOM). That's roughly 70 percent of the countries on the planet. Every day, in fact, America's most elite troops are carrying out missions in 80 to 90 nations, practicing night raids or sometimes conducting them for real, engaging in sniper training or sometimes actually gunning down enemies from afar. As part of a global engagement strategy of endless hush-hush operations conducted on every continent but Antarctica, they have now eclipsed the number and range of special ops missions undertaken at the height of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the waning days of the Bush administration, Special Operations forces (SOF) were reportedly deployed in only about 60 nations around the world. By 2010, according to the *Washington Post*, that number had swelled to 75. Three years later, it had jumped to 134 nations, "slipping" to 133 last year, before reaching a new record of 135 this summer. This 80 percent increase over the last five years is indicative of SOCOM's exponential expansion which first shifted into high gear following the 9/11 attacks.

Special Operations Command's funding, for example, has more than tripled from about \$3 billion in 2001 to nearly \$10 billion in 2014 "constant dollars," according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO). And this doesn't include funding from the various service branches, which SOCOM estimates at around another \$8 billion annually, or other undisclosed sums that the GAO was unable to track. The average number of Special Operations forces deployed overseas has nearly tripled during these same years, while SOCOM more than doubled its per-

sonnel from about 33,000 in 2001 to nearly 70,000 now.

Each day, according to SOCOM commander General Joseph Votel, approximately 11,000 special operators are deployed or stationed outside the United States with many more on standby, ready to respond in the event of an overseas crisis. "I think a lot of our resources are focused in Iraq and in the Middle East, in Syria for right now. That's really where our head has been," Votel told the Aspen Security Forum in July. Still, he insisted his troops were not "doing anything on the ground in Syria"—even if they had carried out a night raid there a couple of months before and it was later revealed that they are involved in a covert campaign of drone strikes in that country.

"I think we are increasing our focus on Eastern Europe at this time," he added. "At the same time we continue to provide some level of support on South America for Colombia and the other interests that we have down there. And then of course we're engaged out in the Pacific with a lot of our partners, reassuring them and working those relationships and maintaining our presence out there."

In reality, the average percentage of Special Operations forces deployed to the Greater Middle East has decreased in recent years. Back in 2006, 85 percent of special operators were deployed in support of Central Command or CENTCOM, the geographic combatant command (GCC) that oversees operations in the region. By last year, that number had dropped to 69 percent, according to GAO figures. Over that same span, Northern Command—devoted to homeland defense—held steady at one percent, European

Command (EUCOM) doubled its percentage, from three percent to six percent, Pacific Command (PACOM) increased from seven percent to ten percent, and Southern Command, which oversees Central and South America as well as the Caribbean, inched up from three percent to four percent. The largest increase, however, was in a region conspicuously absent from Votel's rundown of special ops deployments. In 2006, just one percent of the special operators deployed abroad were sent to Africa Command's area of operations. Last year, it was ten percent.

Globetrotting is SOCOM's stock in trade and, not coincidentally, it's divided into a collection of planet-girding "sub-unified commands:" the self-explanatory SOCAFRICA; SOCEUR, the European contingent; SOCCENT, the sub-unified command of CENTCOM; SOCKOR, which is devoted strictly to Korea; SOCPAC, which covers the rest of the Asia-Pacific region; SOCSOUTH, which conducts missions in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean; SOCNORTH, which is devoted to "homeland defense;" and the ever-itinerant Joint Special Operations Command or JSOC, a clandestine sub-command (formerly headed by Votel) made up of personnel from each service branch, including SEALs, Air Force special tactics airmen, and the Army's Delta Force that specializes in tracking and killing suspected terrorists.

The elite of the elite in the special ops community, JSOC takes on covert, clandestine, and low-visibility operations in the hottest of hot spots. Some covert ops that have come to light in recent years include a host of Delta Force missions: among them, an operation in May in which members of the elite force killed an Islamic State commander known as Abu Sayyaf during a night raid in Syria; the 2014 release of long-time Taliban prisoner Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl; the capture of Ahmed Abu Khattala, a suspect in 2012

terror attacks in Benghazi, Libya; and the 2013 abduction of Anas al-Libi, an al-Qaeda militant, off a street in that same country. Similarly, Navy SEALs have, among other operations, carried out successful hostage rescue missions in Afghanistan and Somalia in 2012; a disastrous one in Yemen in 2014; a 2013 kidnap raid in Somalia that went awry; and—that same year—a failed evacuation mission in South Sudan in which three SEALs were wounded when their aircraft was hit by small arms fire.

SOCOM's SOF alphabet soup

Most deployments have, however, been training missions designed to tutor proxies and forge stronger ties with allies. "Special Operations forces provide individual-level training, unit-level training, and formal classroom training," explains SOCOM's Ken McGraw. "Individual training can be in subjects like basic rifle marksmanship, land navigation, airborne operations, and first aid. They provide unit-level training in subjects like small unit tactics, counterterrorism operations and maritime operations. SOF can also provide formal classroom training in subjects like the military decision-making process or staff planning."

From 2012 to 2014, for instance, Special Operations forces carried out 500 Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions in as many as 67 countries each year. JCETs are officially devoted to training U.S. forces, but they nonetheless serve as a key facet of SOCOM's global engagement strategy. The missions "foster key military partnerships with foreign militaries, enhance partner-nations' capability to provide for their own defense, and build interoperability between U.S. SOF and partner-nation forces," according to SOCOM's McGraw.

And JCETs are just a fraction of the story. SOCOM carries out many other multinational overseas training operations. According to data from the

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), for example, Special Operations forces conducted 75 training exercises in 30 countries in 2014. The numbers were projected to jump to 98 exercises in 34 countries by the end of this year.

"SOCOM places a premium on international partnerships and building their capacity. Today, SOCOM has persistent partnerships with about 60 countries through our Special Operations Forces Liaison Elements and Joint Planning and Advisory Teams," said SOCOM's Votel at a conference earlier this year, drawing attention to two of the many types of shadowy Special Ops entities that operate overseas. These SOFLEs and JPATs belong to a mind-bending alphabet soup of special ops entities operating around the globe, a jumble of opaque acronyms and stilted abbreviations masking a secret world of clandestine efforts often conducted in the shadows in impoverished lands ruled by problematic regimes. The proliferation of this bewildering SOCOM shorthand—SOJTFs and CJSOTFs, SOCCEs and SOLEs—mirrors the relentless expansion of the command, with its signature brand of military speak or *milspeak* proving as indecipherable to most Americans as its missions are secret from them.

Around the world, you can find Special Operations Joint Task Forces (SOJTFs), Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTFs), and Joint Special Operations Task Forces (JSOTFs), Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs), as well as Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCEs) and Special Operations Liaison Elements (SOLEs). And that list doesn't even include Special Operations Command Forward (SOC FWD) elements—small teams which, according to the military, "shape and coordinate special operations forces security cooperation and engagement in support of theater special operations command, geographic

combatant command, and country team goals and objectives.”

Special Operations Command will not divulge the locations or even a simple count of its SOC FWDs for “security reasons.” When asked how releasing only the number could imperil security, SOCOM’s Ken McGraw was typically opaque. “The information is classified,” he responded. “I am not the classification authority for that information so I do not know the specifics of why the information is classified.” Open source data suggests, however, that they are clustered in favored black ops stomping grounds, including SOC FWD Pakistan, SOC FWD Yemen, and SOC FWD Lebanon, as well as SOC FWD East Africa, SOC FWD Central Africa, and SOC FWD West Africa.

What’s clear is that SOCOM prefers to operate in the shadows while its personnel and missions expand globally to little notice or attention. “The key thing that SOCOM brings to the table is that we are—we think of ourselves—as a global force. We support the geographic combatant commanders, but we are not bound by the artificial boundaries that normally define the regional areas in which they operate. So what we try to do is we try to operate across those boundaries,” SOCOM’s Votel told the Aspen Security Forum.

In one particular blurring of boundaries, Special Operations liaison officers (SOLOs) are embedded in at least 14 key U.S. embassies to assist in advising the special forces of various allied nations. Already operating in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Poland, Peru, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, the SOLO program is poised, according to Votel, to expand to 40 countries by 2019. The command, and especially JSOC, has also forged close ties with the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Security

Agency, among other outfits, through the use of liaison officers and Special Operations Support Teams (SOSTs).

“In today’s environment, our effectiveness is directly tied to our ability to operate with domestic and international partners. We, as a joint force, must continue to institutionalize interoperability, integration, and interdependence between conventional forces and special operations forces through doctrine, training, and operational deployments,” Votel told the Senate Armed Services Committee this spring. “From working with indigenous forces and local governments to improve local security, to high-risk counterterrorism operations—SOF are in vital roles performing essential tasks.”

SOCOM will not name the 135 countries in which America’s most elite forces were deployed this year, let alone disclose the nature of those operations. Most were, undoubtedly, training efforts. Documents obtained from the Pentagon *via* the Freedom of Information Act outlining Joint Combined Exchange Training in 2013 offer an indication of what Special Operations forces do on a daily basis and also what skills are deemed necessary for their real-world missions: combat marksmanship, patrolling, weapons training, small unit tactics, special operations in urban terrain, close quarters combat, advanced marksmanship, sniper employment, long-range shooting, deliberate attack, and heavy weapons employment, in addition to combat casualty care, human rights awareness, land navigation, and mission planning, among others.

From Joint Special Operations Task Force-Juniper Shield, which operates in Africa’s Trans-Sahara region, and Special Operations Command and Control Element-Horn of Africa, to Army Special Operations Forces Liaison Element-Korea and Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian

Peninsula, the global growth of SOF missions has been breathtaking. SEALs or Green Berets, Delta Force operators or Air Commandos, they are constantly taking on what Votel likes to call the “nation’s most complex, demanding, and high-risk challenges.”

These forces carry out operations almost entirely unknown to the American taxpayers who fund them, operations conducted far from the scrutiny of the media or meaningful outside oversight of any kind. Everyday, in around 80 or more countries that Special Operations Command will not name, they undertake missions the command refuses to talk about. They exist in a secret world of obtuse acronyms and shadowy efforts, of mystery missions kept secret from the American public, not to mention most of the citizens of the 135 nations where they’ve been deployed this year.

This summer, when Votel commented that more special ops troops are deployed to more locations and are conducting more operations than at the height of the Afghan and Iraq wars, he drew attention to two conflicts in which those forces played major roles that have not turned out well for the United States. Consider that symbolic of what the bulking up of his command has meant in these years.

“Ultimately, the best indicator of our success will be the success of the [geographic combatant commands],” says the special ops chief, but with U.S. setbacks in Africa Command’s area of operations from Mali and Nigeria to Burkina Faso and Cameroon; in Central Command’s bailiwick from Iraq and Afghanistan to Yemen and Syria; in the PACOM region *vis-à-vis* China; and perhaps even in the EUCOM area of operations due to Russia, it’s far from clear what successes can be attributed to the ever-expanding secret operations of America’s secret military. The special ops commander seems resigned to the very real limitations of what

his secretive but much-ballyhooed, highly-trained, well-funded, heavily-armed operators can do.

“We can buy space, we can buy time,” says Votel, stressing that SOCOM can “play a very, very key role” in countering “violent extremism,” but only up to a point—and that point seems to fall strikingly short of anything resembling victory or even significant foreign policy success. “Ultimately, you know, problems like we see in Iraq and Syria,” he says, “aren’t going to be resolved by us.”

—AlterNet, September 28, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/world/americas-secret-army-deployed-astounding-135-countries?akid=13528.229473.8J6fi&rd=1&src=newsletter1043186&t=8>

Special Operations Command’s funding, for example, has more than tripled from about \$3 billion in 2001 to nearly \$10 billion in 2014 “constant dollars,” ... The average number of Special Operations forces deployed overseas has nearly tripled during these same years, while SOCOM more than doubled its personnel from about 33,000 in 2001 to nearly 70,000 now.

Trained to Oppress

Police “training” is the problem: they are trained to oppress Blacks

BY GLEN FORD

There is no military gear on display in the video of a New York City cop’s take-down of James Blake as the Black former tennis pro leaned against a pole in front of a Manhattan Grand Hyatt hotel—just a white guy in a t-shirt suddenly body-slaming a totally inoffensive person into the sidewalk. But, in fact, the assault on Blake by officer James Frascatore, part of a squad of six plainclothes cops prowling the hotel lobby on East 42nd Street, is a prime example of the militarization of policing in the United States. Police behavior—the routine tactics they employ “in the line of duty”—is the best indicator of the actual police mission in the community—better, even, than the inanimate equipment they drive around in or carry.

Although Blake was not seriously injured, his case shares an essential commonality with that of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old shot dead by a white Cleveland cop while playing with a toy gun in a neighborhood park, last November. No tanks or machine guns were involved in that case, either—just a cop with a pistol who shot a Black child from only a few feet away within two seconds of pulling up in an ordinary squad car.

The behavior of the victims is incidental to the actual mission of the police. Blake was on the ground with the cop’s knee in his back before he seemed to realize he was under attack. Afterwards, the one-time Harvard student shuddered at the thought of what would have happened if he had put his hands up in a “normal reaction...to defend myself.” The Cleveland cop gave Tamir Rice no time at all to put away childish toys, before neutralizing the target.

For decades, the essential U.S. police mission has been military in nature—certainly in the Black community, but

applicable in calibrated form generally in the country. Routine police behavior closely tracks the U.S. armed forces field manual tactical operations guidance on “strike campaigns” to “find, fix, destroy, and capture” the enemy. Speed and decisiveness of action are emphasized, for rapid engagement.

The routine police practice of suddenly slamming people to the ground on the slightest pretext—or for no reason at all except to establish immediate control of the person or area—and then pinning them in place with knees or feet to the neck and back, or with the full weight of multiple cops (often yelling “Stop resisting! Stop resisting!” whether there is resistance or not) is a relatively recent development. U.S. cops have always been brutal, but in their own ways. Today’s police bum-rush—which can be observed on “Cops,” the TV show, any day of the week—is clearly a national phenomenon, a standardized tactic.

Cops all over the country engage in similar tactics in street encounters, rapidly closing in on “subjects” (like young, innocent Tamir) and shooting them, afterwards claiming the officer’s life was in danger because of physical proximity to the unarmed victim. The tactic—moving rapidly to close with the targeted individual—justifies the fatal outcome, whether the victim was engaged in criminal activity or not. If Blake had reacted like a “normal” person in the instant that the cop attacked, the 34 year-old athlete would likely be dead. These fatal scenarios recur with numbing regularity because the cops are trained in standardized tactics of armed occupation. Black people are killed under roughly the same circumstances in all parts of the nation because cops everywhere are getting the same training.

It is not lack of training that breeds killer cops, but the training, itself.

Under the militarized policing regime, the exercise of individual police “command” authority over civilians has been weaponized to an unprecedented degree. To be sure, cops have always extrajudicially executed Black people—although the national failure to gather such data from local police departments makes assessment of the relative frequency of past and present killings nearly impossible to determine. However, with the advent of federal funding and direction of local police, dating from the beginnings of the national Black mass incarceration regime in the late Sixties, the procedures and legal theory behind invocation of police authority have been generalized and nationalized, as well. A cop’s verbal exclamation, when characterized as a “lawful order” or “command,” becomes a license to kill. Once the order has been issued—no matter how outlandish, or even impossible to comply with—failure to obey is a crime and the basis for rapid escalation of the conflict. Individuals or groups can easily be maneuvered into non-compliance with police orders, followed quickly by death. Every cop knows this,

thanks to decades of standardized police training as armed occupiers.

U.S. police are well trained, in the same way that U.S. Special Forces are well trained. The problem with both, is their mission. Green Berets are professional assassins and terrorists. U.S. police specialize in containing, controlling, terrorizing and incarcerating Black people, killing many hundreds every year in the process. Since 1968,

For decades, the essential U.S. police mission has been military in nature

with the creation of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the federal government has spent billions training and equipping local police. Homeland Security and the Pentagon have left their indelible mark on U.S. policing. Last summer, two months before a Ferguson cop killed Michael Brown, 32 members of the Congressional Black Caucus voted against a measure that would have halted the transfer of

Pentagon weapons (and the accompanying training) to local police departments. Israel has also played a major role in training U.S. cops. It is nonsense to ask for more “training” for police, unless their mission of armed occupation of Black communities is cancelled, first.

The next step would be to ask these Black communities if they want the police there at all, or would prefer to organize their own security, consistent with the principle of self-determination. There is no U.S. police department or federal agency that is qualified to assist in training cops to serve the Black community, because that has never been done in the United States.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 16, 2015

http://blackagendareport.com/police_trained_to_oppres_blacks



Killed and Killer Cops

BY GLEN FORD

Harris County, Texas, Sheriff Ron Hickman claims that one of his deputies, Darren Goforth, was shot to death “because he wore a uniform.” Goforth was gunned down while filling up his tank at a Houston gas station. Shannon Miles, the 30 year-old Black man charged in the killing, has a history of mental illness. Of course, a Black person doesn’t have to be crazy to want to harm a cop. But, cop-killing in the United States is actually quite rare, when compared to the huge number of civilian lives snuffed out by folks that wear “the uniform.” If there is some kind of war with the cops, as Sheriff Hickman deceptively infers, then it’s a very one-sided conflict.

We will never know the full historical extent of police mayhem and murder, since U.S. authorities have never compelled local police departments to keep records of who they kill, and why. Withholding information is part of police impunity from punishment—or even criticism—in this country. But, the cops are keen to keep track of their own casualties “in the line of duty”—which, it turns out, are at historically low levels. An FBI study of police fatalities shows that an average of 64 police officers per year were feloniously killed between 1980 and 2014. Only 27 cops were killed in 2013, the lowest death-toll for the whole 35-year period. The next year, 2014, cop killings went up, with 51 officers dead. But, that’s still way below the average of 64 a year. This year, the number of felonious police deaths from all causes is on track to be about the same as in 2014. So, the statistics tell us that there has been no rash of attacks on cops. Those who try to portray cops as victims of what Sheriff Hickman calls “dangerous national rhetoric” are simply attempting to silence the real victims of police-terror.

Thanks to a process begun by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement’s

2012 “Operation Ghetto Storm” study of extrajudicial police killings of Black people, the civilized world is aghast at the bloodthirstiness of U.S. police. As the *Guardian* newspaper reported earlier this summer, U.S. police kill more people in days than other countries kill in years. For the first time, the names and pictures of the fallen are posted for planetary observation, so that the rest of the species can know how the U.S. government really feels about human rights. The figures are not yet in on the civilian body count for August, but July was the deadliest month this year for people who found themselves on the other side of police guns, Tasers, chokeholds, and batons.

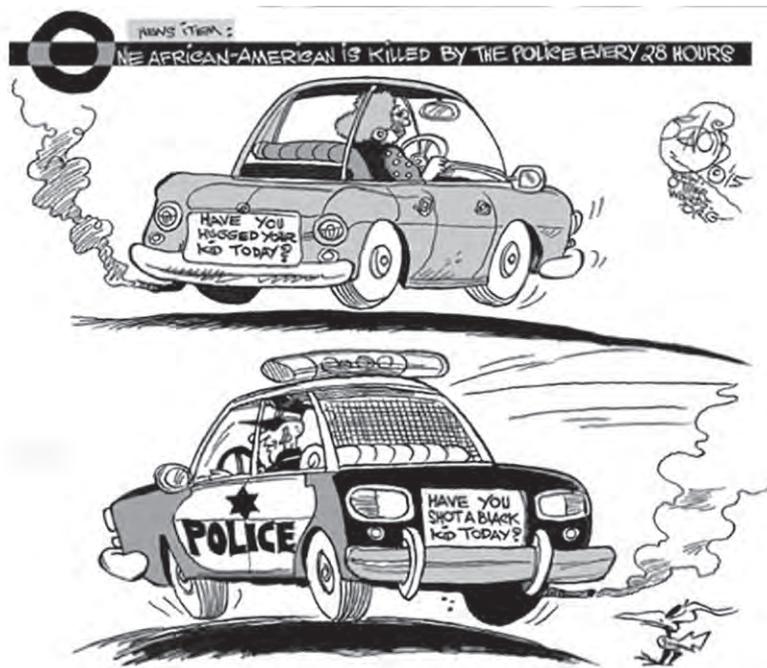
Civilians are also killing each other in large numbers, with homicides up in many cities. The cops want you to believe that’s because officers are being less aggressive in fear of being charged with brutality. That’s insane. First of all, U.S. cops are already by far the most lethally aggressive and demonstrably racist in the developed world, which is why one out of every eight

prison inmates on the planet is an African American, and why the U.S. stands alone in police violence against civilians. Secondly, in the Black community, the cops’ job is not to protect the residents. It is to contain, control and terrorize the population. Sheriff Hickman wants to get on with the business of police terror, because that’s all he’s good at.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 1, 2015

http://blackagendareport.com/killed_and_killer_cops

Withholding information is part of police impunity from punishment—or even criticism—in this country.



Blacks Cheer Venezuelan Leader

But still support Democrat terror

BY GLEN FORD

“The African American movement is today one of the main sources of strength to the sovereignty movement of Latin America and the rest of the world,” Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro told a crowd at the National Black Theater, in Harlem. “We have suffered with you since the events in Ferguson,” said Maduro, speaking before a panel assembled by the Institute for the Black World for its People of African Descent Leadership Summit. “It hurts us to know that this old structure of racism continues to haunt our populations like a ghost.”

Maduro was introduced by actor and Trans-Africa chairman Danny Glover, who was also on hand nine years ago when Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez visited Harlem’s Mount Olive Baptist Church after denouncing “the devil” George W. Bush for stinking up the United Nations with his sulfurous smell. The tradition of trekking “uptown” during the opening of the UN General Assembly was begun by Fidel Castro, in 1960, when the Cuban revolutionary leader thumbed his nose at U.S. apartheid by checking in at Harlem’s Theresa Hotel, where he met with Malcolm X and poet Langston Hughes.

Today, the sulfurous odor emanates from a smooth-talking Black man who was supported for president by most of the people on the dais at the National Black Theater, including Institute for the Black World leader Ron Daniels. State Senator Bill Perkins, who read a proclamation thanking Venezuela for continuing Chavez’s gift of free home heating oil for 75,000 low income New York households, is a loyal Obama Democrat who hopes to replace Congressman Charles Rangel. Co-host Estela Vasquez is executive vice president of 1199 SEIU, a union that leans towards Hillary Clinton, the war hawk, and will certainly spend tens

of millions backing whichever Democrat gets the presidential nomination. A Clinton super PAC tried to link rival Bernie Sanders to Hugo Chavez, prompting Sanders to disassociate himself from what he called “a dead communist dictator.”

The reality is: most Black and labor politicians are oblivious to U.S. crimes abroad when the president is a Democrat.

The decades-long U.S. policy of funding jihadist proxies to unseat independent, secular governments in the Muslim world—the focus of attention at the United Nations—had its counterpart in Latin America, where Washington imposed military dictatorships in nearly every country during the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies.

“If we review the 20th century in Latin America and the Caribbean, we see *coup d’etat*, invasion, wars, a world of war and destruction,” said Maduro. “However, we are still faithful, faithful to our future, faith in our victory.” The tall, former bus driver reminded his audience of “the First Holocaust,” the annihilation of the native Americans, who “were dismembered and burned alive in the 16th and 17th centuries.”

“Their legends remain until today,” said Maduro. “How come we still remember their names? They were the ‘terrorists’ of those times, but today they are still alive, because of the purity of their souls.”

Far more Africans were taken to Latin America and the Caribbean than to the North American mainland. “We have the case of our brothers and sisters who were kidnapped from Africa and brought here,” said Maduro. “We are the children of these Africans, and you can see the children of Africa in Venezuela.”

Maduro had been busy over the weekend at the UN’s Sustainable Development Summit, where he declared:

“Only a deep transformation of the economic system, only an absolute and total change in the system imposed by neoliberal thought will give economic viability and sustainability to the objectives that we are proposing to rid the world of extreme poverty by the year 2030.”

In Harlem, he put it bluntly: “We need to build new economic models that favor the workers, not capital.”

Maduro remembered his commander Chavez’s admonition:

“We need to ensure that Venezuela will have completed the final cycle of independence, no more extreme poverty.

“This is a global project, it is no longer a national project, it is to build socialism. It is a universal challenge. Let’s hope that with the blessing of God we are still alive and we can say ‘mission accomplished,’ we have a better humanity.”

Clearly, Maduro is speaking of a socialism that bears no relationship to Bernie Sander’s stunted vision. As for Chavez “the dictator,” Maduro noted that: “We had 19 elections” over the years. “President Carter said he has taken part in many elections, and he considers the Venezuelan system the best he has seen in all these years he has been observing elections.”

The 20th round of elections since Chavez came to power is set for December 6. The right-wing (and overwhelmingly white) opposition parties are financed by the still-existing business oligarchy and subsidized by the United States. “Some of these parties do both elections and terror,” said Maduro. “I hope they will respect the outcome of this election.”

Fugitive Slave Act of 2015

BY DR. MARSHA COLEMAN-ADEBAYO

That will depend on President Obama, who controls the spigots of terror in Venezuela and elsewhere on the South American continent. Since the early Eighties, when the United States and Saudi Arabia, with the assistance of the military dictator of Pakistan, literally created the international jihadist network to push the Soviets out of Afghanistan, Washington has been Terror Central in the Muslim world. The U.S. and the Saudis are the birthmothers of al Qaida and the midwives of the Islamic State—the adolescent whose refusal to be constrained has led to the unraveling of Obama’s notion of “controlled chaos.” The U.S.-led “coalition” that purports to fight terrorism in Syria and Iraq is a fraud—a criminal network support group.

Maduro and the Russians, Iranians and others propose “a new anti-terrorist alliance to build true peace among the people whose countries have been destroyed.” Such an alliance would press for global action against those who finance and arm the jihadists in the Middle East and Africa, and who bankroll terror against nations such as Venezuela that strain to break the chains of domination by U.S. and European capital.

Barack Obama is at least as culpable a global terror-master as the sulfurous George W. Bush. So is Hillary “We came, we saw, he died” Clinton, the former Secretary of Terror. And, so would be Bernie Sanders, the phony socialist who urges Saudi Arabia on to new atrocities in the region.

The assembled Democrats and labor officials and #BlackLivesMatter activists cheered Maduro in Harlem. But can they break with a terror-soaked party?

If not, they are full of shit.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 30, 2015

http://blackagendareport.com/blacks_cheer_maduro_support_dems

September 1, 2015—Under the ploy of fighting the surge of recent murders, Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser announced last week that she will ask the DC City Council to significantly expand surveillance and police powers to track ex-offenders. The provisions, outlined in a *Washington Post* article will give police the power to “search individuals on parole or probation and immediately detain anyone found in violation of the terms of release.” If these recommendations are enacted it will amount to a 21st Century version of the Fugitive Slave Act.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 (amended in 1850) guaranteed the rights of a terrorist (slaveholder) to “re-kidnap” escaped Africans. The U.S. Congress passed a legal mechanism for Africans to be under surveillance, tracked and forcibly returned to American concentration camps, commonly known as plantations. An estimated half-a-million people escaped to gain freedom, a ratio of about one in five Africans—mirroring the contemporary rate of Black incarceration in the 21st century. Many Africans left the United States altogether for safe havens that included Canada and Mexico.

With one-out-of-five Black men victimized by a hyper-vigilant criminal justice system and a Black community assigned the role of filling vacant “for-profit” prison cells, this initiative amounts to an extrajudicial open season on the Black family.

If Mayor Bowser’s 2015 Fugitive Slave Act is implemented, it would bring back the repressive and racist 18th Century philosophical and applied notion that once a “slave,” always a “slave.” The Washington, DC version will be “once an offender, always an offender,” devaluing and dismissing the basic principle that an offender

found guilty and serves their time are never free from their debt to society. The Mayor’s new draconian initiative trashes our constitutional rights and doesn’t allow for second chances. Let’s not forget that it took America 150 years to incarcerate its first million, but just 12 years to incarcerate its second million.

Increasing, the police’s ability to search and detain parolees or those on probation will add another layer of terror to the already terrorized Black community. Added to this travesty of justice will be the collateral damage to family members caught in the crossfire.

In a recent press release from the Stop Police Terror Project DC, Eugene Puryear charges, “the Mayor has sought a massive expansion of police powers to detain and arrest those on probation or parole. They claim they will focus only on ‘violent criminals.’ This raises two questions, first: where is the evidence that this population of people is uniquely responsible for said murders? Secondly, why, if it is just ‘a few,’ do we need blanket legal changes that criminalize and target wide swaths of Returning Citizens trying to rebuild their lives?”

In addition, to what extent can we link the Mayor’s initiative to gentrification and ethnically cleansing Washington, DC so that the new millennial whites tired of commuting and returning to the city can be protected from “Black crime?” This campaign, while promulgated by a Black female, is reminiscent of the racist Reagan/Nixon Administrations “War on Drugs” that was really a war on the Black community.

The Mayor espouses the need for an increased police presence in the Black community, yet her solution is to harken back to a time of shame and institute her own brand of the Fugitives

Act. She has not stated concrete plans to move a segment of the Black community out of poverty and into educational and work opportunities. She is not giving the already demoralized Washington D.C. Black community a sense of hope, fairness and justice, but instead, she is attempting to implement a policy that does the opposite. Will New York, Detroit, Ferguson, Baltimore or California be next?

As community activist and Program Director for *WeActRadio* Kymone Freeman points out: “The fact is, our young people are faced with over 50 percent unemployment and caught in a cycle of poverty and violence. It has been said that when poverty knocks on the door, love goes out the window. The United States measures poverty by an outdated standard developed in the 1960s, which means that the admitted 28 percent of children living in poverty in DC is much, much higher.”

The essential question is, what do you think the Black community should do if police are given the power, through this initiative, to break into our homes, placing those we love in harms way?

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 1, 2015

http://www.blackagendareport.com/fugitive_slave_act_2015

it took America 150 years to incarcerate its first million, but just 12 years to incarcerate its second million.

Depth of Poverty in the USA

BY ZAID JILANI

The World Bank and other global institutions use a very specific measure to record global poverty rates. They gather data designed to record the number of people in a country who live on less than \$2 a day, and then use the information to make a “poverty head-count ratio”—the percentage of people in a country who live under this standard. In most recent data, Sierra Leone, for example, had a staggering 82.5 percent of its citizens living in poverty by this count.

What is less known is that millions of Americans are living in situations of similar poverty. A new book, *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*, explores the status of Americans who face this extreme level of poverty.

“Most of us would say we would have trouble understanding how families in a country as rich as ours could live on so little,” Kathryn J. Edin, who co-wrote the book with H. Luke Shaefer, said in a conference call recorded by *CBS News*. “These families, contrary to what many would expect, are workers, and their slide into poverty is a failure of the labor market and our safety net, as well as their own personal circumstances.”

According to her research, the number of Americans living on \$2-a-day or less has “more than doubled since 1996, placing 1.5 million households and three million children in this desperate economic situation.”

1996 is an important marker, because that’s the year the Clinton administration, working alongside

Republicans in Congress, eliminated the Aid for Families with Dependent Children program, which provided a guaranteed safety net for the poor. In its place they created Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), a much more meager and temporary safety net. *CBS News* notes that the two authors of the book cite this change as harming the poor:

the number of Americans living on \$2-a-day or less has “more than doubled since 1996, placing 1.5 million households and three million children in this desperate economic situation.

“TANF isn’t working,” Shaefer and Edin said. “Since the program was created in 1996 to replace a 60-year-old welfare system, the number of families living on less than \$2 a day has more than doubled. In 2012, only one-quarter of

poor families received TANF benefits, down from more than two-thirds in 1996, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. According to *\$2.00-a-Day*, the welfare program reached more than 14.2 million Americans in 1994, but by 2014 only 3.8 million Americans were aided by TANF.”

The authors’ research, which includes data analysis and interviews with ultrapoor families in four regions, found that many families aren’t even aware of TANF. “One person said, ‘They aren’t just giving it out anymore,’” Shaefer said. “In fact, in Appalachia it has, in some ways, disappeared. We asked, ‘Have you thought about applying for TANF?’ and they said, ‘What’s that?’”

—*AlterNet*, September 2, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/economy/number-americans-living-less-2-day-skyrocketing?akid=13436.229473.iYQnym&rd=1&src=newsletter1041847&t=4>

The Fight for Dyett High School

The Fight For Dyett hunger strike continues.

BY BRUCE A. DIXON

The unfolding struggle around the privatization of public education in Black neighborhoods, the unspoken policy of the Obama administration since its first hours, is, along with the struggle to roll back the police and prison state itself, arguably the most important one facing African American communities as we near the end of the Obama era. And right now no place epitomizes that struggle more than the Bronzeville community of Chicago's south side, where since August 16, 2015, 12 parents, educators and community activists have been on hunger strike.

The Dyett 12, as the #FightForDyett hunger strikers are called, are demanding that the city honor the community's painstakingly detailed plan for an open enrollment community-led high school, a plan for which they have labored and fought for more than a decade.

It's been an uphill journey. Chicago has never had an elected school board. Near the end of 45 years of rule by two mayors named Richard Daley, the second of these nailed down direct mayoral control of the city's schools, and was among the first school districts in the nation to appoint non-educator "CEOs" rather than educators to head it.

Rahm Emanuel succeeded the second Richard Daley as the city's mayor only because President Obama returned to Chicago to personally campaign for his former chief of staff. Soon after Emanuel's election, the mayor had a get-acquainted dinner with Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis. At one point during the evening, the mayor remarked that that a good quarter of all the city's children would never amount to much, and that he was determined not to throw money

at it. The teachers union president of course made the mayor's callous and intemperate remarks public, and he denied them, but no serious person doubts he did say these things.

Communities like Bronzeville, the heart of Chicago's south side where African Americans have lived for about a century, have experienced systematic disinvestment in job-creating transit and infrastructure, in affordable housing and grocery stores, in healthcare and mental health services, and of course disinvestment in its families and its children. After the piecemeal closings of more than 60 public schools over several years, and the firing of thousands of mostly Black teachers who mostly lived in and made up the activist backbones of the communities they served, members of the Chicago Teachers Union in 2009 successfully sued City Hall for racially targeted mass firings.

In the current jargon, these schools were "turned around," stripped of the powerful and educationally successful parent councils activists won during the brief administration of Harold Washington in the 1980s. Some were temporarily reorganized as no-frills "public schools" with no recess, no music, arts, sports or science, but plenty of profitable test-prep. The rest were speedily handed over to private charter school operators run by friends and cronies of the mayor and the city's elite. In every case, non-teaching employees were replaced by minimum wage contract workers and experienced Black teachers with younger, whiter less experienced ones, often Teach For America temps.

But after 45 years of Daley, Chicagoans have a tradition of resisting their unaccountable and unrepresenta-

tive local government. Community activists and a new leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union organized jointly throughout the city, so that when Mayor Emanuel, following the pro-privatization policies of the Obama administration, forced teachers out on strike in 2012, they enjoyed broad public support from among public school parents and communities, and the strike was partially successful in protecting teachers, students and communities. The respite was short-lived. With the new year, City Hall responded by proposing to close first 129, then 100, and after a huge uproar settled on a few more than 50 public schools, including several high schools and elementary schools in the Bronzeville neighborhood where Dyett is.

It wasn't national news, even though similar and simultaneous waves of school closings were happening in Philly and New York, in Kansas City and Cleveland, in Atlanta and Jacksonville, in Detroit, in Tampa and in Baltimore. Creative accounting by state governments and by local officials, often Black mayors, aldermen and others miraculously uncovered seven, eight and nine figure budget holes to justify school closings and mass firings, and school privatization as the only answer on offer.

It wasn't national news because corporate media in each city barely covered the local story, didn't deliver news of the unfolding national pattern. News coverage and the pronouncements of the pro-privatization politicians and functionaries rarely if ever used the p-word, privatization, to describe the deeply unpopular policy of the Obama administration. And all of it, from beginning to end in every city was co-signed by the urban Black Democrats

who we call our Black misleadership class, Black mayors, congressmen, state legislators, county and school board officials, the whole lot of them.

By this time, Dyett High School parents in Chicago's Bronzeville had been fighting for years to improve their local high school. They won national recognition and made the school a leading educational light on the south side. Dyett won the ESPN Rise Up award, and led the city in the rising percentage of its children going to college, with the smallest number of suspensions citywide. Over several years they met with Chicago Public Schools officials in open rooms and behind closed doors, and before community town hall gatherings. They solicited partnerships with other institutions, and developed plans for expanding Dyett's success. They proposed that Dyett be hooked to six neighboring elementary schools, feeder schools to create an educational village where parents and community would have input in the process from K through the 12th grade. The latest version of their plan called for turning Dyett High School into a "Global Leadership and Green Technology" high school, the meaning of which, as far as objectives, curriculum and more are spelled out in their comprehensive plan.

City Hall spurned their efforts, preferring to turn Dyett over to what some of the hunger strikers call "mediocre charter school operators" intent on turning the school into a privatized holding tank for children on the way at best to precarious lives in shattered communities on the low-wage fringes of the labor market.

On August 16, 2015 parents and community members from Bronzeville, and allies in Pilsen and Uptown announced a hunger strike till the demands of Dyett's parents and the Bronzeville community for a Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology High School are met. Hunger strikers met with the mayor's

staff, and held press conferences outside the offices of the Department of Education in DC.

As pressure built up in support of the hunger strikers, the Black misleadership class rode to the mayor's rescue. Mayor Emanuel announced that Dyett High School would not be closed after all, that it would reopen as an open-enrollment school, but as an arts school without the community's educational plan, its feeder schools, its green technology and global leadership components curriculum, without the community's choice of principal, and without its elected local school council.

The mayor convened a gaggle of his Black minions headed by none other than Congressman Bobby Rush, to accept his "generous offer" at a press conference and publicly urge the hunger strikers to do the same.

"There will be no negotiation," said a mayoral spokesperson to the Dyett 12 and the community they represent. "We are moving forward."

The hunger strikers, who are now debilitated to the point they may be physically unable to negotiate their demands in person, have designated Reverend Jesse Jackson, who has lived on the city's south side for 50 years, to negotiate their demands with the mayor's office. Their demands are as follows:

- Dyett HS to be a school of Green Technologies and Global Leadership, in name, intent and curriculum;
- Dyett HS to be connected to local feeder schools to create a unified educational village;
- That the school facilities be open to the community till 8:00 P.M. every night of the year;
- That the name of Walter Dyett, a noted music educator who taught for decades on the south side, be preserved;
- That the community's principal of choice head the school;

- That immediate Local School Council elections be held, and the council's full legal powers be recognized by City Hall;
- That the Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School be represented in any negotiations;

The battle lines are clearly drawn, on the south side of Chicago and across the country. Healthy, sustainable communities are impossible without democratic local control over institutions and local resources. The notion of a viable community that does not control its own schools, a community with no control over its educational destiny is worse than a bad joke. The best schools have never been run by business people like businesses. The best schools have always been run by parents, teachers, students and communities working with each other. The best schools are democratically run, with their workers living in and accountable to the community, and unionized so they have a legal right to combine and plan and act jointly in their own and the community's interest.

At the end of the Obama era, along with the struggle against the police and prison state itself, this is the fight for our right to be a community at all.

The Black misleadership class in Chicago and nationally, along with its new-jack aspirants like the Campaign Zero/Teach For America crew, know what side they're on. They stand for school privatization, for the gentrifying, the scattering, shattering and dissolution of what remains of urban African American communities. It's the stand of Republicans and Democrats alike, and especially of big city mayors and the Black urban Democrat regime that rules Black politics these days.

Among national political parties, only the Green party has a firm position opposing privatization of public schools. There are also national formations like the opt-out movement, and

others active on the side of justice too. But again, in Chicago, as in Philly, New York and elsewhere, Congressman Bobby Rush and the gaggle of Black mayoral minions have taken their stand for privatization. They know which side they're on.

The question for all and each of us now is, what side are YOU on. It's time to #FightForDyett, to fight for our lives, our right to the city and to community. Before it's too late. It's time to ask every ostensibly Black organization from motorcycle clubs and sororities to churches, businesses and block clubs, along with each and every one of us individually, which side are you on?

Which side are YOU on?

For up to the minute information on the #FightForDyett visit the Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology HS on Facebook. Do it NOW.

<https://www.facebook.com/Dyett-Global-Leadership-Green-Technology-HS-444474968927301/timeline/>

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 9, 2015

<http://Blackagendareport.com/dyett-hunger-strike-20150909>

The best schools have never been run by business people like businesses. The best schools have always been run by parents, teachers, students and communities working with each other.

The Movement Lives in Ferguson

Teach For America, Black Leadership, and Disaster Capitalism

BY DREW FRANKLIN

Former Black Panther Bruce Dixon, in his blog for the *Black Agenda Report*, asked a provocative question last year when he wrote the headline: “‘Teach For America’ Trojan Horse Among Ferguson Activists?”

Whether the muted response can be attributed to apathy or ignorance of Teach For America's activities, the organization carried on with its operation in plain view, and the question seldom came up again. Today, TFA shows no sign of slowing down. For three days in February, the vanguard of the education reform movement will host its 25th Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C. “Together We Rise” is the tagline for the event, for which they've booked two major downtown venues and three hotels.

The 501(c)(3) non-profit has indeed come a long way since Wendy Kopp founded it in 1990. In its first year, Teach For America had 500 recruits; by 2013, the organization controlled nearly half-a-billion dollars in assets and employed 11,000 teacher “corps members” in schools across the United States.

Despite mounting evidence that school privatization does more harm than good, in less than three decades TFA has spread their reach to thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia, playing an indispensable role in enabling the proliferation of charter schools—schools run by private businesses with public funding—throughout the country. But it doesn't stop there. Tracing the genealogy of tax-exempt education reform foundations puts Teach For America at the center of a massive scheme, backed by powerful donors, for corporate takeovers of public schools everywhere—not just in the US, but around the world.

“Join us,” reads the header on TFA's 25th Anniversary Summit web page, “to reflect on the progress we've made over the past 25 years as we step forward together to reach One Day.” (The capitalized “One Day” appears to be a reference to the title of Wendy Kopp's 2001 memoir about TFA's origins, *One Day, All Children...*) Below it, the event description says: “Our 25th Anniversary Summit will bring together thousands from the Teach For America community, all united behind a single goal: in our lifetime, every child will have access to a truly excellent education.”

In the past, TFA relied on political alliances with policy makers, like former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and DC's ousted mayor Adrian Fenty, to seize control of school districts and impose the charter school model. But the long game—what it calls “the second half of the movement”—is to develop its corps members into a leadership class of its own. Kopp explains:

“I think the way to understand Teach for America is as a leadership development program. We need political leaders, policy makers, doctors, lawyers, and probably more business leaders than we are producing right now . . . In the long run, we need to build a leadership force of people. We have a whole strategy around not only providing folks with the foundational experience during their two years with us, but also then accelerating their leadership in ways that is strategic for the broader education reform movement.”

By developing corps members into leaders committed to its ideology, TFA has disguised its centrality in the education reform movement, spawning a disorienting web of interconnected but nominally independent founda-

tions. These organizations, nearly all of them founded or directed by TFA alumni, work together in coordinated campaigns to dissolve school boards, bust teachers' unions, and secure public funding for charter schools.

Among them is the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), an umbrella organization for charter schools founded in 1994 by TFA alumni Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, which administers 183 schools in cities like New York, D.C., and New Orleans, where education reformers connected to TFA first cleared the way for privatization. KIPP's reputation has earned it the moniker "Kids In Prison Program" for its schools' draconian disciplinary policies, giving new meaning to the term "school-to-prison pipeline."

The justification for this epidemic of institutionalized child abuse in the form of charter schools depends entirely on standardized testing. The No Child Left Behind Act mandated an increase in testing across the United States, and education reformers seized on the "achievement gap" revealed by the test scores. This metric has been used, first to justify firing thousands of teachers and principals and closing schools, and then as proof of charter schools' effectiveness. But all along the entire premise was bunk. The Texas Observer reports on the work of University of Texas professor Walter Stoup, who in 2012 testified to the Texas House Public Education Committee that standardized testing was not a reliable measure of student aptitude.

Stroup knew from his experience teaching impoverished students in inner-city Boston, Mexico City and North Texas that students could improve their mastery of a subject by more than 15 percent in a school year, but the tests couldn't measure that change. Stroup came to believe that the biggest portion of the test scores that hardly changed—that 72 percent—

simply measured test-taking ability. For almost \$100 million a year, Texas taxpayers were sold these tests as a gauge of whether schools are doing a good job. Lawmakers were using the wrong tool.

Stroup's testimony had little effect, and it ultimately cost him his tenure. Meanwhile, Teach For America's leadership bloc has grown beyond the non-profit sector and is working its way up the ranks of state power. As the *Nation* reports, "More than seventy alumni currently hold public office, including two state senators. Within the federal government, their ranks include two assistants to Education Secretary Arne Duncan, as well as education policy advisers and associates in the offices of Senators Harry Reid and Al Franken and Representative George Miller."

The most notorious of Teach For America's political operatives is alumna Michelle Rhee, who in her last year as Chancellor of D.C. Public Schools was the hero of the 2010 feature film "Waiting For 'Superman.'" The documentary, a masterpiece of modern propaganda, is unreserved in its exploitation of working-class families, to sell to the public the kinds of policies that made those families desperate enough to be used in such a way to begin with.

Director Davis Guggenheim narrates and, over heart-wrenching images of young Black and Brown children surrounded by urban decay, gives away the plot with an astonishing claim: "For generations," he says, "experts tended to blame failing schools on failing neighborhoods. But reformers have begun to believe the opposite: that the problems of failing neighborhoods might be blamed on failing schools."

Here the word "failing," of course, is a euphemism for poor. After all, what does it mean for a neighborhood to "fail?" On the other hand, it is an empirical fact that public schools in poorer districts are poorly funded. But

this rhetorical sleight-of-hand is emblematic of TFA's explicitly outlined strategy for countering negative press.

An internal memo, made public last year in a story for the *Nation*, paints a frightening picture of TFA's outside political power. According to the memo, an unnamed source inside the Department of Education tipped off the organization that TFA alumna and *Nation* reporter Alexandra Hootnick had filed a large FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) request on Teach For America, indicating that "she was unlikely to portray TFA in a positive light." In response, TFA utilized its press connections, website, and social media accounts to do pre-emptive damage control.

The memo also describes how TFA monitors Internet communications to pick up on controversy surrounding its brand and neutralize it before it grows. Its rapid response to online criticism of *Mother Jones* for running a TFA advertisement shows that its PR team has media manipulation down to an exact science:

"As soon as we saw this conversation beginning to build our communications team drafted a short response, which shared the overwhelming positive reception we'd received from the magazine's readers and our disappointment that a small group would use this as an opportunity to rehash factually inaccurate information and distract attention from the critical issue of early childhood education.

"We posted this response on our *On The Record* page within a few hours of the detractors making noise and tweeted it out from our national handle twice because the conversation wasn't immediately dying (Tweet one (April 30) and Tweet two (May 1)). These tweets generated five posts from five unique supporters and a Twitter reach of 107,519 (the '@teachforamerica' Twitter handle represented 106,131 of the 107,519 supporters) and a

Twitter exposure of 213,621. There were 269 clicks on the link to the *On The Record* page. At this point the conversation died.”

Although the World Wide Web has created novel means of disseminating information, the basic strategy of utilizing mass media to influence public opinion—and, by extension, public policy—has been around for a long time. The propagandist Edward Bernays, widely regarded as the founder of the public relations industry, articulated this method in a 1955 paper entitled “The Engineering of Consent.” Declaring that “only by mastering the techniques of communication can leadership be exercised fruitfully in the vast complex that is modern democracy in the United States,” Bernays insists that leaders should not seek to inform the public, but manipulate it:

“With pressing crises and decisions to be faced, a leader frequently cannot wait for the people to arrive at even general understanding. In certain cases, democratic leaders must play their part in leading the public through the engineering of consent to socially constructive goals and values. This role naturally imposes upon them the obligation to use the educational processes, as well as other available techniques, to bring about as complete an understanding as possible.”

The intersection of education, politics, and wealth thus made public school systems ideal breeding grounds for a public relations leviathan. Not only does privatizing schools create new opportunities for profit, it provides cover for class warfare in general, while subjecting teachers and students to a fundamentally ideological process. Writing for the *Nation*, George Joseph expounds on this concept:

“For decades, sociological research has shown that anti-poverty measures, not energetic young college students, are the driving factors in improved education outcomes. Yet for over twenty years

TFA’s organizational model has been based upon the idea that a college student, fresh from a five-week summer camp, could swoop into [a] poor, overcrowded classroom and inspire her students to overcome all barriers of structural inequality. Thus, the fundamental premise of Teach For America elides this need for wealth redistribution, perhaps explaining TFA’s massive corporate donor appeal.”

Teach For America doesn’t just have an extensive PR apparatus; it is an extensive PR apparatus. Bruce Dixon’s suspicions about Ferguson were fully justified, for as he notes, TFA is “backed to the tune of hundreds-of-millions per year by Wal-Mart, the Broad Foundation, Monsanto and a long list of corporate villains and hedge fund predators intent upon dismantling, destroying and privatizing public education in Black and Brown neighborhoods, turning public education into a private profit center.”

That’s precisely what Michelle Rhee did when, in her first year as chancellor, she closed 23 schools and fired 157 D.C. Public Schools employees, including 36 principals. By the end of her tenure, 682 teachers represented by the Washington Teachers Union—most of them Black—lost their jobs.

Teach For America proved indispensable in that endeavor, as it supplied a reserve army of inexperienced recruits to replace tenured teachers in the few schools that had not been shuttered, and to staff the dozens of new charter schools that sprang up around the District, enticed by Rhee’s school voucher scheme. Among its foot soldiers in that period was the woman Bruce Dixon would later accuse of being a “trojan horse:” Brittany Packnett, who began her career in 2007 as a TFA corps member at Martin Luther King Elementary School in Southeast D.C.

Thanks in part to the notoriously racialized political landscape of

Washington, D.C., the publicity surrounding Michelle Rhee represented a growing liability for TFA. The ensuing backlash ended Adrian Fenty’s Mayorship, and then grew in response to the situation in New Orleans, where education reform reached its apex in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. 7,500 teachers were laid off in the midst of the prolonged humanitarian disaster that followed severe and widespread flooding in the city of New Orleans, while the number of TFA recruits quadrupled. In May 2011 Governor Bobby Jindal appointed TFA alumnus John White to be superintendent of the New Orleans Recovery School District. White closed every single public school that remained, making the RSD the first all-charter school district in the country (he was promoted to state superintendent the next year.)

The disproportionate devastation of these policies for Black communities created a race problem for Teach For America. In response to the growing backlash, TFA doubled down on its liberal rhetoric and began to re-brand itself as a Civil Rights organization. Selling such an image necessitated a new class of political operatives, one that was “majority-led by the oppressed group.” So when protests erupted in the majority-Black town of Ferguson, Missouri on August 9th, 2014, TFA saw its window of opportunity.

Most people who followed the story from the beginning will recognize the name Antonio French. The alderman from St. Louis might justifiably be credited with making the police execution of Michael Brown a national headline. For the first several weeks, thanks to his prolific tweeting, French was among the most visible personalities on the ground in the now-infamous Midwestern suburb, garnering profiles in national publications like the *Washington Post*, and TV spots on CNN.

On August 21st, 2014, in a post that has since been retweeted 1,342 times, French announced that Teach for America had set up shop in Ferguson. This wasn't merely on-the-ground reporting, but free publicity from a man whose business connections with TFA's St. Louis chapter were well-established. Two years prior, French had founded a non-profit in St. Louis modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, a pioneer of the charter school industry. Among the North Campus's recruits were staff who had originally come to St. Louis to teach as TFA corps members, and by May 2013, French had brokered an official partnership between North Campus and TFA St. Louis.

French's partner in the deal was Brittany Packnett, who by then was executive director of TFA St. Louis. The rapport they developed over the next year surely made it easier for Packnett to establish herself among the nascent protest movement's purported leadership. Twitter conversations between them suggest that Packnett was in Ferguson as early as August 12th. She publicized Antonio French's arrest on August 14th and, on the same day, declared her "revolutionary love" for St. Louis's Black children in a rather incoherent post on TFA's official blog:

"Education didn't save Mike Brown. Racism killed him. There seems to be only one solution-end racism. . . . [W]hile issues of inequitable education, unemployment and poverty contributed to this crisis, racism is the cause for Mike's death . . . We must love our students enough to engage in the hard work of active anti-racism, confronting our own biases and ensuring that we dismantle deadly systems of racial dominance and oppression."

Then, on August 16th, a new player joined the operation. As he tells it, Deray McKesson made the eight-and-a-half hour trip from Minneapolis to Ferguson on August 16th under his

own initiative, and on his own dollar. There is an air of mystery surrounding McKesson's seemingly spontaneous appearance on the scene, but in any case, he soon found his place among the Teach For America cohort. That much was inevitable. Deray McKesson is also a TFA alumnus, and his enthusiasm for education reform is evident.

McKesson was present with Antonio French and Brittany Packnett the day Teach For America began its Ferguson campaign in earnest on August 21st, 2014. He joined French in publicizing the event on twitter, while TFA began the work of curating his public image on the same day, with a feature on the TFA blog.

Before long, McKesson supplanted French as a go-to source for live updates on the ground in Ferguson, aided by promotion from Teach for America. On October 29th, TFA advertised a "national conference call featuring TFA alumni @MsPackyetti [Brittany Packnett] and @deray." The *Washington Post* profiled McKesson in an article published November 13th, and TFA promoted it on social media, identifying him once again as a "TFA alumnus." On December 10, *Time Magazine* named him and several others, collectively referred to as the "Ferguson protesters," as runner-up to Person of the Year—and again, TFA promoted it.

A simple twitter search query reveals this trend, right on up to TFA's big break: a cover story in the May 4th issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, under the headline "Our Demand Is Simple: Stop Killing Us." The 6700-word article profiles McKesson and fellow overnight superstar protester Johnetta Elzie, as they drop in to protests in cities across the United States (who's paying for it all is never explained.) According to the *Times*, the two got together in mid-September, under Brittany Packnett's leadership, to produce a newsletter for the

Ferguson protests called *This is the Movement*, which boasted a "wide range of readers, from reporters to protesters to officials within the Department of Justice." (In actuality, the "newsletter" was simply a collection of links to articles from various external publications, a few charities, and several T-shirt vendors.)

"Twitter is the revolution," McKesson is quoted as saying, in an utterance that has gone on to become his mantra. TFA, of course, benefits from the illusion that social media is inherently liberatory; as we have seen, twitter has proven to be an immensely useful tool in their million-dollar PR arsenal. And so we learn just how much McKesson has in common with his "influencer" Michelle Rhee:

"After graduating in 2007, McKesson joined Teach for America and taught middle school for two years in East New York, Brooklyn, before moving back home to Baltimore to work in H.R. (Human Resources) for the city's schools. He developed a reputation as a ruthless administrator—every hiring and firing was justified, in his own mind, by what was best for the kids in the district."

When one imagines a revolutionary activist following in the footsteps of the Civil Rights movement, a ruthless human resources administrator does not usually come to mind. But that is the "Superman" at the heart of the neoliberal narrative pushed by the education reform movement. Yesterday it was Michelle Rhee and John White; today, Brittany Packnett and Deray McKesson represent the superheroes we have been waiting for.

The post-Katrina privatization *coup* was the culmination of years of economic restructuring in New Orleans following the disaster, which former Secretary of Education famously called "the best thing that happened to education in New Orleans." The concept behind this phenomenon was identi-

fied by Naomi Klein in her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein illustrates, using New Orleans and occupied Baghdad as case studies, that “disaster capitalism” is a predatory policy framework that depends on the chaos brought about by catastrophic events to recuperate public infrastructure and cede it to corporations. No wonder, then, that TFA operatives like McKesson keep showing up in cities like Baltimore when the threat of rioting looms large.

While McKesson was busy shoring up TFA’s brand, making the rounds on the cable news circuit and garnering praise for such intellectual feats as making Wolf Blitzer look dumb on TV, Brittany Packnett swiftly moved up the ranks of the political class. In November 2014, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon named her to the 16-person panel on the Ferguson Commission. The next month she joined the Dream Defenders’ Phil Agnew and a handful of others in a private meeting with President Obama in the White House.

The meeting evidently paid off, as Packnett was subsequently selected for the President’s Task Force On 21st Century Policing. One of the co-chairs under which she would work was former D.C. Metropolitan Police Chief Charles Ramsey, whose own civil rights violations against protesters were so severe that in 2009 the city was forced to pay them \$8.25 million in damages.

The task force’s final report, predictably, ignored any substantive economic analysis in favor of milquetoast reforms. These recommendations found further expression in the much-ballyhooed Campaign Zero, a watered-down platform launched by Brittany Packnett and Deray McKesson, who make up half the campaign’s planning team.

For their efforts, the two were rewarded last July with a \$10,000 prize from Teach For America, who named them the winners of the 2015 Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership.

Antonio French got his, too, in the form of a \$500,000 grant for his St. Louis non-profit from the state of Missouri.

Meanwhile, the future of the protest movement they helped build is uncertain. For all the protestations that Black lives matter, Teach For America’s crimes against Black communities have gone largely unchecked, shielded by its near-hegemonic public relations empire. The movement lives.

The movement is also spreading its tentacles across national borders. Teach For All, founded by Wendy Kopp in 2007, claims affiliates in 37 countries, where globetrotting alumni have exported the TFA brand. Teach For India, Teach For Lebanon, and Enseña por Colombia are among the fruits of the second-half of the movement.

Teach First Israel, which claims schools in occupied Jerusalem, is particularly worrisome. According to its website, TFI was launched in partnership with JDC (a Zionist resettlement foundation) and the Israeli Ministry of Education. Not only is Kopp’s foundation thus directly implicated in Israel’s violations of international law, each of its litany of corporate donors consequently meet the standards for boycott from the growing international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. Now that that’s out in the open, perhaps a silver lining can be found in the potential for new forms of joint struggle between Palestinians and the United States’ Black underclass.

Teach For America’s goal of “One Day, All Children” isn’t a promise; it’s a threat. That’s worth remembering on February 5th, the day TFA descends on Washington to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

Drew Franklin is co-editor of OrchestratedPulse.com. This article previously appeared in Orchestrated Pulse.

—*Black Agenda Report*, October 13, 2015

http://Blackagendareport.com/ferguson_tfa_black_lives_matter

**These organizations,
nearly all of them
founded or directed by
TFA alumni, work
together in coordinated
campaigns to dissolve
school boards, bust
teachers’ unions, and
secure public funding
for charter schools.**

Condemning Austerity

“Fighting for their people,” Puerto Rico’s faith leaders condemn austerity.

BY DEIRDRE FULTON

August 31, 2015—Denouncing new austerity plans and proposed “fiscal adjustments” that they say will adversely impact Puerto Rico’s poor and needy people, the island’s faith leaders on Monday called for debt relief and a resolution to the financial crisis that eschews further austerity.

A working group restructuring plan was delivered to Governor Alejandro Garcia Padilla in early September. The letter from religious leaders¹ comes as the U.S. territory struggles to address crippling debt and double-digit unemployment.

Two recent reports, one commissioned by a group of hedge funds who purchased the island’s distressed debt and the other authorized by Puerto Rico’s own government, suggest new austerity plans to pay off portions of the debt—including reducing the minimum wage along with cuts to education and healthcare programs.

Citing the Biblical concept of debt relief, or Jubilee, the letter’s signatories express concern about “predatory hedge funds, which seek to benefit from our distress and push our economy to the brink of collapse” while calling for full-scale debt restructuring “that invests in Puerto Rico’s people.”

“This debt crisis threatens to push more of our people into poverty and put people out of work,” stated San Juan Archbishop Roberto González Nieves, leader of Puerto Rico’s mostly Catholic population. “The religious community stands with vulnerable people and we call for the crisis to be resolved in a way that protects the poor and grows our economy.”

In resolving the financial crisis, the religious leaders call for policymakers to adhere to six principles:

1. In any solution that is reached, there should be no more austerity policies affecting people and poor families and young people who are the most vulnerable.
2. Any solution must create an investment in the Puerto Rican people and seek to grow our economy.
3. We need enough debt relief to bring our total debt back to sustainable levels.
4. We encourage all solutions that enhance Puerto Rico’s laws on budget transparency.
5. We seek greater participation in resolving this crisis and working with the government on solutions that protect Puerto Rico’s people.
6. In addition to the participation of the religious sector, we call for a multi-sectorial participation in which our people are well represented. A representation that also includes the poorest because they are always the most affected.

“Puerto Rico’s religious leaders are fighting for the lives of their people,” stated Eric LeCompte, the executive director of the faith-based development coalition Jubilee U.S.A Network. LeCompte, who visited Puerto Rico in mid-August to advise religious and political leaders on solutions to the crisis, said: “We need to get Puerto Rico’s debt back to sustainable levels and ensure that the island has a path for economic growth.”

However, the letter acknowledges how Puerto Rico’s complicated geopolitical standing makes finding solutions to the crisis more challenging:

We understand that some processes and options typically available to indebted governments are not available to ours. Because Puerto Rico is not a sovereign country, we can’t receive low-interest loans or emergency financing from the International Monetary Fund. Because Puerto Rico is not a U.S. state or city, we can’t access U.S. bankruptcy laws. In the absence of Congress extending bankruptcy protection to Puerto Rico, we must call for greater involvement from the Federal Reserve to act and to arbitrate our debt according to our six principles to protect the common good. The Federal Reserve has the power to act and should act. The Federal Reserve has the ability to restructure our debt in ways that limit austerity and ensure debt relief without harmful conditions.

And it expresses solidarity with communities around the world—such as Greece, Argentina, and some of Puerto Rico’s Caribbean neighbors—that are also struggling against austerity politics in the face of high debt burdens and poverty.

“As we call for a Jubilee for Puerto Rico’s people, we call for a Jubilee for all people,” the letter reads. “We call for economies to serve people, not for people to serve economies.”

—*Common Dreams*, August 31, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/08/31/fighting-their-people-puerto-ricos-faith-leaders-condemn-austerity>

1 <http://jubileeusa.org/fileadmin/PuertoRicoReligiousLeaderCallEnglishFinal.pdf>

Tiny Guam

Huge U.S. Marine base expansions

BY SYLVIA C. FRAIN

On Saturday morning August 29, 2015, the United States Navy signed the Record of Decision (ROD), the final document needed for the implementation of one of the largest “peacetime” military build-ups in American history. This will cost between eight and nine billion, with only \$174 million for civilian infrastructure, which Congress has not released yet. As a central aspect of American’s foreign policy “Pivot to the Pacific,” the build-up will relocate thousands of Marines and their dependents from Okinawa, Japan to Guam.

This does not auger well for the people of Guam. For decades, the Okinawans have protested the violence, pollution, military accidents, and sexual assaults committed by American Marines on the local population. Moving those Marines to tiny Guam frightens many.

Military-colonial destruction is not new to the people of Guam. The indigenous Chamorro people were nearly exterminated by invasion and colonization by Spain, then the U.S., then Japan during WWII, and then back into U.S. possession. Located in the Western Pacific Ocean more than 8,000 miles from Washington D.C., Guam remains an unincorporated territory and possession of the United States. While residents are American citizens, carry U.S. passports and pay federal taxes, they have no representation in the Senate, have a non-voting delegate in Congress and cannot vote in Presidential elections.

Currently, one-third of the island of Guam (210 square miles) is U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) property and inaccessible to non-military residents. Many people are still waiting for war reparations from World War II

and compensation for their land taken by the military. In addition, people from the Guam serve and die in the United States Armed Forces at higher rates than any other state in America.

The build-up will add further strain on already fragile infrastructure and limited resources:

- A thousand acres of limestone forest will be destroyed for housing the Marines and their dependents and the military will control the largest water source for the island.
- Guam will become the biggest storage facility for fuel and ammunitions in the Pacific.
- A Live Fire Range Complex (LFRC) will be constructed at Northwest Field on Anderson Air Force Base and will close Ritidian National Wildlife Refuge, a sanctuary to numerous endangered species and a sacred site to the indigenous people. The public will no longer have access to the National Wildlife Refuge, including the pristine beach, ancient caves, education center and a newly “rediscovered” 4,000-year-old fishing village containing the oldest archaeological artifacts found on Guam. In the early 1990s, local families demanded that Ritidian Point,

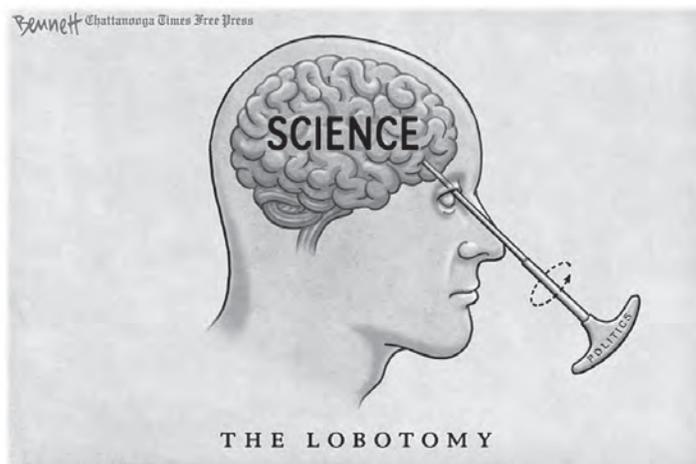
or Litekyan, be returned to its traditional owners. However, the federal government instead created the National Wildlife Refuge, owned by the United States Fish and Wildlife Services.

While the Governor of Guam, the non-voting Congresswoman, the Guam Chamber of Commerce and other military-business lobbyists welcome the military build-up, many people on Guam consider the ROD’s release a sad day for the people, land, wildlife and culture of Guam. With an economy 60 percent derived from tourism, a massive expansion of the military on a vulnerable small island will only degrade both the environment and the native Chamorro people.

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—CounterPunch, September 4, 2015

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/04/tiny-guam-huge-us-marine-base-expansions/>



What Doomed El Faro?

Hurricane Joaquin was only the direct cause. The drive for profit sunk El Faro.

By JACK HEYMAN

The hearts of all maritime workers stopped earlier this month when news hit that the ship El Faro, a U.S.-flagged cargo vessel with thirty-three crew members aboard, was dead in the water north of the Bahamas with no propulsion power and directly in the path of a rapidly intensifying Hurricane Joaquin.

At 7:00 A.M. on October 1, 2015, within thirty hours of departing Jacksonville, Florida, the captain made satellite contact with TOTE, the ship's owner. While that conversation has not been made public, apparently the ship had taken on water in a hold, listing her dangerously. And without a powered propeller, El Faro was helpless before waves that reached fifty feet and a counter-clockwise spiral of winds up to 125 miles-per-hour. It was sucked into the eyewall of a Category Four hurricane.

Within twenty minutes of the ship captain's final communications with the ship's owner, the U.S. Coast Guard reported that El Faro's signals from her Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beam had stopped. The Coast Guard immediately contacted the ship owner and was informed of its daunting conditions. But efforts by the Coast Guard to communicate with the El Faro were futile. The ship had disappeared into the deep. A quick, dark fate awaited the crew.

Now, at the same time the crews' family and mariners around the world are in mourning, ship owners and their friends in the media are diverting attention from the real cause of the disaster.

On Monday, the conservative National Review cried crocodile tears, opining: "Hurricane Joaquin wasn't the sole culprit; it had an accomplice, and that accomplice is a monstrous

piece of legislation known as the Jones Act."

Passed in 1920, the Jones Act was promulgated to ensure that U.S. coastal waterways trade remains open to American unions, i.e. ships were required to be built and manned by American citizens. A key sector of maritime interests complain that union wages make it too costly and would prefer highly exploited, nonunion crews from Third World countries and build ships elsewhere. Dumping the Jones Act would destroy maritime unions and make the maritime industry a free-trade zone on steroids.

But it wasn't the Jones Act that sunk the El Faro and its crew. More likely it was TOTE's drive for profit.

In fact, before the El Faro left from Jacksonville, it had already been forecast that Tropical Storm Joaquin would develop into a hurricane by the next morning—and it was heading directly into the ship's charted navigational course.

Aware of the deadly weather prior to El Faro's departure, TOTE Maritime could have ordered a course change or even delayed the departure. Had El Faro gone down the coast of Florida, it would have lengthened the journey. But she and her crew could have avoided the hurricane, sought a safe haven, or at least had a better chance of rescue had Hurricane Joaquin turned in that direction.

For whatever reason, on the Tacoma-to-Anchorage run, a Tacoma longshoreman tells me that TOTE ships took the Inside Passage from Vancouver Island up the coast to Alaska for safe sailing when there was a storm forecast. Why didn't the ship sailing from Jacksonville similarly steer clear of harm's way?

Time is money

For TOTE and other ship-owners, time is money. Typically that means captains are under tremendous pressure to deliver cargo as quickly as possible. But the opposite can be true as well. During the 1970s oil crisis, I was at the helm of a tanker traveling from the Gulf to New York. With lines at gas stations getting longer and longer, we were ordered to slow down—prices, and oil companies' profits, were skyrocketing by the hour.

The drive for profit can also impel companies to forgo needed repairs. In the case of El Faro, TOTE refused to have the ship's engines and structural welding repaired before departure—or better yet, to have her replaced with a newer ship. (One experienced longshoreman in San Juan who'd worked the El Faro told me the ship was frequently scheduled to have her engines replaced.)

Crew members and dockworkers alike complained about the lack of safety. Chris Cash, whose last voyage on El Faro ended in January, told CNN the ship was fit for the scrap yard. "It was a rust bucket," Cash said. "They were bandaging the ship with extra steel all the time... It seemed like they didn't want to put any money into the ship. When things would break they would just patch it up rather than really fix it."

It also appears that the past repairs might have undermined the ship's seaworthiness. In 1993, the owner retrofitted it in Alabama Shipyard, adding a midbody and lengthening her ninety-one feet with stacked tiers to accommodate more containers (and thus generate more money). The San Juan longshoreman said, "it would make it top heavy and less safe to maneuver under tough sea conditions."

TOTE claims that the El Faro was regularly inspected by the American Bureau of Shipping and the U.S. Coast Guard. They should have no problem opening their books to the public then.

Cost cutting

There were other telltale signs of dangerous cost cutting. The five Poles who perished on the El Faro were a “riding crew”—a group of additional workers brought on board to complete special projects due to inadequate manning for essential maintenance. Reduced to skeleton crews, many ships now rely on these riding crews. The riding crew aboard El Faro, Cash said, was there to weld. But proper welding and repairs should have been done on the forty-year old vessel in a shipyard to maintain and repair the ship’s structural integrity and stop leaks like the one workers identified in the cook’s porthole.

But bowing to concerns about crew’s safety by delaying the sailing time or making potentially live-saving repairs diminishes profits. So, companies often don’t.

This is not a new sea story. Tales of horror—where lives were sacrificed at the altar of corporate greed—have been told by the greatest sailor writers: Joseph Conrad, Herman Melville, Jack London, Mike Quin, and especially B. Traven in *The Death Ship*. All excoriate the base motive—profit.

Anti-red purges

Unfortunately, the maritime unions that should be fighting such unsafe conditions are timid and conservative.

The unions representing the El Faro crew, the Seafarers’ International Union (SIU) and the American Maritime Officers’ Union (AMO), both pariahs in the labor movement for negotiating substandard contracts, actually support nonunion riding crews. They reject the principle that crew members, whether U.S. citizens or foreign born, should be in the union,

working under a decent contract. And because military cargo is a major source of jobs, many U.S. maritime unions support imperialist adventures abroad.

How could seafarers’ conditions be in such a state of affairs? For starters, deep-sea maritime unions haven’t had a major strike in fifty years—giving employers the upper hand at every turn.

The history of red-baiting is key to understanding this lack of militancy. During the McCarthyite witchhunts, thousands of radicals who had built the maritime unions in the 1930s were purged and screened off the waterfront by the U.S. Coast Guard, many of them Black longshoremen and seamen. The result was a workforce pared down to the bone and a business unionism with little appetite for struggle against employers.

The SIU has been the main culprit in collaborating with companies and undermining workers’ conditions. Labor standards have been thrown over the ship’s gunwale and down the hawse-pipe as employers scale back manning and introduce labor-saving technology that simply boosts profits, rather than benefiting workers through shorter days or fewer voyages with no loss in pay.

U.S. ship-owners have found other ways to weaken unions. After World War II, the Marshall Plan’s lend-lease program permitted ships to be registered in foreign countries. They used this to circumvent unions and escape taxes by registering their ships in countries like Greece, Panama, and Liberia while retaining ownership. Today many corporations, following this paradigm, claim their operations are based “offshore,” to avoid taxes and unions.

That hole in the dike turned into a torrent of “runaway flagships” resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs. The poor souls who man these newly-built “flag of convenience” behemoths work with no union of their choice to repre-

sent them, no way for themselves to bargain for safe working conditions, decent wages, or good benefits and certainly no right to strike.

There’s been much ado about pirates in the Indian Ocean and the ostensible hero, Captain Phillips, who endangered his crew’s lives to cut a short route through unsafe waters, saving time and fuel costs for Maersk Shipping Company. But the real pirates are the companies who put runaway flags on the ship’s stern to avoid taxes, unions, and environmental laws and abscond with billions of dollars.

The National Maritime Union (NMU), once the largest American maritime industrial union, which had one-hundred-thousand members at its peak, has been completely decimated by these anti-union forces. Anti-red purges thinned out its ranks. And the corrupt Curran union bureaucracy helped turn a union that integrated thirty years before the Civil Rights Act was passed into one that once-proud retired members now refer to as “No More Union.”

Unless maritime unions start challenging maritime employers in united actions to defend safe working conditions and win decent contracts, they may face the same fate as the NMU. To begin with ships’ crews should elect safety committees with the right to stop unsafe operations. That’s what rank-and-file militants called for in the NMU.

“They’re all about money”

For mariners and grieving family members of the El Faro crew, hard questions remain unanswered by TOTE. For instance, why wasn’t the Coast Guard contacted immediately when it was clear the ship was imperiled? When the Coast Guard desperately attempted to make critical contact with her, it was too late.

Unfortunately, it’s unlikely that the truth will ever come out about this

horrible disaster—the Coast Guard, which has a notorious pro-company bias, will be a key entity in the investigation. The maritime industry’s “revolving door”—when Coast Guard officers retire, they’re often hired by the very companies they were previously regulating—has been common practice for years.

To make matters worse, there’s a heavy anti-union bias in the federal government. In 2012, during an International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) protest against grain monopolies at EGT Terminal in Longview, Washington, the Obama administration sent an armed Coast Guard cutter to protect a scab grain ship. This act of intimidation was consistent with the government’s historic role in siding with employers, even using armed military to break union picketing.

Mark Tabbutt, the chairman of Saltchuk transportation conglomerate, of which TOTE is a part, also has a notorious anti-union bias. Saltchuk ran its scab Foss Maritime tugs during ILWU’s Northwest grain conflict in cahoots with the Coast Guard’s union-busting efforts on the Columbia River. As one veteran mariner said, “They’re all about money.”

With El Faro, it seems that TOTE’s fixation on profit led the company to spurn the safer, longer route along the Florida coast or delay the sailing time in the face of Hurricane Joaquin. The result was catastrophic.

No ship is stronger than Mother Nature’s awesome seas, jutting rocks, and powerful winds. Sailors know that before they go up the gangway. But for maritime CEOs, all they see is dollar signs.

—*Jacobin*, October 16, 2015

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/10/el-faro-national-review-tote-coast-guard-union/>

We Want Our Due and We Want It Now

By GREGG SHOTWELL



Gregg Shotwell

The harbinger has sounded. On October 1, UAW members rejected the tentative agreement with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles [FCA] by a two to one margin. The UAW International spun around like a cold-cocked drunk, reshuffled the deck, and dealt another shaky hand to workers.

The biggest bone of contention for UAW members was equal pay. The new contract promises equal pay for all—eight years from now. Without Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) the installment plan is more like a cut than a raise. Workers produce profit today and the Con says, “Some day, baby, who knows, maybe, we’ll pay what we owe—eight years from today. Okay?”

There’s no way UAW members can comprehend how a four-year contract can guarantee raises in eight years. Apparently, the top leadership of the UAW, that calls themselves the Administration Caucus, but is more aptly known as the Concession Caucus, hasn’t acknowledged its credibility problem.

Dave Barkholz at the *Automotive News* reported that Norwood Jewell, UAW VP in charge of negotiations at FCA, admitted publicly that the

“Highlights” which the Concession Caucus presents to UAW members at contract information meetings cannot be trusted. Now he is promising a payout that the contract can’t guarantee to an untrusting membership. The old Jewell has lost his con. The trick won’t click.

The new deal is more of a Selective Bargaining Agreement than a Collective Bargaining Agreement. Everyone gets a different shake. I’ve heard Chrysler workers say there will be as many as ten different tiers but it’s hard to nail the shake up down.

Some workers “in progression” will attain traditional pay scales in less than eight years. Some will never get there. FCA workers in the Mopar Division have equal pay now but future Mopar workers won’t. Axle workers have a much lower rate and axle work is damn hard labor. There is no cap on second tier new hires, which for FCA is like an open bar and a free ride home. Temporaries will make less than they do now.

The *Automotive News* reported that the new deal permits FCA to “double the use of temporary staff”—another glaring omission torpedoed from the “Highlights.” The temp deal was buried under 250 pages of legal jargon. Whoever found that nugget of ossified crap must have been paid by the word not the hour.

Under UAW contracts temps pay dues and they are allowed to vote, but since they don’t acquire seniority they don’t have traditional union rights and the company can terminate them without cause. Temps get pushed around a lot but they don’t dare complain let alone demand a grievance. Temps are always aware of their precarious status on the job. A permanent class of temps is not only an oxymoron it’s an atrocity in a union contract.

I'm sorry I can't make this contract analysis less confusing, but neither can the negotiators. The UAW Concession Caucus blamed social media for the stunning ratification results. So, they hired a PR firm to tip the communication scales. The *Detroit Free Press* reported, "The UAW has turned to BerlinRosen—a public relations firm that was involved with Detroit's bankruptcy and New York Mayor Bill De Blasio's election—to help the union communicate its message with workers."

In other words, UAW members pay UAW representatives to pay someone else to represent the UAW representatives to UAW members. The double talk is so convoluted it reminds me of "Jeopardy," the TV game show where the answer is in the form of a question. What PR firm is paid from a strike fund?

The ratification process for the new tentative agreement has been altered to tip the scales. Instead of spreading the voting procedure over two weeks, the ratification will be concluded in two days. Instead of voting in the easy access of the workplace, where members can vote during lunch or breaks, members must drive off site to the union hall before or after work. The new ratification plan intentionally limits participation.

The Con Caucus and its business partner FCA claim the pie is too small and if workers demand too much, investment in jobs will move offshore. But some pieces seem to be missing from the pie puzzle. Big pieces. Billion-dollar pieces.

According to *Bloomberg News*, Fiat relies on Chrysler profits to make up for losses in Europe. Marchionne's plan to invest in Italian factories "depends on access to Chrysler's \$12 billion cash hoard." When did the pie slicing begin and where was the UAW Concession Caucus when the divvy went down?

"Fiat started accumulating Chrysler stock in June 2009 as part of a government and labor-union bailout of the

U.S. carmaker...Rather than paying cash for the initial 20 percent holding and subsequent 15 percent stake, Fiat provided management experience and technology and helped Chrysler meet various performance milestones, such as developing models."

Daimler bought Chrysler for \$36 billion in 1998. Cerberus paid \$7.4 billion for an eighty percent stake in 2007. Fiat bought it for "management experience and technology."

When do workers get a slice of pie for their experience and know how? Does hard work count for nothing in America? Here's a "Jeopardy Daily Double-talk" answer: What union represents management?

In 2014 Fiat bought out the UAW Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA) trust's 41.5 percent stake in FCA. Initially, the UAW trust demanded \$5 billion for the stake, but settled for \$4.35 billion. *Bloomberg News* reported, Most of the money was put up by Chrysler not Fiat. "Marchionne did a great job," Vincenzo Longo, a strategist at IG Group in Milan, said by phone. "Fiat couldn't get a better deal."

The UAW could get a better deal. Now, not later. UAW members have already sacrificed plenty. It's high time to collect a fat slice of pie. According to the Center for Automotive Research, "Since 2009 in the U.S., management compensation has grown about 50 percent faster than union workers' income. In the U.S. auto industry, real wages have declined 24 percent since 2003."

How come there's always more money for salary workers? How come the press doesn't report what FCA spends on expense accounts? How come the investing class doesn't have to wait eight years for the pay off? How did I get fooled into saying eight? Top tier UAW workers haven't had a raise or COLA in ten years.

The struggle for fair pay isn't unique to the UAW. Workers everywhere are

treated as if they don't deserve a decent standard of living. An entire generation of workers are treated like second class citizens, less deserving, less valuable. The implication is clear—if you work for a living you must be stupid. The Cons can blow the whole strike fund on PR and it won't cover up the vile stench of entitlement.

The UAW Con Caucus must think members all got blasted waiting for the new deal. Instead of eliminating tiers, they multiplied them. What a worker gets paid depends on where they work, how long they've worked, and who they are related to in the chain of patronage. For UAW President Dennis Williams to call this a good contract is astounding bold face bullshit. Here's a "Jeopardy Daily Double-talk answer." Who is the president who won't shed a tier?

The Alternative Work Schedules [AWS], which force workers to work overtime for straight time pay and alternate in some situations from days to nights will be resolved, according to the Cons, after the contract is ratified.

After? Does the Con Caucus think UAW members can't read or reason? Here's another "Jeopardy Daily Double-talk" answer: Who wagers on wages after a contract expires?

When I worked an Alternative Work Schedule at Delphi we got paid time-and-a-half after eight hours of work and double time on Sundays. We worked three twelve hour days one week which amounted to twelve hours of overtime which equals forty-two hours of pay for thirty-six hours of work. The next week we worked four twelve-hour days. Every other week we got a four-day weekend. We got paid for lunch. We got shift premium for night work. We didn't alternate from days to nights. I worked fewer hours and made more money than I ever did in my life.

How's this for an alternative? A stable schedule, time-and-a-half after eight hours, double time on Sundays

and holidays, and a ten percent night-shift premium.

The Cons insist that the competition is non-union and we need to organize. Damn straight. One of the major issues for VW workers in Chattanooga, Tennessee is AWS. Why should they join the UAW when AWS is a problem for UAW members? Workers are attracted to unions by good contracts. Unions that need to hire PR firms to sell contracts attract flies not new members.

Daniel Howes, a columnist at the *Detroit News* well known for his anti-union bias reported: “For all the attention Wall Street and the news media pay to union labor and its contracts with the Detroit automakers, the UAW is an increasingly small component of overall costs. CAR (Center for Automotive Research) estimates that UAW labor accounts for eight percent of Ford’s total costs, six to seven percent at GM, and just four percent at FCA.” Four percent isn’t a slice, it’s crust.

Dennis Williams quit talking about the healthcare co-op for good reason. He couldn’t explain it. In which case workers are wise to suspect it is not in their best interests. If it was, Williams could lay it out in plain English. What’s plain is that even if premiums aren’t

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deducted from UAW members’ checks, there is nothing in the contract to restrict the cost shifting of healthcare from the company to the worker. Co-pays, deductibles, and fees tend to rise faster than wages.

Second tier workers deserve to make more money than top tier workers because they do not have a pension or healthcare in retirement. They need to make more money if they are ever to save for retirement. The Concession Caucus acts like this glaring inequality doesn’t exist. My final “Jeopardy Daily Double-talk answer:” What is anti-union?

Workers everywhere are watching the UAW because we are all in the same leaky life raft. Our incomes have diminished while the investing class has made out like bandits in a lawless country. Workers deserve reparations now, not raises postponed without COLA.

The preponderance of NO votes against the UAW contract at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles is the harbinger of courage and outrage prevalent in the working class today. We want our due and we want it now.

Gregg Shotwell is a retired UAW-GM member and author of Autoworkers Under the Gun.

—Via Email: *Soldiers of Solidarity*, October 18, 2015



A permanent class of temps is not only an oxymoron it’s an atrocity in a union contract.

The American War of Independence

Revolution or counter-revolution?

BY CHRIS KINDER

Black Lives Matter movement spokes people have exhibited considerable perspicuity on the origins of police and their murderous violence against Black people lately. It is now axiomatic in the movement that modern-day police derive directly from the slave-catcher patrols of the epoch of slavery before the Civil War. There is a deep understanding among the conscious activists of the origins of racism in this country, and the role of police in enforcing a racially-biased system of repression which continued after the Civil War and Reconstruction, and down to modern times.

Yet the roots of this system's original foundation in a nascent capitalism that preserved and extended an aristocratic slavery system within it, is still little understood.

The origins of 1776

The American War of independence, otherwise known as the "American Revolution," is still thought of as a great progressive event overall, which drove out a feudal monarchy and instituted democratic principles which still seems to some to ring true even now, underneath the brutal cacophony of modern-day U.S. imperialism, with its puppet dictatorships, militarist atrocities, and racist police murders.

But the origins of this system tell a more sordid story. The events of 1775-81 in the British colonies of continental North America were in reality little more than the establishment of not only a new empire, but of one based squarely on a pre-capitalist slave system that held back and squelched both the revolutionary impulses of the multi-racial masses, and, in large measure, even the development of capitalism itself.

Yet the late 17th and 18th Centuries, like the era of the English Revolution of the 1640s, was indeed full of great revolutionary rumblings, and of outright revolts. This was the age of the big mercantile empires, which arose out of feudalism after the European "discovery" of the New World, and which were the cradle of capitalism—what Marx called the era of primitive capitalist accumulation. This era produced the bourgeois revolutions of England and France. The question is, to what extent was the American War of Independence a "revolution?" The answer has as much to do with the working class—including the slaves—of this era as it has to do with the bourgeoisie.

Grave diggers

Just as industrial capitalism produced its grave diggers in the industrial proletariat, so the period of mercantile empires produced its own working class grave-diggers: the slaves, seamen, maritime and related workers. These were the working people who produced the wealth, which enriched the merchants and bankers of this era, and thus laid the basis for the development of capitalism, and the final overthrow of kings and nobility. They fought hard for their freedom and equality. But they were not yet able to inherit the new world, which their labor had made possible.

One of the least understood, often ignored and actively covered up aspects of the origins of the American War of Independence lies in the rebellions and other mass actions that rose up from the working classes, starting with both slaves and indentured servants, acting together. Just a hundred years earlier, in 1675-76, a prosperous Virginian merchant's son and former aide to the governor named Nathaniel Bacon led an armed revolt in Virginia, in which a

small army of white and Black freemen including some women, bond servants and slaves who were promised their freedom, rose up, burned Jamestown, looted the estates of the governor's supporters, and forced the governor to flee (temporarily) to a British ship in the Chesapeake Bay. The revolt was crushed, and 23 were executed (including some of the women, who chose to die with the soldiers.)

A Leveller vs. a Royalist

The governor, Sir William Berkeley was a royalist and a representative of the old regime in England against which the parliamentarian revolution of the 1640s had been fought. Bacon, who was called a "leveler" by the governor's supporters, acted in a tradition of rebellion by servants, sailors, slaves and others that in the colonies went back at least to 1663. The restoration in England had initiated a radical "diaspora," as refugees who had supported the regicide of Charles I stowed away or otherwise fled from the mother country to the colonies, thus setting up a new tradition of revolt in the "New World" which continued right down to 1776 and beyond.

Bacon's revolt had begun as an attack on certain Indian tribes who occupied lands in the Appalachians, which were coveted by landless white settlers, which morphed into a workers and slaves rebellion. But the true historical significance of Bacon's Rebellion lies in what happened afterward: the racial identity of slavery as being for Blacks only.¹

The connection to the English revolution

Opposition to "slavery" had been a big issue among the masses in the English Revolution, but the word had not been limited to the now standard image of the

slave on the plantation. Nor was slavery identified as a racial category.

For the poor, the laborers, seamen, peasants, Diggers, Levelers and others, “slavery” referred to things like the enclosures of common lands, traditionally used for free by farmers and herders to graze flocks or plant vegetables. “Slavery” also referred to impressment, which was the practice, instituted under Cromwell at the behest of the emergent merchant bourgeoisie, to force laborers, on pain of death, to serve in the shipyards and as seamen on both naval and merchant ships.

“Taxation without representation,” which came up in England first, was also considered slavery by those who hadn’t yet received the benefits of the bourgeois revolution.

And “slavery” did also refer to the workers on those plantations and farms in the Americas, but they weren’t all Black. White English, Scots and Irish were also kidnapped to work in the colonies, “transported” as prisoners, or trapped as indentured servants. In England, the soldiers and commoners opposed all these crimes as well as the enslavement of Africans and the growing slave trade. The slave trade was something which English merchants were eager to take over from their Spanish and Portuguese competitors.

The Putney Debates

All of these issues and more were hotly contested in the Putney Debates, held under the auspices of the New Model Army, which had been set up under Cromwell to defeat the royalists. Soldiers as well as other commoners were allowed to speak their minds against a spokesman for the grandees and gentry. In these short-lived debates, the interests of the masses of working people, and those of the bankers, merchants and other bourgeois, clearly diverged.

In the American colonies, the English Revolution had ongoing effects, but with differences. The

English gentry was being displaced by the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie had many ways with which to divide and conquer the masses in their home front, but chattel slavery wasn’t one of them. With Bacon’s Rebellion, the American colonial ruling class developed a racist ideology as their chief tool to prevent future combinations of white and Black working people. Slavery began to be defined as exclusively for Blacks only, and only for a life term, while Indian servants would serve 12 years, and Europeans, four to five years. Indentured servitude was gradually phased out altogether. Virginia planters began to substitute African slaves for European indentured servants, and whites on plantations were used for policing and overseeing, not labor. This pattern began right after Bacon’s Rebellion, when some captured servants among the insurgents were sent home, while the slaves faced re-enslavement.

Despite this calculated and imposed racist divide, white and Black insurgents still revolted together over the coming century, and while punishments were more severe against African rebels, whites could still be executed for insurrection. But while Bacon’s Rebellion has been used to posit a theory of “white skin privilege,” which asserted that the white working classes materially benefitted from the special oppression of Blacks, the proletarian experience of the 17th and 18th Centuries tells a different story.

A motley crew: the mercantile proletariat

As the American colonial ruling classes continued dividing the laboring masses according to race in order to protect their rule, the emergent mercantile imperialist empires continued to produce their own gravediggers, which included all races and all nationalities in a spectacular mixing of ethnicities.

While intercontinental trade was expanding at a great rate, and mer-

chants and bankers were accumulating the capital that would soon fuel full-blown capitalism, those who made the ships, and sailed them around the globe were creating their own culture. Seamen were at the heart of the new mercantile proletariat that made the trading system work. Sailors on virtually every ship came from everywhere: England, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Italy, Turkey and Africa. The African seamen were sometimes slaves and often escaped slaves. They all learned to talk to each other in a matter of days or weeks on board any given ship, virtually inventing new pidgin languages as they went along. They were very oppressed, very combative, and they were not divided by race. “The ship was...the first place where working people from those different continents communicated.”²

The effect of this working-class consciousness in the world of the emergent bourgeois revolution cannot be underestimated. For instance, Nathaniel Bacon, besides being denounced as a “leveler,” was also called a “Masaniello” by his elite persecutors in America. A what? Masaniello was a fish-monger in Naples who, in 1647 led what was perhaps the first working-class uprising of the modern world. This was a take-over by the working and poor masses of a major port city in what was then Bourbon-French-owned southern Italy. It didn’t last long, but it left its mark on the emergent revolutionary sub-culture around the world. Seamen, many of them British, brought the word back to England, where it had an immediate effect in the Putney Debates and around the world, including in America, where it triggered this slandering of Nathaniel Bacon almost 30 years later.

New York Rebellion, 1741

Seamen, together with other allies in the maritime trades such as ship builders, sail and rope makers, long-shoremen, porters, and so forth went

on to lead revolts all over, including in the British colonies in America. One of the most important was in New York in 1741. It was characterized by a Black and white unity that drove the ruling cliques crazy.

The 1741 rebellion was plotted specifically to take place on St. Patrick's Day, because Patrick had abolished slavery in Ireland in the late 5th Century. The plot was hatched in dockside pubs such as Hughson's Tavern, which was known as communistic because it offered free food and drink to those who couldn't afford it, and served as a cultural center for song, dance, and planning resistance. The plotters were sailors, maritime workers and slaves, who, as laborers in this area along the waterfront, were an intimate part of working people generally. The pub was also a notorious site for fencing stolen materials—this was part of the underground workers' culture in the mercantile empire.

New York was a slave-trading hub, along with Boston and Providence Rhode Island, and these colonies were just as much involved with slavery as their Southern compatriots. All these cities held many slaves working in urban occupations. In the 1741 rebellion, fires would terrorize New York for weeks. The cry went up that, "the negroes are rising!" Some 13 African men were burned at the stake, and many exiled. Hughson's Tavern was destroyed, and four whites, including John Hughson and his wife, were executed along with the Blacks.³

Maritime workers' rebellions such as 1741 were numerous and went on for decades, as did slave revolts in the South. Slave revolts in the South prior to 1776 are often underestimated in contemporary accounts, which usually focus on slavery as it existed after independence. But the '76 war was in its resolution a big defeat for slave rebellion in the mainland colonies; and this had a dampening effect on future revolts.⁴

Stono's Revolt

Prior to 1776, slave revolts, and rumors of revolts, were many indeed. In Stono's Revolt in 1739, some 29 settlers were killed in South Carolina, one of the most slavery-intensive colonies. The triumphant rebels marched south to Spanish-controlled Florida, attracting other fleeing slaves on their way. Stono's revolt had revealed a factor, which was critical to both the Southern colonies and slave owners generally: a competing mercantile empire, namely the Spanish, the colonial overlords of Florida (until 1763), had helped instigate the 1739 rising.⁵

Although a slave-owning power itself, Spanish authorities, operating out of St. Augustine, used African troops over many years to attack mainland slaveholders in South Carolina. Slaves throughout the Southern colonies had come to see St. Augustine as a refuge from slavery, and many successfully fled there and found non-enslaved occupations. The colony of Georgia had been originally established as a non-slave buffer against the Spanish, to protect South Carolina; but this obviously wasn't working in the case of Stono's Rebellion. (Georgia later became a major slave-holding state.)

The practice by the big colonial powers of using African military forces against each other was pervasive, including by Britain, much to the horror of the British-American slave-holding colonists. African-staffed military forces (as well as allied Maroon colonies of escaped slaves) were even used on occasion to put down slave revolts. Much of the motivation for this practice came from the Caribbean colonies of these French, Spanish and British powers. Unlike the mainland colonies of British America, the Caribbean colonies had huge slave majorities in their populations, and were subject to frequent, large and often brutal slave revolts, which many times sent white colonists fleeing to the mainland British colonies. Here, they sought bet-

ter protection against slave revolts, and eventually became promoters of the '76 rebellion against the crown.

Now we have come down to the real reasons that the American War of Independence was initiated, and it had nothing to do with the so-called great democratic principles of the enlightenment, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. British observers gagged at the hypocrisy when they read that document at the time, due to one definitive factor: slavery.

Real reasons for the War of Independence...

The American colonists had many concerns with their colonial Motherland, which grew over time. As early as the mid 1600s, American colonists started complaining about the deficiency in the trade of Africans reaching their shores. The English Revolution had begun a process of "liberating" (*i.e.*, privatizing) trade, specifically the slave trade, from the Crown's exclusive control, which had heretofore been conducted through agencies such as the Royal African Company (RAC.) This break from mercantilism was a key factor in the bourgeois revolution: "free trade." But mercantilist rules still applied in the colonies.

At first the colonists got their way in terms of the "freeing" of the slave trade, but more and more they conflicted with London's wishes. They traded in products such as sugar with Britain's rivals France and Spain, against imperial rules that required everything to go through British ports first. And, they punched their way into the British-dominated slave trade through ports such as Providence, Rhode Island, which became the chief American slave-trading hub in the 1700s.⁶

Trade issues and, of course taxes, especially following the 1763 treaty that ended the Seven-Year War between

Britain, France and Spain (known in the U.S. as the French and Indian War), were also major factors of dispute; as was the endless question of Westward expansion, in which the colonists, both North and South, were the chief instigators of conflicts with Native Americans. But slavery was the biggest issue, and also the most under-represented and overlooked issue in most traditional histories.

...All tied in with slavery

All of the colonists' issues with Britain tied into slavery. But the chief issue is hardly mentioned: the British were rapidly becoming abolitionists! Despite the fact that British merchants were the world's chief slave-traders, and despite the fact that British New World colonies had mostly slave-driven economies, Britain itself was quickly moving toward capitalist development. There were many signals of rising abolitionism coming out of this that frightened the American slave masters, starting with Oliver Cromwell, who threatened to arm the slaves to restrain the settlers in the 1640s, and strong abolitionist statements aimed at American colonists by British parliamentarians. But two more recent incidents stood out. First was the Somerset court decision of 1772.

In Somerset, in a case brought by a visiting American colonist's slave, an English judge ruled that any slave brought into England would be free. To colonists who, unlike British rulers, had based their entire economy on slaves as lifetime property, this was anathema. Was this soon to be extended to the colonies?

The second and tipping-point event was the threat made in 1775 by the governor of Virginia—the most powerful and oldest slave colony—that Britain would give refuge to any American slave that reached its control, and arm those who were capable. That statement was throwing down the gauntlet. There had been talk before of

the British freeing slaves, including by British generals, and many slaves were already coming together in groups to plan for the day. But this ruling by Lord Dunmore, coming as it did in the year that hostilities began, was the top-per. American colonists' slave private-property, indeed their whole economy, was threatened by the British, as they had long suspected.

Meanwhile, the "motley crew" of maritime-led working people of all ethnicities and races were the driving force in the revolutionary upsurge sweeping through the colonies. Seamen were in the lead of multiple struggles, especially against impressment. As in the English Revolution, this use of "press gangs" to kidnap and coerce so-called "recruits" for labor on British ships was equated with slavery. Protests were massive, violent, and often successful in freeing victims of impressment as well as capturing the responsible British naval officers and forcing them to capitulate. Similarly, crews of ethnically diverse rebels were behind the big protests against British tax policies, such as the Boston Tea Party, which was actually many such events. Even more significant was the Gaspee incident, in which, in 1772, rebels attacked a British revenue schooner which had run aground near Providence, Rhode Island, captured the crew and set the vessel on fire.

Rebellious activity did not sit well with gentlemen

It's important to understand that all this rebellious activity from below did not sit well with the slave-holding, or slave-trade dependent elite in the colonies. The consensus among the elites was that the revolution should be moved "inside," out of the streets, and into the meeting halls of gentlemen's debates, where the property-owning powerful held the floor. John Adams for instance, a Harvard graduate and lawyer, and later the second president of the U.S., successfully defended the

British soldiers who had shot protesters in the 1770 "Boston Massacre" in court, calling the protesters a "motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes and molattoes, (sic) Irish teagues and outlandish Jack Tarrs," and making an explicitly racist appeal in court, claiming that the looks of the Afro-Indian sailor Crispus Attucks, a leader of the protest, "would be enough to terrify any person." This unpopular move coincided with his earlier legal career of defending slaveholders against slaves who had brought suits against them in court.⁷

The protestors of Boston were a seamen-led gang of maritime workers who "resented the British soldiers who labored for lower-than-customary wages along the waterfront." And they were a mixed-race group, which noted artist and "revolutionary" hero Paul Revere totally falsified in his famous engraving of the event. He rendered "the 'motley rabble' more respectable by leaving Black faces out of the crowd and putting in entirely too many gentlemen"⁸

What was really going on here? The colonial slave-owning and slavery-dependent ruling class was waging class war against both the working classes of the colonies, and their mercantile imperialist overlords in London. And they were doing it to defend and extend their political economy based on slavery.

Slaveholders ruled in America

As is well-known, all the major leaders in the War of Independence, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, *etc.*, were major slaveholders, and the others went along with the rule of the "gentlemen," despite democratic pretensions. Benjamin Franklin was a minor slaveholder who was proud of his working-class roots, and who later in life was one of the few leaders to free his own slaves. Yet he was a big defender of unity between the often-squabbling

colonies, served as governor of Pennsylvania, and represented the new slave power diplomatically.

In general the “left” of the colonial ruling class served the purpose of coopting the street fighting working class rebels into the cause of independence from Britain, which, despite its enlightenment rhetoric was all about saving the propertied slave-owning classes. Jefferson was perhaps the most hypocritical of the leading gentlemen, guilt ridden over slavery at one point, and accepting its inevitability at another. His draft of the Declaration of Independence included an anti-slavery section, which was quickly taken out on complaint from the southern colonies, while his complaint against British impressment stayed in.

Thomas Paine, a recent English immigrant to the colonies, the author of *Common Sense* and many anti-slavery pronouncements, was ultimately against the mob, and very much pro-property. His great fear was that the struggles of urban workers, African slaves, and Native Americans might combine. He said that, “...some Massanello (sic) may hereafter arise,” who “may collect together the desperate and discontented, and by assuming to themselves the powers of government, may sweep away the liberties of the continent like a deluge.”⁹

Similarly, Samuel Adams, cousin to John Adams and a noted radical agitator in the run-up to 1776, showed his true colors later in reaction to Shays Rebellion in 1786-87, which was an uprising of thousands of discontented and indebted farmers led by Daniel Shay, a war veteran. Once defeated, some argued for mercy for the rebels. But Sam Adams said, “In monarchy the crime of treason may admit of being pardoned or lightly punished, but the man who dares rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death.” Some 12 leading rebels were condemned to death.¹⁰

Slave revolts ramp up...

In the decade prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1775 the already-panicky slaveholders of the colonies were going apoplectic over slave revolts. Tacky’s Rebellion, a two-month long revolt of slaves in Jamaica in 1760, was followed by more revolts all over the Caribbean. In the British mainland colonies, slave revolts also exploded in Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, North Carolina and Charleston, South Carolina. Charleston was well-known for its slave longshore workers (now a proud union local), as well as Black port pilots, who were a rebellious lot.

In Tacky’s Rebellion, seamen dra-gooned off ships to help put down the slave revolt were totally indifferent, except when it came to looting slaveholders’ mansions, which they did! The rebellion in Boston involved Irish and Africans working together, and in the rebellion in North Carolina in 1775, a white seafarer helped make the revolt possible with arms. Thus white and Black cooperation in rebellion continued to defy the racist formula imposed after Bacon’s Rebellion.¹¹

...And slaves flee

With the Somerset decision in 1772, and Dunmore’s 1775 declaration right at the onset of the war, slaves fleeing plantations mushroomed tremendously, as did colonists’ hostility to Britain. According to Herbert Aptheker, a loosely-Marxist scholar of the Stalinist stripe, as many as 100,000 colonial slaves fled to British lines in the independence war, as well as to French or Spanish forces, or to safe havens within the colonies—some one-in-six individuals. Georgia declared that it lost 75 to 85 percent of its slaves, while South Carolina did not again have as many slaves as in 1773 until 1790. Both of these two colonies had lost most of their territory to the British by 1780.

Many of these runaways fought with the British as redcoats, and many even-

tually obtained refuge in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.¹² (Many who fought with the British died of disease in Dunmore’s botched military endeavors, and many were allegedly re-enslaved in the Caribbean, though this charge came from biased, *i.e.*, pro-slavery sources and is probably false.) Despite endless claims by slavers, the British never returned runaways or paid compensation to former owners.

The so-called “Revolutionary” War had many similarities to the Civil War almost 80 years later, in which the Confederacy claimed, not without merit, to be the true inheritors of the “spirit” of 1776. This included difficulty in retaining militia fighters, most of whom were poor white farmers with crops to get in. (The Confederacy had a huge desertion rate from poor whites who saw the war as a rich man’s fight.) Also, in both wars, whites were needed at home to patrol for slave runaways.

French help turned tide for American colonists

Nevertheless, the settler-colonists won the ’76 war, largely due to the ability to mobilize whites to fight on the basis of fear of slave revolts in which Blacks were going to slit white throats (which happened more frequently in the Caribbean revolts than in the mainland.) However, the American victory had more to do with the French alliance. By 1780 the war, which by then had long been fought in the south, was being lost by the Americans. But the French had just managed to achieve naval superiority over the British (after the last war, and since when were the French and the British NOT at war during this era...one loses count), temporarily to be sure, but by enough edge to give them a key victory over the British in Chesapeake Bay. This enabled them to ferry their troops and American troops by ship down to Yorktown (saving time,) where they trapped the British general Cornwallis by both land and sea, prompting his surrender after

a massive bombardment in 1781. French and American forces were involved in equal numbers in this engagement.

The British, worried about the European theater and other parts of their vast empire more than American colonies at this point, gave up, and signed a treaty (Paris, 1783) which was very favorable to the Americans, especially by giving them expansion rights Westward, which had been restricted since the 1763 treaty that ended the Seven Year War. This, combined with the Louisiana Purchase 20 years later, opened up vast areas, which big slave-owners coveted for expansion of their political economy, and northern merchants, bankers and others sought for land speculation (*i.e.*, privatization of land which had hitherto been free.)

After the war, American slave trading ramped up. Domestically, as plantations in the Carolinas and Georgia expanded and took up cotton production, soil-depleted Virginia and Maryland shifted to less labor-intensive crops like wheat, spurring trade in excess slaves. Internationally, following the abolition of the African slave trade

in 1807, the British, having regained their naval dominance, actively patrolled the seas to catch slave-traders--many of whom were Americans--and to otherwise harass American shipping. This led to the War of 1812, in which the unprepared Americans once again took on the British empire. As the federal government concentrated on an ultimately failed attempt to conquer Canada, the Chesapeake Bay region was left largely unprotected. Slaves once again fled to British ships by the thousands, and many served as guides to British shore patrols to make night raids on plantations throughout the Chesapeake region to free yet more slaves, often the families of the initial runaways.

Once again, the British used the runaways as troops, and refused to give them up after the war, with one astonishing exception. Receiving pleas from slaveholders, British naval officers actually invited these pitifully naive former owners (who believed their own propaganda about slaves being “kidnapped” by the British) to come on board and try to convince their former slaves to return “home” to bond-

age! Only about nine out of at least 3,400 escapees still on British ships did return, and these did so only because of age or family members still being held in slavery!¹³

Slavery was not capitalist

It is well known that the development of slavery in the colonies of all the mercantile empires provided cheap goods and huge profits to rapidly expanding commercial markets world wide, and that this trade provided the capital for the development of capitalism as a political economy, especially in England. But did this mean the slave system was capitalist? No, it did not. Participation of slave-owning producers in commercialism is nothing new; trade and commercialism date back to the early Bronze Age and beyond. In the political economy of slavery, labor power is a fixed capital investment, or constant capital; and the production process is tied to the land. This limits the master’s ability to select workers for special tasks, or to lay them off during idle periods.

The method of reinvestment between the two systems is substantially different. Under slavery, growth and expansion is accomplished by buying more land or more slaves, a quantitative process; whereas capitalism grows qualitatively through expansion of plant and equipment. Slavery limited the development of banking and industry, by tying everything into this limited land-based economy. Slavery held back technological development as well. While the invention of the cotton gin did give a big profit boost to the slave system, Eli Whitney’s other invention, that of interchangeable parts, was utilized much more in the North. These weaknesses proved fatal for the slaveholders, as the North moved ahead in production, expansion and population growth, and was essentially a capitalist political economy by the 1840s.¹⁴

Thus slavery actually held back cap-



italist development in colonial areas where it was dominant, including in the southern states of the U.S. This is the final nail in the coffin of any “revolution” of 1776. Despite all the fancy words and promises of “democracy” and “liberty,” the colonial ruling classes united around building a new mercantile empire on an aristocratic slave-based economy, when their mother country, despite its own hypocrisy as an imperial and slave-trading power, was already heading in a different direction.

In his vigorous defense of the American War of Independence as a “democratic” revolution, Herbert Aptheker falls all over himself insisting that the democratic ideals it professed somehow hold sway over the fundamental nature of the society it brought into being. Yes, this war was a successful anti-colonial overturn, but why does Aptheker say that it was “fortunate for the Revolutionary cause that political and economic considerations kept the British from actively waging an anti-slavery war?” Or that the “mass flight for freedom” by slaves during the “revolution” was “pathetic?” Or that Maroons “disturbed” considerable areas of “rebellion?” (my emphasis.) Aptheker turns Marxism on its head. It’s more important to him that the fine words of “democracy,” unfulfilled today, stand over an independent new empire based on slavery, than that the slaves therein should secure their freedom.¹⁵

The U.S. Civil War, which was indeed the revolutionary social overturn that 1776 was not, was itself unfin-

ished, in the sense that capitalism was able to tap into the Southern slave legacy to make huge profits off the various Jim Crow measures, such as the criminalization of Black people, which were quickly instituted as the era of Reconstruction ebbed and enforced by racist KKK terror. Major corporations which built fortunes off of this slavery by another name, and presenting themselves as “persons” today, continue to keep the United States in the category of oppressive oligarchy as when it began in 1776.

1 A good description of Bacon’s Rebellion and the aftermath is in Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s excellent, *The Many Headed Hydra, Sailors, Slaves Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Boston, 2000, pp. 136-37.

2 Linebaugh and Rediker, pp. 152. This work is essential for understanding how the development of the working class in the formative period of capitalism actually worked.

3 A slave graveyard was found recently in New York City. On the 1741 uprising, see: Linebaugh and Rediker, pp. 174-79.

4 Eugene D. Genovese, in *Roll Jordan Roll, the World the Slaves Made*, New York 1972,

gives a brilliant description of slave culture post-1776. But it somewhat downplays the role of slave revolts in the culture.

5 Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776, Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*, New York, 2014, p. 111.

6 W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade To the United States of America*, Harvard Historical Studies, 1896. This monograph, packed with informative research, is based on Du Bois’ doctoral dissertation. It was his first published piece.

7 Linebaugh and Rediker, p. 232 and 237; and Gerald Horne, p. 19.

8 Linebaugh and Rediker, pp. 233-34.

9 Quoted in Linebaugh and Rediker, p. 238.

10 Howard Zinn, *A Peoples History of the U.S.*, Chapter 5, “A Kind of Revolution.”

11 Linebaugh and Rediker, pp. 221-27.

12 Herbert Aptheker, *The American Revolution 1763-1783*, International Publishers, 1969, pp. 218-19.

13 A few of the escapees appealed to were in Bermuda. Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy, Slavery and the War in Virginia, 1772-1832*, New York, 2013, pp. 357-59.

14 See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery, Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South*, Vintage edition, 1967, pp. 15-23.

15 Herbert Aptheker, pp. 218-19



Corbyn Wins Labor Leadership

Now we must build the class struggle

BY GRAHAM DURHAM

*“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
...but to be young was very heaven.”*

These words on the French Revolution, by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, flashed through my mind on Saturday, September 12, 2015, as I attended the Special Conference of the Labor Party in Queen Elizabeth Conference Center in central London. As the results of the leadership contest were announced it was clear that the left candidate Jeremy Corbyn had won an overwhelming mandate, polling 251,000 votes (59.5 percent) against three candidates who supported the neo-liberal austerity program.

It was clear from the reaction of the (Tony) Blairite “suits” in the conference that they were utterly stunned, especially as the official Blair candidate, Liz Kendall, polled 4.5 percent. After a three-month campaign, in which Corbyn had spoken to packed meetings across Britain, his softly spoken anti-austerity message in defense of the welfare state and the positive role of immigration had enthused a new audience of young people and of many who had despaired of politics.

Walking in the early autumn sunshine that day down to meet the huge Refugees are Welcome Here march packed with young people in Whitehall, I also remembered that Wordsworth had quickly become disillusioned and ended up a reactionary High Tory. How to build on this tremendous movement to avoid disappointment and lose support?

Reflecting on that day five weeks later, it is clear that Corbyn faces huge and organized opposition to his policies from within the Parliamentary Labor Party—where only 14 of 232

Labor MPs voted for him—as well as from the organized party machines of the Blairites and the predictable hostility of the establishment Tory press, including the *BBC*. The strategy of these neo-liberals in the PLP is to publicly rubbish Corbyn, hope Labor polls badly in 2016 elections for London Mayor and the Scottish Assembly as a result, and try a *coup* against him. On October 12, 21 right-wing Labor MPs actually refused to back Labor opposition to Tory austerity spending.

On the positive side, the Labor Party has gained 40,000 paying members since September taking membership up to 340,000. More importantly, Corbyn has challenged the Tories on the impact of their housing policies and austerity cuts to the income of the poorest working families (known as tax credit cuts here.) Corbyn having appointed John McDonnell as Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, a left politician more hated by the neo-liberals than himself, it has been good to see McDonnell standing on picket lines. To the horror of the right, Corbyn has made clear he would never press a nuclear button and will not back down in his opposition to the renewal of the Trident nuclear submarine. In this respect topics rarely debated on British media for years such as why is Britain in NATO, why do we want to support Saudi Arabia and U.S. in their Syria campaign, why do we need nuclear weapons and why are the poor paying for the international financial crisis that are reaching thousands of people

Most encouragingly, Corbyn and McDonnell have realized that they must organize forces inside and outside the Labor Party to strengthen the

struggle being waged inside as well as building solidarity in struggle against the Tory government. The new group-ing Momentum launched this week is designed to achieve this in every part of Britain supporting strikes and social movements against austerity.

The Labor Party is a unique party in the world, genuinely founded in 1900 by the working-class organizations and developing into a mass party of government. Such a powerful party has always attracted reformists of all hues who have led the party for its entire history, ensuring that capitalism is never challenged as a system and serving as a loyal ally of U.S. imperialism since 1945. If Tony Blair represented a right-wing version of this reformism, then Corbyn and McDonnell represent a left-wing version, possibly the most radical left reformists ever to lead the Party. Labor therefore remains a mass workers party with a bourgeois leadership.

However the economic program of Corbyn, with its proposed “people’s quantitative easing” (borrowing money on the international financial markets and printing money for social investment) is a form of updated Keynesianism. It ignores the real crisis of world capitalism, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and therefore for investment to dry up and capital to migrate to low-wage economic zones. When Corbyn proposed a small program of re-nationalizing the privately owned railway system, he made clear that this would be on the basis of taking over expired contracts of private companies. This would mean that if there were five years of Labor government to 2025, only a quarter of railways would be renationalized. Socialists

would argue that this deference to capitalist property rights is wrong and the railways and much else should be nationalized without compensation.

On other issues, McDonnell has shown a tendency to wobble, reversing his previous stance of support for the Irish republican struggle in the 1980s and publicly apologizing for the deaths of British soldiers occupying Ireland.

This and other retreats partly show the huge pressure of the right in the Parliamentary Labor Party and the weakness of reformism in the face of the neo-liberals' agenda for world exploitation of workers.

Never before has it been more important for socialists in Britain to be active in the Labor Party and trade unions, supporting Corbyn against the right and challenging concessions to capitalism.

It is a period of political engagement unparalleled in the last thirty years and reflected in anti-austerity movements across the world. Our task is to help educate and support in struggle this new generation interested in the workers movement and the fight for socialism.

Graham Durham is a Unite the Union shop steward and editor of Socialist Labor bulletin.

—October 18, 2015

To the horror of the right, Corbyn has made clear he would never press a nuclear button and will not back down in his opposition to the renewal of the Trident nuclear submarine.

Student Victory in South Africa

Why was South Africa's President Jacob Zuma forced to agree to zero percent fee increase for 2016?

BY SHAHEED MAHOMED

First of all a big salute to all the students who stood up in the fight for free education, against high fees and an end to outsourcing. A big salute to the worker-student and staff alliance that was growing day by day. There are so many lessons that these struggles can teach us all. This breakthrough moment has come through many battles over the years, some partial victories and several defeats.

Firstly, imperialism draws on the experience of many struggles around the world where the masses have risen up against the state. Their aim was to contain the revolt, to prevent the broader working class from entering the battle. Thus the meeting of the demand for zero percent increase was a move by imperialism to neutralize the growing revolt. They have calculated that it is late in the year, when there generally is a downturn in struggles, and of course, for students, the final exams are looming. The dispatching of some ANC formations to "support" the student struggle is an old technique of planting forces within the masses so that at a strategic moment these forces can either lead the struggle into a dead-end, without confronting the system, or if they can gain complete control of the movement, to co-opt it as part of the state structures. (It is imperialism that is running the show; Zuma and the ANC government are merely their managers.) Just like the march of the 1000 soldiers in 2009, the state had placed provocateurs in the crowd. The leadership of the students out-manuevered them by withdrawing the students away from the open clashes, marching away from the Union buildings and then back once the situation had calmed a bit.

Historically, the workers movement in South Africa has been under the iron

grip of theory of the (NDR) National Democratic Revolution, which comes from the Stalinist tradition. According to the NDR, the white section of the population, including the white worker and white lower middle class are part of the internal colonial power. On the other hand, the NDR regards the upper Black middle class and the Black capitalist as a progressive force. Thus the NDR defines the problem as being of white capital rather than capitalism in general. The Marikana massacre, the privatization and collapse of public education by the ANC government has shown that the upper Black middle class and the Black capitalist class has not only lost any "revolutionism" but has openly sided with imperialism-capitalism. Inherent in the NDR is a permanent split in the working class. The fundamental mistake of the NDR is its claim that all whites (at least, most of them) are colonizers while at the same time claiming that all Blacks, irrespective of their class position, are progressive.

The current student struggles have exploded the NDR. Since 1994 there has been an increasing impoverishment of the white working class and of the lower white middle class. Gone are the days of statutory support. This increasing impoverishment, which has been a general trend in the masses, has undercut the artificial barriers that existed under the old regime and which have been perpetuated in part by the new regime.

The new generation is also not under the ideological sway of the South African Communist Party's (SACP) NDR. They are looking at issues afresh. Thus the material basis was there for the breaking from the notion that a white skin makes one reactionary and a

Black skin makes one progressive. The past 21 years of struggles against the ANC government has taught the masses this life lesson in practice. The basis was set for all factions of the students to unite. None of the parliamentary parties could impose themselves to lead the student uprising.

When the white and Black railway workers united a few years ago, they won their demands within three days of the beginning of their strike. Today, when white and Black students united, they won their demands within days. What was decisive was not only that they were students but that the movement was developing to involve their parents. Imagine the consequences, if in the next week, the call materialized for students and their parents to march on the Union buildings and on parliament. You would have had student and worker, white and Black united for the first time on such a scale, bringing the entire economy to a standstill. This in itself was not the only issue. Imagine if the masses had united in this way and drew the lesson of their combined strength and power. The South African Spring would have arrived. The Spring, which looked so promising when the entire mineworkers went on their revolt, but was isolated by the state and the ANC-SACP-COSATU (African National Congress-South African Communist Party-Congress of South African Trade Unions) alliance, would have come to fruition. This revolt could have inspired the working class and broader masses of the entire world.

Every regime on the planet is under threat of revolt from the masses. Imperialism needed to put out the flames. They have tried to do so for the moment with the zero percent fee increase but they also have within their arsenal every repressive weapon in the book.

The momentum was indeed very rapid, on Wednesday, October 21, the march on parliament; Thursday, October 22 the march on Luthuli

house; and Friday, the march on the Union buildings. The bourgeois media and their agents will do everything to flatter the students as if they are the center of the universe, in order to disguise the true class forces at play.

The state gave in, out of fear of revolution, not because of any caring for student needs. A task team as been set up as a means to postpone the struggle and break its momentum. There is no time frame and the state will surely frustrate this process as they try to co-opt or neutralize the student leaders. Their main concern is to prevent the working class from taking center stage in this fight. In 1976, June 16 was followed up by two general strikes in August and September. The revolt which beckons from this fight is on a much larger scale. The working class threatens to stand up united. It is this that is behind the rapid attempt to appease students. They want to curb a revolt by the working class and broader mass against the capitalist system.

There have also been other protests starting up in London, and imperialism wanted to prevent the #feesmustfall movement from reaching other countries. (In the USA for example, workers work until pension age just to pay off their student debt; student debt is bigger than debt from home loans.)

We propose that students and workers discuss placing a deadline by which free education should be achieved, an end to outsourcing, end to student debt and other demands. All those who have had their degrees held back due to debt, should have them awarded and the debt scrapped. All students and others arrested in this struggle should have the charges dropped. Increase the company tax back to 48 percent where it was in 1994 (currently it is 28 percent.) We propose building towards a national day of action of students, parents, academics and communities, to demand a deadline by which all demands be met.

The state claims that there is no money. But the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Ashman, Fine, 2011) reports that there is a long trend over decades of transfer pricing and other illegal mechanisms that the mines have used to steal from South Africa. Hundreds-of-billions of Rands are stolen every year, more than enough not only for free quality education for all, but for free healthcare, free decent housing for all and other basic needs. In 2007 alone, they report that over 600-billion Rands were stolen by Anglo American and others. The state turns a blind eye to this, the ANC leaders take up positions on mining boards; the ANC, SACP and COSATU investment companies all have shares in the mines. Thus the call for the expropriation of the mines, to fund free education and other demands, is quite legitimate.

—*Workers International Vanguard Party*, October 23, 2015

www.workersinternational.org.za

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The Migrant Crisis

What is to be done?

BY W. T. WHITNEY

Migrants are abandoning the Middle East and Africa and flooding Europe. Others leave Central America and Mexico for the United States. Humanitarian crises are at U.S. and European doorsteps. Panic reigns in Europe at the masses of strangers in their midst. Volunteers and the United Nations have mobilized. Some European governments provide social services, transportation, housing, and food. For migrants, deportation and detention loom as dangers. The dominant media concentrate on refugees' immediate problems, barriers in their way, and governments' difficulties in coping. And migrants keep on coming.

Reason at this point, you'd think, would insist on new modes of thought for fixing things. Why, for example, are people leaving? One could discover the reasons, fix them, and end the disaster. Realization might dawn that turmoil in Europe and the United States represent symptoms, and that palliation is not enough. Cure lies in treating the disease. Victims know that, and from experience. They leave in order to survive; their lives are at great risk. That's the disease asking for a cure. What causes it?

Life at risk in the three regions is a much-told and shifting story, especially as the responsible parties are named. The tale is simple enough, however, and really needs only a few words in the telling. Artists do the trick with word nuggets. The late Portuguese Nobel-winning novelist José Saramago is a case in point.

With Africa in mind, he maintains that, "Displacement from south to north is inevitable. Neither barbed—wire fences, walls, nor deportations will be worth anything; they will come by the millions. Europe will be taken

over by the hungry. They come looking for those who robbed them. There'll be no return for them because they are leaving behind a famine of centuries, and they come tracking the scent of their daily rations. Distribution is getting closer and closer. Trumpets have begun to sound. Hatred is being served and we'll need politicians who know how to rise above the circumstances."

This poignant brief on colonialism, plunder, and desperation concerns Africa. Mexican journalist David Brooks, with similar economy of words, tells why Middle Easterners migrate.

The United States, he writes in *La Jornada* newspaper, "has been the biggest seller of arms in the world ... 60 percent of these sales by the Obama administration go to their clients in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East; to whom, in Obama's first five years in the White House, [the United States] sold \$64 billion worth of arms and military services and of this, three fourths were destined for Saudi Arabia. It has another 15 billion in arms formally promised for 2014 and 2015. ... At the same time it ended the freeze on military sales to Egypt. Meanwhile in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen it's reported that massive piles of U.S. arms initially sent to allies have ended up in the hands of enemies like ISIL. While the world is shaken up by pictures of waves of refugees arriving in Europe, the reason for why they flee is lost from sight. It's the result of countries being attacked by the United States and European powers and being victims of interventions, invasions, and internal conflicts unleashed by the collapse of previously intact regimes. For all that, what is used in internal battles and/or battles between these states are largely products "made in the USA."¹

Africa experienced the bloody fruits of colonial possession. The Middle East knows death from bombs and chaos. Refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean end up in the United States to escape the consequences of extraction of resources, land monopolization, bankers' imperatives, and international-trade prerogatives. The process extended over centuries. A now-stilled poetic voice spoke for migrants forced to leave his America.

Introducing his magisterial *Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano (1973) says: "Our part of the world ... was precocious: it has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilization. ... But our region still works as a menial. It continues to exist at the service of others' needs. ... The more freedom is extended to business, the more prisons have to be built for those who suffer from that business. Our inquisitor-hangman systems function not only for the dominating external markets; they also provide gushers of profit from foreign loans. ..."

Little more need be said, save for trying to make connections. An Argentinean journalist opined recently that, "On our side, in the countries of America, we do know very well what has caused the flow of migrants, because for now more than two centuries we have been on the 'receiving' end of those migrations that brought millions of Europeans to our countries fleeing from hunger, from wars and political persecutions, from the periodic, destructive economic crises of capitalism."

Alberto Rabilotta continues: "[In] the colonial era the European powers

and the United States caused much danger and social destruction in the countries of America, in particular to the societies of the original peoples. ... [T]hose neo-colonial and imperialist policies are still causing never-healing wounds in our peoples ...from the Malvinas to Puerto Rico. ...[What] the elites of the world don't want to see is continuing or increasing migration of refugees arriving at European shorelines or at the U.S. southern frontier. But they will be doing so as long as current political, economic, and military policies go on. It's the military conflicts or lack of means for subsistence that make refugees come."

Indeed, colonialism merging into imperialism prevails in all three regions. The result is want and great suffering due to already-rich countries having commandeered their wealth and to military force, real or threatened. A latecomer as imperialist victim, the Middle East, fount of oil-based riches, caught up fast once U.S. wars and bombings began. Strong, nationalizing states that once provided for their pop-

ulations disappeared. The imperialists' job description says nothing about attending to victims. Seeking safety with their feet, these headed to where riches from their own lands are stored.

The workings of imperialism abroad, and imperialism itself, are thus on the agenda of the refugee problem. To end ongoing disaster, anti-capitalists near the centers of power have every reason to unite in common cause with refugee victims of imperialism. They may initially find familiar grounding as they respond to fascist-like mobilizations of thugs doing their masters' dirty work on their home turf. But the challenge inevitably follows of how to link popular struggle in rich countries with resistance movements abroad. It's necessary, and a first step is for those in struggle in Europe and the United States to get serious about leaving division and recriminations behind and they themselves unite. The glue, straightforward enough, would be anti-imperialist struggle on behalf of the socialist alternative to capitalism, everywhere.

W.T. Whitney Jr. is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine.

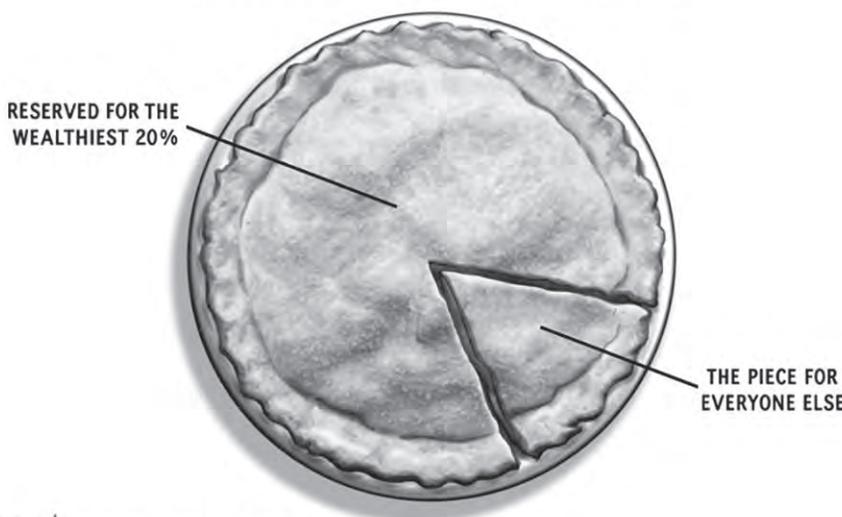
—*CounterPunch*, September 15, 2015

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/15/what-causes-migrants-to-leave-and-what-is-to-be-done/>

¹ As source for his information Brooks cites a report by William D. Hartung appearing in April 2015. See: <http://www.lobelog.com/the-obama-arms-bazaar-record-sales-troubling-results/>

“On our side, in the countries of America, we do know very well what has caused the flow of migrants, because for now more than two centuries we have been on the ‘receiving’ end of those migrations that brought millions of Europeans to our countries fleeing from hunger, from wars and political persecutions, from the periodic, destructive economic crises of capitalism.”

CAPITALISM: AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE.



Bennett Chattanooga Times Free Press

Regime Change Refugees

BY VIJAY PRASHAD

Terrible pictures arrive onto social media of refugees from Syria and elsewhere, washed up on the shores of Europe. One in particular is particularly ghastly—the body of young Aylan Kurdi. He was only three. He was from the Syrian town of Kobane, now made famous as the frontline of the battle between ISIS and the Kurdish militias (largely the YPG and PKK). Aylan Kurdi's body lay in a fetal position. Few dry eyes could turn away from that photograph.

The Jordanian cartoonist Rafat Alkhateeb drew an image of Aylan Kurdi. The infant's body lies on the other side of a barbed wire fence that separates him from the continents of the world.

Children like Aylan Kurdi are disposable in the world's imagination. Over a thousand Syrian children have died in this conflict. Tens-of-thousands of children die in conflicts around the world. The United Nations estimates that half of all deaths in conflict zones are of children. In 1995, UNICEF reported that two million children had died in conflicts over the previous decade. The rate has not decreased. The statistic harms the consciousness. But it is the picture of Aylan Kurdi that has unsettled our ethics—does the world really care about the damage done to children as a result of war and diabolical trade policies? The evidence suggests that the world does not care at all. What care there is comes in the brief instance when we glance at a photograph such as that of the dead body of Aylan Kurdi. He breaks our heart. But he will do little to change our politics.

The West believes that it is acceptable for it to intervene to influence the political economy of the Third World—to force IMF-driven “reforms” on these states. Capital is allowed to be

borderless. That freedom does not apply to labor—to people. Migration is forbidden. It is hateful. Racist ideas allow fortresses to be built against the natural movement of people. Barbed wire fences and concentration camp towers outline the U.S.-Mexico border, just as such fences and the Mediterranean Moat block the passage into Europe. If Capital destroys the society here, its people cannot be allowed to migrate there.

The West believes that it is acceptable for it to overthrow governments and bomb its enemies in the lands of the Third World. It sees this as the limit of its humanitarianism. It calls this humanitarian interventionism or, in the language of the UN, “responsibility to protect” (R2P). When it breaks states, as it did in Libya, the West takes no responsibility for the broken lives of the people in those zones. Bombs are borderless. But war refugees must stand in *queues* and be held in concentration camps. They are not allowed freedom of movement.

Hypocrisy is central to elite Western ethics. It uses words like “freedom” and “equality” but mostly means its opposite. The freedom of human beings and equality between human beings is not relevant. More important is the freedom of Money. It is Money that cannot have its liberty impinged.

Both Europe and the United States want to build walls to prevent the free movement of people. The Statue of Liberty in New York harbor bears the words, “Give me your tired, your poor; your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” This is Emma Lazarus' poem from 1883. No longer do these words make sense. There is no exhortation to send the tired, the poor, the huddled masses to safety. There is mostly the State-led jingoism that sets

up barriers and threatens deportations. The more appropriate song is by Woody Guthrie, “Deportee,” from 1961: “They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves. We died in your hills, we died in your deserts, we died in your valleys and died on your plains.” He would have added, we died on your shores.

Such toxic lineages are not alone. There is also the people's ethics—banners in Germany unfurled at football games to welcome refugees, convoys of ordinary British nations to Calais (France) to help feed and clothe the refugees, demonstrations of radical internationalists in Eastern Europe against the neo-fascists and the racists. There are also, in the United States, the Dream Defenders and United We Dream who fight for undocumented residents, who formed part of the massive pro-immigrant rallies that have now adopted May Day as their day. These indications of the good side of history are often ignored by the press, which has a tendency to hype up the bad side to boost ratings. Such gestures of solidarity tell us what is possible in the West.

Aylan Kurdi is dead. Many other Aylan Kurdis remain. Our outrage at this callous death should drive us deeper into a politics that calls for a draw-down of the violence in Syria and for a serious peace process in Libya, that forces us to be resolute in our fight against IMF and NATO destruction of societies and states. In essence, this is a call for a resolute anti-imperialism. Imperialism, after all, is extra-economic force such as war or the unequal drafting of trade rules to allow a small capitalist minority to sequester the largest share of globally produced social wealth. Refugees such as Aylan Kurdis are “climate change refugees,”

“regime change refugees” and “IMF refugees.”

The West’s managers will only talk about tragedies and security. For them people are migrants and deportees, those whose mobility must be constrained. This is a limited imagination. They will not want to talk about the causes of the problem—the wars and economic policies that throw millions of people into the status of refugee. That is our job. In the name of Aylan Kurdi.

Vijay Prashad, director of International Studies at Trinity College, is the editor of Letters to Palestine, (Verso).

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/04/regime-change-refugees-on-the-shores-of-europe/>

Capital is allowed to be borderless. That freedom does not apply to labor—to people. Migration is forbidden. It is hateful. Racist ideas allow fortresses to be built against the natural movement of people.

A Year After Ayotznapa

Why we need an anti-capitalist and socialist organization

BY LEFT VOICE

The massacre in Iguala, Mexico in September 2014 made the crude reality of the Mexican political regime even more evident. The disappearance of the 43 education students (*normalistas*) in Ayotznapa sparked a massive movement condemning the entire regime, taking up the slogans #ItWasTheState and #PeñaOut (in reference to Peña Nieto, the Mexican President.) In light of these events, there is a debate amongst the left about the youth and workers’ tasks.

The movement for Ayotznapa and for the return of the 43 students alive reached its highest point on November 20 when Peña Nieto was forced to cancel the military parade in the Zócalo (main square) of Mexico City and a mass of hundreds-of-thousands marched to the center of the city. Workers were also participating in the movement and organized work stoppages, particularly the CNTE (teachers’ union) and the UNT (“opposing” unions) with the telephone workers’ union. This goes to show that the mobilizations were so large that they forced the unions that were not aligned with the government to mobilize the rank and file workers. This movement sparked a deep crisis of political representation: the massacre in Iguala posed a new turning point in the history of the country.

The end of a left

The massacre in Iguala put an end to the main “left wing” party, the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution,) as the opposition party founded in the ’80s that came out of the union of Maoist, former PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) militants, ex-guerrilla fighters, Stalinists, and ex-PSUM (United Socialist Party of Mexico,) founded in the ’80s. The PRD

was directly responsible for the massacre in Iguala; the municipal president, Abarca, who is part of the PRD, played a key part in the disappearance of the 43. Even though the PRD had already collaborated with Peña Nieto on the Pact for Mexico to implement the Structural Reforms (the labor, energy and education reforms), the massacre in Iguala put an end to the PRD’s identity as the party of the “left.” Thus, the massacre in Iguala politically destroyed the so called “institutional left,” the “modern left,” which is in reality part of the of the corrupt and rotten Mexican regime: a machine designed to disappear people. In their book, Manuel Aguilar Mora and Claudio Albertani they argued that this signaled the end of this “left.”

The Ayotznapa movement surpassed the traditional left organizations. For example, the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation,) despite having participated in the global actions for the return of the 43, expressed the political impotence of autonomism *via* their declaration on November 16 when the Zapatista leadership suggested that those who were mobilizing for the 43 were doing so because it was a “fad.” During the last few days of the mobilizations, the EZLN limited their demonstration of solidarity to their seminar on confronting the “capitalist Hydra,” in which they developed the idea that “each individual should cut the head off the Hydra,” which, in turn, further isolates the different struggles.

Community organizations also showed their political impotence by proposing the Ayotznapa movement become one without objectives. These community organizations, mostly in Guerrero, aimed to develop the movement clear aims and strengthened illu-

sions of “popular power” without overthrowing Peña Nieto’s government, echoing the time they proposed (in the Popular National Assembly) co-existing with union leadership “without criticizing them.”

The Ayotzinapa movement also presented a new generation of youth that came out to struggle after the #YoSoy132 movement and the movement in solidarity with the CNTE in 2013. Thousands of students throughout the country organized student assemblies, were repressed, and protested for the return of the 43 students—alive. The strong presence of youth in the movement also raised the question of politicization and an important discussion about strategy. What was necessary for Peña Nieto’s downfall? They debated in youth assemblies; it should be pointed out that this movement founded a new generation of activists, intellectuals, and militants.

The massacre in Iguala showed that the so-called transition to democracy never existed, and it revealed the crude reality that the country was full of hidden mass graves, that the regime still practices forced disappearances with the participation of the 27th Armed Forces Battalion that tortured the disappeared.

Disappearances, militarization, and misery are the rule. As José Revueltas stated years ago, In Mexico, “barbaric democracy” is the rule of thumb. As Walter Benjamin wrote, “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘emergency situation’ in which we live isn’t the exception, it’s the rule.”

The emergence of a new left

The Italian intellectual Massimo Modonesi suggests that the Ayotzinapa movement presented a new opportunity for the left. It indicated that there exists a subordinate left; an opposing left that is still being born. It was a reality that was in the making before Ayotzinapa, particularly through the

MPJD (Movement for Peace, Justice and Dignity of 2011), #YoSoy132 and the teachers’ struggle of 2013. For years, new anti-capitalist organizations were growing in number due to an increase of a new wave of mobilizations.

Some intellectuals, like Modonesi, argue that Mexico is a breeding ground for the emergence of anti-capitalist and socialist revolutionary projects. It’s fertile terrain. There is a serious crisis of political representation and great unrest that still has not been capitalized by the autonomist left (EZLN) or the National Regeneration Movement, MORENA: although Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, AMLO, is gathering the most political support, it is still not enough to co-opt the angst that arose in response to the massacre. In many ways, the Ayotzinapa crisis opened a new historical opportunity for the left: the rise of a new workers’ and youth anti-capitalist and socialist organization on a national level is possible.

In the last few months a series of important workers’ struggles have developed: San Quintín, CNTE (Coordinating Committee of the Education Workers, a radical and powerful wing of Mexico’s national teachers union,) EATON, Foxconn, Sandak, Honda, the IMSS (Mexican Institute for Social Security, Health Workers,) who, despite the attacks on workers, insist that the working class be an entity that struggles and resists.

The socialists of the MTS (Movement of Socialist Workers) have participated in the latest and most advanced struggles of the youth, workers, women and the LBGT community. Recently, we participated in #YoSoy132 and the struggles with the CNTE, SME (Mexican Union of Electricity Workers,) and IMSS. We founded the women’s group *Pan y Rosas Mexico*, which is a renowned organization that calls for a Women’s Day demonstration every year. During the Ayotzinapa movement, we put all our strength in

broadening the movement for the presentation of the 43 students alive.

We are part of the left that never aligned itself with the Mexican regime. During the most critical times of the movement, we fought for the idea that the workers and the youth could impose the fall of Peña Nieto by revolutionary means. In November, we stressed the idea that it was key for the movement to call for a general strike that unified the opposition unions such as the CNTE, the UNT and other unions like the CTM (historically aligned with the PRI), calling to break with the isolation and join with non-unionized workers. As in Egypt and Tunisia, the fall of Peña Nieto was possible by the independent mobilization of the working class, implementing its own historical methods of struggle.

A year after the disappearance of the 43 students, the attacks continue and escalate. The selected killings of students and journalists continue, such as Rubén Espinosa and Nadia Vera. Austerity plans also persist, for example in public education, the pillaging of natural resources, and the expropriation of the indigenous lands of Xochicuautla to build a highway.

Alongside the unification of all the current struggles, its imperative to build a strong anti-capitalist, socialist organization that sets its objective in rooting itself in the heart of the industrial Mexican working class. The industrial working class, due to its social composition and position of strength in the economy, will be the key player of a second Mexican revolution, a revolution that can only be working-class and socialist. Therefore, there is an urgent need to build a new anti-capitalist socialist organization, of the workers and the youth. We invite you to learn about the MTS (Movimiento de Trabajadores Socialistas).

Leon Trotsky suggested that “Without a guiding organization, the energy of the masses would dissipate

like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam.” In many ways, during the Ayotzinapa crisis, a revolutionary leadership was missing to help the movement defeat Peña Nieto. Inside a country filled with discontent, and with the growing attacks against the workers from the government, the construction of this organization is of essence.

—Left Voice, September 23, 2015

<http://leftvoice.org/A-year-after-Ayotznapa-Why-there-is-a-need-for-an-anti-capitalist-and-socialist-organization>

Arms Embargo on Israel

64 Public figures, seven Nobel laureates, call for arms embargo on Israel

BY STEVEN KATSINERIS

Sixty-four public figures, including seven Nobel Peace Prize winners, have called for an international arms embargo on Israel for its “war crimes and possible crimes against humanity” in Gaza. The statement came in a letter published in Britain’s *The Guardian* on Friday.

“Israel has once again unleashed the full force of its military against the captive Palestinian population, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip, in an inhumane and illegal act of military aggression. Israel’s ability to launch such devastating attacks with impunity largely stems from the vast international military cooperation and trade that it maintains with complicit governments across the world,” read the statement.

“We call on the UN and governments across the world to take imme-

diately steps to implement a comprehensive and legally binding military embargo on Israel, similar to that imposed on South Africa during apartheid,” the letter concluded.

Among the signators were Nobel peace laureates Desmond Tutu, Betty Williams, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Jody Williams, Adolfo Peres Esquivel, Mairead Maguire and Rigoberto Menchu.

Also signing were academics Noam Chomsky and Rashid Khalidi, filmmakers Mike Leigh and Ken Loach, musicians Roger Waters and Brian Eno, writers Alice Walker and Caryl Churchill, and journalists John Pilger and Chris Hedges. Two Israelis, academics Ilan Pappé and Nurit Peled, signed the letter as well.

Of Course, It is an Intifada

This is what you must know

BY RAMZY BAROUD

When my book *Searching Jenin* was published soon after the Israeli massacre in the Jenin refugee camp in 2002, I was quizzed repeatedly by the media and many readers for conferring the word “massacre” on what Israel has depicted as a legitimate battle against camp-based “terrorists.”

The interrogative questions were aimed at relocating the narrative from a discussion regarding possible war crimes into a technical dispute over the application of language. For them, the evidence of Israel’s violations of human rights mattered little.

This kind of reductionism has often served as the prelude to any discussion concerning the so-called Arab-Israeli conflict: events are depicted and

defined using polarizing terminology that pay little heed to facts and contexts, and focus primarily on perceptions and interpretations.

Hence, it should also matter little to those same individuals whether or not Palestinian youth such as Isra’ Abed, 28, shot repeatedly on October 9 in Affula—and Fadi Samir, 19, killed by Israeli police a few days earlier, were, in fact, knife-wielding Palestinians who were in a state of self-defense and shot by the police. Even when video evidence emerges countering the official Israeli narrative and revealing, as in most other cases, that the murdered youth posed no threat, the official Israeli narrative will always be accepted as facts, by some. Isra’, Fadi, and all the rest are “terrorists” who endangered

the safety of Israeli citizens and, alas, had to be eliminated as a result.

The same logic has been used throughout the last century, when the current so-called Israeli Defense Forces were still operating as armed militias and organized gangs in Palestine, before it was ethnically-cleansed to become Israel. Since then, this logic has been applied in every possible context in which Israel has found itself, allegedly: compelled to use force against Palestinian and Arab “terrorists,” potential “terrorists” along with their “terror infrastructure.”

It is not at all about the type of weapons that Palestinians use, if any at all. Israeli violence largely pertains to Israel’s own perception of its self-tai-

lored reality: that of Israel being a beleaguered country, whose very existence is under constant threat by Palestinians, whether they are resisting by use of arms, or children playing at the beach in Gaza. There has never been a deviation from the norm in the historiography of the official Israeli discourse which explains, justifies or celebrates the death of tens-of-thousands of Palestinians throughout the years: the Israelis are never at fault, and no context for Palestinian “violence” is ever required.

Much of our current discussion regarding the protests in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and as of late at the Gaza border is centered on Israeli priorities, not Palestinian rights, which is clearly prejudiced. Once more, Israel is speaking of “unrest” and “attacks” originating from the “territories,” as if the priority is guaranteeing the safety of the armed occupiers—soldiers and extremist settlers, alike.

Rationally, it follows that the opposite state of “unrest,” that of “quiet” and “lull,” are when millions of Palestinians agree to being subdued, humiliated, occupied, besieged and habitually killed or, in some cases, lynched by Israeli Jewish mobs or burned alive, while embracing their miserable fate and carrying on with life as usual.

The return to “normalcy” is thus achieved; obviously, at the high price of blood and violence, which Israel has a monopoly on, while its actions are rarely questioned, Palestinians can then assume the role of the perpetual victim, and their Israeli masters can continue manning military checkpoints, robbing land and building yet more illegal settlements in violation of international law.

The question, now, ought not to be basic queries about whether some of the murdered Palestinians wielded knives or not, or truly posed a threat to the safety of the soldiers and armed settlers. Rather, it should be centered prin-

cipally on the very violent act of military occupation and illegal settlements in Palestinian land in the first place.

From this perspective then, wielding a knife is, in fact, an act of self-defense; arguing about the disproportionate, or otherwise, Israeli response to the Palestinian “violence” is, altogether moot.

Cornering oneself with technical definitions is dehumanizing to the collective Palestinian experience.

“How many Palestinians would have to be killed to make a case for using the term ‘massacre?’” was my answer to those who questioned my use of the term. Similarly, how many would have to be killed, how many protests would have to be mobilized and for how long before the current “unrest,” “upheaval” or “clashes” between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli army become an Intifada?”

And why should it even be called a “Third Intifada.?”

Mazin Qumsiyeh describes what is happening in Palestine as the “14th Intifada.” He should know best, for he authored the outstanding book, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*. However, I would go even further and suggest that there have been many more intifadas, if one is to use definitions that are relevant to the popular discourse of the Palestinians themselves. Intifadas—shaking off—become such when Palestinian communities mobilize across Palestine, unifying beyond factional and political agendas and carry out a sustained campaign of protests, civil disobedience and other forms of grassroots resistance.

They do so when they have reached a breaking point, the process of which is not declared through press releases or televised conferences, but is unspoken, yet everlasting.

Some, although well-intentioned, argue that Palestinians are not yet

ready for a third intifada, as if Palestinian uprisings are a calculated process, carried out after much deliberation and strategic haggling. Nothing can be further from the truth.

An example is the 1936 Intifada against British and Zionist colonialism in Palestine. It was initially organized by Palestinian Arab parties, which were mostly sanctioned by the British Mandate government itself. But when the *fellahin*, the poor and largely uneducated peasants, began sensing that their leadership was being co-opted—as is the case today—they operated outside the confines of politics, launching and sustaining a rebellion that lasted for three years.

The *fellahin* then, as has always been the case, carried the brunt of the British and Zionist violence, as they fell in droves. Those unlucky enough to be caught, were tortured and executed: Farhan al-Sadi, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Mohammed Jamjoom, Fuad Hijazi are among the many leaders of that generation.

These scenarios have been in constant replay since, and with each intifada, the price paid in blood seems to be constantly increasing. Yet more intifadas are inevitable, whether they last a week, three or seven years, since the collective injustices experienced by Palestinians remain the common denominator among the successive generations of *fellahin* and their descendants of refugees.

What is happening today is an Intifada, but it is unnecessary to assign a number to it, since popular mobilization does not always follow a neat rationale required by some of us. Most of those leading the current Intifada were either children, or not even born when the Intifada al-Aqsa started in 2000; they were certainly not living when the Stone Intifada exploded in 1987. In fact, many might be oblivious of the details of the original Intifada of 1936.

This generation grew up oppressed, confined and subjugated, at complete

odds with the misleading “peace process” lexicon that has prolonged a strange paradox between fantasy and reality. They are protesting because they experience daily humiliation and have to endure the unrelenting violence of occupation.

Moreover, they feel a total sense of betrayal by their leadership, which is corrupt and co-opted. So they rebel, and attempt to mobilize and sustain their rebellion for as long as they can, because they have no horizon of hope outside their own action.

Let us not get bogged down by details, self-imposed definitions and numbers. This is a Palestinian Intifada, even if it ends today. What truly matters is how we respond to the pleas of this oppressed generation; will we continue to assign greater importance to the safety of the armed occupier than to the rights of a burdened and oppressed nation?

Dr. Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of Palestine Chronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London).

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/14/of-course-it-is-an-intifada-this-is-what-you-must-know/>

**The question, now... ..
should be centered principally on the very violent act of military occupation and illegal settlements in Palestinian land in the first place.**

Israel and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

How Yarmouk came about: Israel's unabashed role in the Syrian refugee crisis

BY RAMZY BAROUD

When Zionist Haganah militias carried out Operation Yiftach, on May 19, 1948, the aim was to drive Palestinians in the northern Safad District which had declared its independence a mere five days earlier, outside the border of Israel.

The ethnic cleansing of Safad and its many villages was not unique to that area. In fact, it was the *modus operandi* of Zionist militias throughout Palestine. Soon after Israel's independence, and the conquering of historic Palestine, the militias were joined together to form the Israeli armed forces.

Not all villages, however, were completely depopulated. Some residents in villages like Qaytiyya near the River Jordan, remained in their homes. The village, located between two tributaries of the Jordan—al-Hasbani and Dan rivers—hoped that normality would return to their once tranquil village once the war subsides.

Their fate, however, was worse than that of those who were forced out, or who fled for fear of a terrible fate. Israeli forces returned nearly a year later, rounded the remaining villagers into large trucks, tortured many and dumped the villagers somewhere south of Safad. Little is known about their fate, but many of those who survived ended up in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria.

Yarmouk was not established until 1957, and even then it was not an “official” refugee camp. Many of its inhabitants were squatters in Sahl al-Yarmouk and other areas, before they were brought to Shaghour al-Basatin, near Ghouta. The area was renamed Yarmouk.

Many of Yarmouk's refugees originate from northern Palestine, the Safad District, and villages like Qaytiyya, al-

Ja'ouneh and Khisas. They subsisted in that region for nearly 67 years. Unable to return to Palestine, yet hoping to do so, they named the streets of their camp, its neighborhoods, even its bakeries, pharmacies and schools, after villages from which they were once driven.

When the Syrian uprising-turned-civil-war began in March 2011, many advocated that Palestinians in Syria should be spared the conflict. The scars and awful memories of other regional conflicts—the Jordan civil war, the Lebanese civil war, the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq wherein hundreds-and-thousands of Palestinian civilians paid a heavy price—remained in the hearts and minds of many.

But calls for “*hiyad*”—neutrality—were not heeded by the war's multiple parties, and the Palestinian leadership, incompetent and clustered in Ramallah, failed to assess the seriousness of the situation, or provide any guidance—moral or political.

The results were horrific. Over 3,000 Palestinians were killed, tens-of-thousands of Palestinian refugees fled Syria, thousands more became internally displaced and the hopeless journey away from the homeland continued on its horrific course.

Yarmouk—a refugee camp of over 200,000 inhabitants, most of whom are registered refugees with the UN agency, UNRWA—was reduced to less than 20,000. Much of the camp stood in total ruins. Hundreds of its residents either starved to death or were killed in the war. The rest fled to other parts of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Europe.

The most natural order of things would have been the return of the refugees to Safad and villages like Qaytiyya.

Yet, few made such calls, and those demands raised by Palestinians officials were dismissed by Israel as non-starters.

In fact while countries like Lebanon had accepted 1.72 million refugees (one in every five people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee), Turkey 1.93 million, Jordan 629,000, Iraq 249,000, and Egypt 132,000, Israel made no offer to accept a single refugee.

Israel, whose economy is the strongest in the region, has been the most tight-fisted in terms of offering shelter to Syrian refugees. This is a double sin considering that even Syria's Palestinian refugees, who were expelled from their own homes in Palestine, were also left homeless.

Not surprisingly, there was no international uproar against a financially able Israel for blatantly shutting its door in the face of desperate refugees, while bankrupt Greece was rightly chastised for not doing enough to host hundreds-of-thousands of refugees.

According to UN statistics, by the end of August of this year, nearly 239,000 refugees, mostly Syrians, landed on Greek islands seeking passage to mainland Europe. Greece is not alone. Between January and August this year 114,000 landed in Italy (coming mostly from Libya), seeking safety. Around the same time last year, almost as many refugees were recorded seeking access to Europe.

Europe is both morally and politically accountable for hosting and caring for these refugees, considering its culpability in past Middle East wars and ongoing conflicts. Some are doing exactly that, including Germany, Sweden and others, while countries, like Britain, have been utterly oblivious and downright callous towards refugees. Still, thousands of ordinary European citizens, as would any human being with an ounce of empathy, are volunteering to help refugees in both Eastern and Western Europe.

The same cannot be told of Israel, which has alone ignited most of the Middle East conflicts in recent decades. Instead the debate in Israel continues to center on demographic threats, while loaded with racial connotations about the need to preserve a so-called Jewish identity. Strangely, few in the media have picked up on that or found such a position particularly egregious at the time of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

In recent comments Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, rejected calls to admit Syrian refugees into Israel, once more unleashing the demographic rationale, which sees any non-Jews in Israel, be they African refugees, Syrians, or even the country's original Palestinian inhabitants, as a "demographic threat."

"Israel is a very small state. It has no geographic depth or demographic depth," he said on September 6th.

When Israel was established on the ruins of destroyed Palestine, Palestinian Jews were a small minority. It took multiple campaigns of ethnic cleaning, which created the Palestinian refugee problem in the first place, to create a Jewish majority in the newly-founded Israel. Now, Palestinian Arabs are only a fifth of Israel's 8.3 million population. And for many in Israel, even such small numbers are a cause for alarm!

While the refugees of Qaytiyya, who became refugees time and again, are still denied their internationally-enshrined right of return per United Nations reso-

lution 194 of December 1948, Israel is allowed a special status. It is neither rebuked nor forced to repatriate Palestinian refugees, and is now exempt from playing even if a minor role in alleviating the deteriorating refugee crisis.

Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia, the UK, Italy and other European countries, along with rich Arab Gulf countries must be relentlessly pressured to help Syrian refugees until they safely return home. Why then should Israel be spared this necessary course of action? Moreover, it must, even more forcefully be pressured to play a part in relieving the refugee crisis, starting with the refugees of Qaytiyya, who relive the fate they suffered 67 years ago.

Dr. Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London).

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/17/how-yarmouk-came-about-israels-unabashed-role-in-the-syrian-refugee-crisis/>



‘Uninhabitable’

UN report says total destruction of Gaza nearly complete

BY JON QUEALLY

Citing a series of vicious military attacks in recent years coupled with severe shortages of water, medical supplies, and shelter created by an internationally-backed blockade, a new report issued by the United Nations warns that if current trends continue the Gaza Strip will be virtually “uninhabitable” within five years.

Home to approximately 1.8 million people, Gaza is often referred to the largest open-air prison in the world and the latest report, published by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), is just the latest official assessment¹ to paint a devastating picture of life inside the sealed borders of Gaza which has now faced eight years of economic blockade and three large-scale military operations by Israel since 2009.

According to UNCTAD, military aggression and the ongoing blockade have accelerated the “de-development” of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, a process by which development is not merely hindered but reversed. The combined factors of war and economic suffocation, the report says, has shattered Gaza’s ability to export and produce for the domestic market, ravaged its already debilitated infrastructure, left no time for reconstruction and recovery, and accelerated the sharp decline in overall well-being of all who live there.

As summarized by the report, the metrics are devastating:

- In addition to the 500,000 people who have been displaced in Gaza as a result of the most recent military operation, the report estimates significant economic losses, including the destruction or severe damage of more than

20,000 Palestinian homes, 148 schools and 15 hospitals and 45 primary healthcare centers.

- As many as 247 factories and 300 commercial centers were fully or partially destroyed. Serious damage was inflicted on Gaza’s sole power plant. The agricultural sector alone suffered \$550 million in losses.
- It is estimated that, even before the military operations in July and August 2014, Gaza’s electricity supply capacity was not enough to meet 40 percent of the demand (2012 figures). The electricity and energy crisis is exacerbated by the fact that the Palestinian National Authority is not permitted to develop and use the offshore natural gas fields discovered since the 1990s on Gaza’s Mediterranean coast.
- In 2014, unemployment in Gaza reached 44 percent, the highest level on record. Joblessness was particularly severe among young women Palestinian refugees in Gaza, with more than eight out of ten women out of work. The economic well-being of Palestinians living in Gaza is worse today than two decades ago. *Per capita* gross domestic product has shrunk by 30 percent since 1994.
- Food insecurity affects 72 percent of households, and the number of Palestinian refugees solely reliant on food distribution from United Nations agencies had increased from 72,000 in 2000 to 868,000 by May 2015, representing half the population of Gaza.
- The report maintains that even before the three military opera-

tions, the economic blockade in place since 2007 had already led to the large-scale cessation of productive operations and loss of employment. Exports from Gaza have been almost completely blocked, imports and transfers of cash severely restricted and the flow of all but the most basic humanitarian goods suspended.

Well aware of the scale of the destruction and the plight of the Palestinian people living under occupation in the Gaza Strip, over 150,000 individuals and dozens of humanitarian organizations last week told world leaders that the international community is long overdue in forcing Israeli government to lift their blockade on Gaza and allow its residents the right to rebuild their lives.

In an interview, UNCTAD’s Mahmoud Elkhafif detailed aspects of the new report and emphasized the role that international donors have to support the recovery effort in Gaza while also addressing the underlying issues of occupation, the economic blockade, and the devastation of war.²

—*Common Dreams*, September 2, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/09/02/uninhabitable-un-report-says-total-destruction-gaza-nearly-complete>

¹ http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb62d3_en.pdf

² See video interview of Mahmoud Elkhafif at:

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/09/02/uninhabitable-un-report-says-total-destruction-gaza-nearly-complete>

The Yemen Tragedy

The Yemen tragedy and the ongoing crisis of the left in the United States

BY AJAMU BARAKA

“... it is Western propaganda that is capable of mobilizing the masses for whatever ends or goals anywhere in the world. For whatever reasons, it can trigger coups, conflicts, terrible violence, and ‘strive for change.’ It can call the most peaceful large country on earth the most violent; it can describe it as the real threat to world peace; and it can call a bunch of Western nations that have been, for centuries, terrorizing the world, the true upholders of peace and democracy, and almost everybody believes it. Almost all people in the West believe it.”
—Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare*

“... trenches of ideas are more powerful than weapons.” —José Martí

After months of horrific scenes of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean where literally thousands of human beings were dying at sea, European public opinion was finally mobilized to respond to this movement of people. However, the anguished expressions of concern from the general public and government leaders in Europe was a far cry from the response that met the first wave of migrants that was largely African.

In response to that migration, European authorities openly talked of launching military attacks on the boats in Libya to stop the “flood” of these “illegal” immigrants into Europe, even after experts cautioned them that military attacks would result in even more deaths at sea.

What changed? The racial composition of the majority of the migrants shifting away from Sub-Saharan Africans to refugees from the various conflict zones of Iraq and Syria, captured in the image of the globally disseminated image of Aylan Kurdi, the Kurdish child from the devastated city

of Kabani. But even more importantly, European and U.S. propaganda could exploit this flow of humanity from Syria politically.

This example is pertinent to the discussion here because it raises two issues related to Yemen: first, the ease in which public opinion is influenced by Western propagandists (I include both the official state entities responsible for psychological operations (psy-ops) directed at the public and the corporate media that largely collaborates with these efforts because of shared ideological positions and worldviews,) and secondly, how humanitarian concerns are selectively manipulated to prepare and justify military attacks from the U.S./EU/NATO axis of domination.

In Yemen, six months of relentless and seemingly indiscriminate bombing by the repressive Wahhabist dictatorship of Saudi Arabia has cost the lives of over four thousands human beings, who according to the United Nations and major human rights organizations have been primarily civilians.

Along with this wanton murder, the Saudi government and its allies from the contemptuous gang of corrupt Arab monarchies known as the Gulf Cooperation Council benefit from the diplomatic cover and military support from the equally contemptuous U.S. state. Together, they have created a humanitarian catastrophe in one of the poorest nations on the planet.

Yet, for the majority of the people in the U.S., the carnage in Yemen simply does not exist because it has not been in the interests of the rulers to draw the attention of the American people to it.

Therefore, the U.S. public is unaware that the U.S. is participating in the naval blockade of a country that imports 80 percent of its food by sea.

They don’t know that the bombing, blockade, and massive displacement has resulted in widespread famine with more than 78 percent of the population now in need of humanitarian assistance. They never read the report from Peter Maurer, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who said that “Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years.”

And while U.S. propagandists are preparing the people for an even more direct intervention into Syria, using the absurd pretext that somehow the imposition of a “no fly zone” is an appropriate response to the humanitarian concerns of refugee flows from Syria to Europe, the humanitarian emergency created by the war in Yemen is largely uncovered and outside the bounds of polite conversation in the U.S.

This conspiracy of silence has translated into impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It has meant that the central role played by the U.S. in this criminal assault occurred without any opposition from mainstream politicians or most radicals and leftists in the U.S.

Do non-European lives really matter to white leftists?

The political reaction to the killing spree in Yemen that now eclipses the murderous assault on Gaza by Israel, has not only been met with indifference but many leftists and radicals in the U.S. have given their support to Bernie Sanders who said very clearly that under his administration the Saudis would be given even more latitude to carry out military operations in the Middle-East. The Sanders’ position is that the Saudis needed to get their “hands a little dirty.” For Bernie and his supporters, the mischief that the

Saudi government and private individuals have been engaged in across the region financing groups like ISIS wasn't dirty enough.

After years of drone attacks from the U.S., the end of the agony of the people of Yemen is nowhere in sight. These attacks targeted weddings, funerals, first responders to an initial drone attack and so-called signature strikes where an anonymous person is murdered because he fits the behavior profile of a "terrorist." After pounding the country into rubble with six months of terror from the sky, the Saudis are now involved in ground operations in Yemen that will only increase the death toll and the humanitarian disaster.

This is the world that a President Sanders promises—continued war crimes from the sky with drone strikes and Saudi led terror in support of the Western imperial project.

This is not to suggest that everyone who might find a way to support Sanders is a closet racist and supporter of imperialism. I know plenty of folks of all backgrounds who "feel the Bern." There is, however, an objective logic to their uncritical support that they cannot escape and which I believe represents the ongoing crisis of radicalism in the U.S. and Europe.

The Sanders' campaign, like the Obama phenomenon before it, does not offer a program or strategic direction for addressing the current crisis and contradictions of Western capitalist societies. Instead, it is an expression of the moral and political crisis of Western radicalism. This crisis—which is reflective of the loss of direction needed to inform vision, and fashion a creative program for radical change—is even more acute in the U.S. than Western Europe. Yet, what unites both radical experiences is a tacit commitment to Eurocentrism and the assumptions of normalized white supremacy.

In their desperate attempt to defend Sanders and paint his critics as dogma-

tists and purists, the Sanders supporters have not only fallen into the ideological trap of a form of narrow "left" nativism, but also the white supremacist ethical contradiction that reinforces racist cynicism in which some lives are disposable for the greater good of the West.

And as much as the "Sandernistas" attempt to disarticulate Sanders "progressive" domestic policies from his documented support for empire (even the Obamaite aphorism "The perfect is the enemy of the good" is unashamedly deployed,) it should be obvious that his campaign is an ideological prop—albeit from a center/left position—of the logic and interests of the capitalist-imperialist settler state.

The silence of the left on Yemen is not a trivial matter. The fact that so many white leftist supporters of Sanders can politically and psychologically disconnect his domestic program from his foreign policy positions that objectively support U.S. and Western neoliberal hegemony means that not only have they found a way to be comfortable collaborating with imperialism, but that they have also decided that they can support the implicit hierarchy that determines from an imperial perspective that lives in the White West matter more than others.

What this means for those of us who are internationalists and believe in the equal value of all life is that we have to question the sincerity of individuals who claim that Black lives matter while supporting someone who clearly believes that Israeli lives matter more than Palestinian and Yemeni lives. And that the pro-democracy fighters in Bahrain should be subjected to the policing and murderous assault by the gangster regime in Saudi Arabia.

It means that if today leftists in the U.S. can find a way to reconcile the suffering of the people of Yemen and Gaza and all of occupied Palestine for the greater good of electing Sanders,

tomorrow my life and the movement that I am a part of that is committed to fighting this corrupt, degenerate, white supremacist monstrosity called the United States, can be labeled as enemies of the state and subjected to brutal repression with the same level of silence from these leftists.

And since tomorrow has already happened in the past with the repression of the Black Liberation Movement, when it happens again we will not be surprised—but this time we will be ready.

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/16/the-yemen-tragedy-and-the-ongoing-crisis-of-the-left-in-the-united-states/>

...the U.S. public is unaware that the U.S. is participating in the naval blockade of a country that imports 80 percent of its food by sea. They don't know that the bombing, blockade, and massive displacement has resulted in widespread famine with more than 78 percent of the population now in need...

French Workers Show How to Fight

BY MARGARET KIMBERLEY

Two Air France executives fled a righteously angry mob at a meeting meant to announce the cut of 2,900 jobs from the airline. The men had their clothes ripped off and climbed a fence to escape workers unwilling to give up their livelihoods without a fight. Aside from the fact that the incident was caught on camera, it was not an uncommon occurrence in France. Workers have kidnapped their bosses, booby trapped factories, and dumped pigs and manure when they want to make it clear they will not accept economic insecurity.

On the other side of the ocean, American workers are barely surviving, in part because they lack the class-consciousness, which permeates the politics of countries like France. That absence is not accidental, it has been deliberately inculcated into the American mind by the ruling classes and by racist sentiment.

Consider that the rest of the world honors workers on May 1st, May Day, in commemoration of events, which took place in Chicago in 1886. Despite having made that contribution to history, Americans celebrate Labor Day. Workers do get a day away from their jobs, but the holiday says nothing about the history of struggle. That is why it was created, to make certain that Americans didn't connect themselves with their own radicalism.

Anyone who depends on wages for a living is a worker. The collar may be blue or it may be white. Whether a task is carried out on a computer or by hand or with machinery, dependence on the ability to earn a wage is the very definition of a working person.

Instead of accepting this obvious truth, most Americans have fallen prey to identifying themselves as middle class. Those are the two deadliest words in the lexicon. They denote nothing

except a desire to conform and feel accepted by people who aren't at all concerned about the lives of working people. The term middle class is defined however one wants and is consequently meaningless and a stumbling block to solidarity.

Real wages haven't risen in 40 years. Only the already flush one percent of the population has experienced any gains. Wage theft is rampant and the only growth in employment has been among the low wage job sector. Yet any attack on working people is diminished with talk of the amorphous yet ubiquitous middle class.

Fortunately, many people in the rest of the world are a lot smarter. In France they are smarter and more courageous. While Americans fear going on strike or even making demands, the French throw down the gauntlet at any mention of job loss or pay cuts.

France is surely no utopia. It clings to and continues its history of colonization and its current government is a willing partner to American imperial adventures. But its citizens have not given up their rights and politicians ignore popular demands at their peril.

President Francois Hollande called the incident "unacceptable" and warned it would harm the country's image, but he is no fool. He cannot act like Ronald Reagan, who fired 11,000 of air traffic controllers and decertified their union in 1981. The union movement was already hurting because of the incipient neo-liberal plan to deindustrialize the country. Many deluded Americans even applauded the firing. Now unions are a shell of their former selves as membership continues to drop due to the decimation of unionized industries.

Of course not all Americans are stupid and the lack of labor action is not an accident. The toll of the decades'

long shift to the right means that worker concerns are never on the political agenda. The country has no labor party and Democrats wouldn't even raise the minimum wage when they controlled the White House and both Houses of Congress in 2009 and 2010.

Needless to say, racism is always the elephant in the room and explains some of the mysterious dearth of worker organizing. Too many white Americans are eager to separate themselves from the labor struggle because they are privileged in so many ways. They do not want to see themselves as having anything in common with Black workers, and join in attacking any industry that gives them the possibility of equal outcomes.

Such is the case with public sector employment, which is perceived as being "too Black." Government jobs at the local, state and federal level are the first to go on the austerity chopping block precisely because they employ such a high number of Black people. The corrupt plot to push Detroit into bankruptcy was applauded in part because its majority Black population was blamed for supposed labor profligacy. The crooked bankers whose schemes created the disaster were scarcely mentioned as culprits. The successful effort to ban public employees from collective bargaining in states like Wisconsin has made an already bad situation worse for Black workers but pleased millions of white ones.

The Air France incident did not take place in a vacuum. Sanitation workers were on a four-day-long strike at the same time. What Americans think of as labor unrest is welcome elsewhere in the world. A majority of French people polled say they "disapprove" of the airline workers actions but "understand" their feelings.

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Wellhead and Tailpipe

Reflections on eco-Orwellianism

BY PAUL STREET

This is an age of eco-Orwellian cognitive dissonance. Three years and three months ago, then United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Norway to negotiate increased U.S. access to the Arctic's vast oil reserves. She sailed on a research vessel to see in person the melting of the Arctic under the pressure of anthropogenic global warming (AGW)—an experience she called “sobering.” Back on land, she went straight into a meeting to strategize for increased Arctic oil production with an Exxon Mobil executive and the CEO of Norway Statoil.

A different version of the same absurd, eco-Orwellian drama was acted out in a different Arctic setting by U.S. President Barack Obama this August. Obama went to Alaska to see firsthand the toll that carbon-driven planet-cooking is taking on Arctic frost. Obama's junket north included a speech on climate change that “bordered on the apocalyptic” (*New York Times*) and

argued with seeming passion that “we're not acting fast enough” to heal the earth.

Never mind that just last May Obama cleared the way for the giant climate-changing multinational oil corporation Royal Dutch Shell to begin drilling for fossil fuels in the Arctic Ocean this summer. Shell got approval to drill in the U.S. portion of the Chukchi Sea off the coast of Alaska. Shell's leases are 70 miles out, in a remote, untouched, and pristine area that provides critical habitats for several rare species and large marine mammals. It's a treacherous area characterized by extreme storms, likely to cause massive oil spills. Environmental groups had long warned against the madness of drilling in the area, which holds 22 billion barrels of oil and 93 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The *New York Times* described Obama's decision as “a devastating blow to environmentalists.” It might have added “and to prospects for a decent

future.” According to *Times* environmental reporter Coral Davenport, speaking on the “PBS Newshour” last May, the Chukchi Sea announcement had environmental groups “surprised.”

Nobody should have been surprised. The decision came just four months after Obama had opened up a large portion of the southern U.S. Atlantic coast to new deep-water offshore drilling. In late March of 2010, three weeks before the Deepwater Horizon disaster, Obama freed up 167 million acres along the eastern U.S. seaboard for Big Oil extraction.

The president's “drill, baby drill” record ever since has been calamitous. It has greased the skids for the United States' largely fracking-based emergence as the world's leading oil and gas producer in the name of an “all-of-the-above” (nuclear included) energy policy and so-called national energy independence. “Beneath his climate change policies,” Slate's Eric Holthaus recently noted, “Obama is basically running a petrostate.” Consistent with that observation, Obama's faux-green Alaska trip included a call by the president for an increase in U.S. Coast Guard vessels equipped with ice-cutting tools to further America's competitiveness in the international race for the exploration, drilling, and extraction of Arctic oil.

How is it then that Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Obama, and the petro-statist Democratic Party more broadly are lauded by their “liberal” supporters and denounced by their Republican critics as environmentalist enemies of AGW? Beneath the undeniable contribution of Republican-leaning propaganda from the U.S. Big Carbon lobby and wishful partisan thinking on the part of Democrats, one key to the



absurdity lay in a great cognitive failure that even many smart climate scientists have exhibited: a framing of the excess atmospheric carbon that is heating Mother Earth almost entirely around the sale and combustion of carbon at the expense of serious attention to the exploration, development, and production of fossil fuels. The political culture and even much of the scientific and environmentalist discourse has been obsessed with what British climate change communications strategist George Marshall calls “the tailpipe” of carbon sale and emissions, ignoring the basic point-of-extraction “wellheads” and “mineheads” of AGW.

This over-focus on the back end of humanity’s extreme carbon pollution is no small part of “why,” in Marshall’s words, “we keep fueling the fire we want to put out.” It is also part of why so many can be fooled into thinking that a militantly petro-capitalist president like Obama is a planet-loving climate change-fighter. Beyond his seemingly heartfelt statements of concern for livable ecology, his calls for people to acknowledge and heed the warnings of climate science, and his support for limited renewable energy production, Obama does, after all, advocate and

enforce various and increased “tailpipe” regulations and restrictions on final emissions (Never mind for now that he almost singlehandedly undermined desperate international efforts for binding global carbon emission limits in Copenhagen in December of 2009.) U.S. truckers bitch about “Obama’s” Environmental Protection Agency restrictions on engine emissions as Obama presides over the phenomenal growth of U.S. gas and oil production, leading among other things to a bright light of burning gas that can be seen across the fracking fields of North Dakota from outer space.

The tailpipe/wellhead dissonance is hardly limited to the U.S., of course. As Marshall notes in his chilling book *Don’t Even Think About It* (2014), “In England, energy and climate change are combined into one government department leading to simultaneous action to reduce emissions and to boost oil production. One month the minister of Energy and Climate Change brags about the allocations of new licenses to release 20 billion barrels of oil around British coasts. The next month the Minister of Energy and Climate Change announces an ambitious plan for the government to reduce

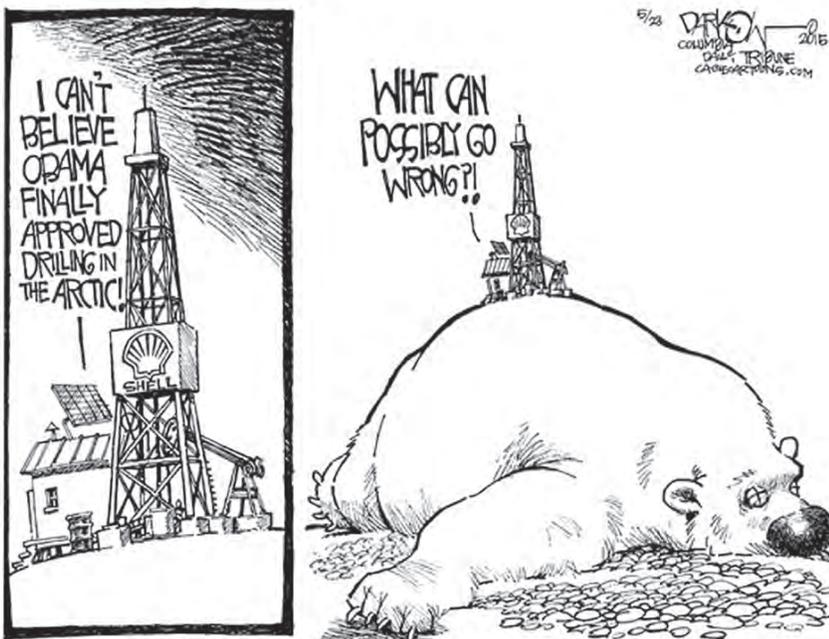
its emissions by ten percent.” The great British novelist and social critic George Orwell would be impressed.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produces detailed data on nationally aggregated *per capita* greenhouse gas emissions. This data has been used as the empirical basis for international climate negotiations since the early 1990s. The IPCC compiles no comparable factual record on national fossil fuel production. The head of the body’s Science Committee cannot recall a single instance in which it talked about limiting the production of fossil fuels, Marshall reports. It’s a seemingly obvious and overriding concern, something that might—in a rational world—have moved to the forefront of public and scientific climate change consciousness after an incident like Deepwater Horizon. We cannot process, sell, and burn the fossil fuels without first finding those fuels and digging and pumping them out of the ground. Thanks to the obsession with tailpipe over wellhead and minehead, it is left to officially marginalized “radical environmentalists” to make the connection between exploration, drilling, and mining on one hand and processing, sale, and actual burning on the other.

The term “radical” is ironic. What could be more conservative than efforts to preserve the world’s still vast stock (big enough to push Earth well past livability) of fossil fuels to sustain prospects for decent life? The relentless drive to push oil and gas extraction past the point of no return to decently livable ecology in the outward name of growth and in the hidden pursuit of profit is radical indeed: radically irresponsible and catastrophic.

—Reader Supported News, October 3, 2015

<http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/271-38/32740-wellhead-and-tailpipe-reflections-on-eco-orwellianism>



Pipeline Straight to Jail

Millions of brilliant Americans have been set up from birth to be put behind bars. Boris Franklin was one of them, and his words dramatically trace a powerful system that destroys lives.

BY CHRIS HEDGES

The defeat of the Harvard University debate team by a team from the Eastern New York Correctional Facility in the Catskills elucidates a truth known intimately by those of us who teach in prisons: that the failure of the American educational system to offer opportunities to the poor and the government's abandonment of families and children living in blighted communities condemn millions of boys and girls, often of color, to a life of suffering, misery and early death. The income inequality, the trillions-of-dollars we divert to the war industry, the flight of manufacturing jobs overseas and the refusal to invest in our infrastructure wrecks life after innocent life.

I spent four years as a graduate student at Harvard University. Privilege, and especially white privilege, I discovered, is the primary prerequisite for attending an Ivy League university. I have also spent several years teaching in prisons. In class after class in prison, there is a core of students who could excel at Harvard. This is not hyperbolic, as the defeat of the Harvard debate team illustrates. But poverty condemned my students before they ever entered school. And as poverty expands, inflicting on communities and families a host of maladies including crime, addiction, rage, despair and hopelessness, the few remaining institutions that might intervene to lift the poor up are gutted or closed. Even when students in inner-city schools are not the targets of racial insults, racism worms into their lives because the institutions that should help them are nonexistent or deeply dysfunctional.

I stood outside a prison gate in Newark, New Jersey, at 7:00 A.M. last April 24. I waited for the release of one of my students, Boris Franklin, who had spent 11 years incarcerated. I had ridden to the gate with his mother, who spent her time reading Bible verses out loud in the car, and his sister. We watched him walk down the road toward us. He was wearing the baggy gray sweatpants, oversize white T-shirt and white Reeboks that prisoners purchase before their release. Franklin had laid out \$50 for his new clothes. A prisoner in New Jersey earns \$28 a month working in prison.

Franklin, with the broad shoulders and muscular chest and arms that come with years of lifting weights, clutched a manila envelope containing his medical records, instructions for parole, his birth certificate, his Social Security card and an ID issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles, his official form of identification. All his prison possessions, including his collection of roughly 100 books, had to be left behind.

The first words he spoke to me as a free man after more than a decade in prison were "I have to rebuild my library."

"You don't know what to think or feel at that moment," he said to me recently about the moment of his release. "You are just walking. It is almost surreal. You can't believe it. After such a traumatic experience you are numb. There is no sense of triumph."

When Franklin was in prison, he was a student under the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative

Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP). Now, at 42, he is attending Rutgers under the university's Mountainview Program for ex-offenders. He is seeking a degree in social work and plans to assist the formerly incarcerated. This is an unusual and rare opportunity for a freed prisoner.

Franklin, like many others I have taught, should never have ended up in prison. His brilliance, his hunger to learn and his passion for ideas, if nurtured, would have led him to a very different life. But when you are poor in America, everything conspires to make sure you remain poor. The invisible walls of our internal colonies, keeping the poor penned in like livestock, mirror the physical walls of prison that many in these communities are doomed to experience.

"I started school in Piscataway, New Jersey," he said. "It was predominantly white. There was a lot of space. It was clean. There was order. People walked down the halls in lines. I had been prepared in Head Start."

When he was in the second grade, his family moved. He started attending an inner-city school in New Brunswick. The two schools, he said, "were night and day." The classrooms in New Brunswick were shabby, dirty and overcrowded. Many of the children were "loud and disruptive."

"In Piscataway we were taught how to learn, how to read and scan texts for information," he said. "New Brunswick was a zoo. It was mostly Black and Hispanic. There were fights all the time. I doubt the teachers were even qualified. It was not an environment

where you could teach anything. Kids would come to school and slam things down or turn stuff over. They were angry. I remember seeing a girl in my class, a victim of child abuse, with welts all over her. She later became a drug addict. Your fight-or-flight mechanism as a child is activated even before you walk out of the house. Your blood pressure goes up. There are drugs and alcohol all around you. You see fights on the way to school. You see dope addicts slumped over. You see police jump on someone and beat 'em up. You run into gangs of kids."

"I knew kids who dropped out of school because it was dangerous to be in school," he went on. "If you had a fight they would find out what school you went to and they would be there to retaliate when you got out. We used to take bats and knives to school and put them by the door when we came out in case there was a confrontation. I got my first weapons charge at 14 for a handgun. You are not in a state to learn anything. Of course criminals have low brain arousal. They have been desensitized since childhood. This is how you deal with constant danger. You go numb. And you become a danger to others and yourself."

"The students in my third-grade class were tracing out letters," he said. "They were trying to learn how to write. I was writing in cursive. I could multiply and divide. They did not know how to add and subtract. The two schools were only 20 minutes apart. But in New Brunswick you were not taught how to think. You were taught rote behavior, to obey. I was told to sit in the back of the class, be quiet and wait for the other students to catch up. But they never caught up."

"There was usually drugs in the homes," he said. "I had friends whose homes were raided when they were children. Most of the parents were getting high, including my father. I did not know any child who did not have a drug addict in the home. And if a per-

son was not a drug addict he or she was often suffering from some form of mental illness. It seemed everyone was dealing with something. Those who were left with their grandparents were in the best situation. Kids would say they were living with their grandmother. They would never mention their mother or father. I never saw the fathers of most of my friends. They had disappeared or were in jail."

"I remember when my friend Carl Anderson's father came home from jail," he said. "We were in the seventh grade. We were sitting in the classroom. Somebody said, 'Carl, that's your father outside.' We all turned around. Carl was my best friend. I had never seen his father. He looked like [boxer] Marvin Hagler. He had a leather jacket, a bald head and a goatee. Carl was excited because his dad was home. That same year we were walking home from school and this lady who was getting high ran up to him and said, 'Little Carl, they just locked your father up. He cut somebody's throat down in the projects.' You could see everything drain out of his face. He shut everything down. How do you learn to deal with that? You learn not to care. We were using a lot of misplaced aggression. That night we were probably fighting somebody. I could feel his pain. You want to get it out? We will get it out. That's how you dealt with it. That's how everybody dealt with it. Take it out on somebody else. When I would get hit in the house I would come outside and the first person lookin' at me I would say, 'What you lookin' at?' I would jump them or chase them or something. My mother told my father, 'You can't hit him anymore. You are making him violent.'"

"There is a stigma that comes with being poor," he said. "If you are poor you are bad. You are worthless. You are ridiculed. You are picked on. Markets are built on this. This is how you can sell a kid from the inner city a pair of \$200 sneakers. He is buying his

identity. He is buying his self-esteem. And that's why poor people hustle. That's why I started hustling [drugs], to buy things. The gratification is immediate. You wear that stuff and it is like you are magically not poor anymore. It is a trigger to go back to selling drugs. I remember when I was struggling. I had grits one night for dinner because that was all that was in the cabinet. I panicked. By the next day I decided I would do something criminal to change my situation."

"What's the best that can happen to you, even if you don't go to jail?" he asked. "Check out bags at Wal-Mart? A warehouse job? That's as far as you can go in this world if you are poor. The only education the poor are given is one where they get to a place where they learn enough to take orders. They are taught to remember what is said. They are taught to repeat the instructions. There is no thinking involved. We are not taught to think. We are educated just enough to occupy the lowest rung on the social ladder."

"No one in prison wanted to admit they were poor," he said. "A friend of mine in prison told all these big-drug-dealer stories. He has been in and out of jail for 20 years. But one day we were walking on the basketball court. He got honest. He told me he had been sleepin' in his car. Sometimes motel rooms. Basically homeless. No education. No connections. The only people he knows are inmates. He does not know anyone in the working world who can help him put in an application and say a word for him. When he got out he went to the guys he knew from jail still in the streets. That was his network. That's most people's network. 'Can you get me some dope? What's the price? Who's moving it?' That's your economy. That's the one you go back to. That's how you survive. His brother is doing 30 years. His nephew is doing 16 years."

"One of my four children went to school in New Brunswick," Franklin

said. “And he is in jail. The other three, who did not go to school in New Brunswick, have college degrees or are in college. You go to schools like the one I went to and you enter a pipeline straight to jail. When I walked into the mess hall in prison it looked like my old school lunchroom, including the fights. When I walked into the yard in prison, it looked like my old playground, including the fights. When I was in the projects it looked like prison. When guys get to prison the scenery is familiar. If you grow up poor, then prison is not a culture shock. You have been conditioned your whole life for prison.”

His family moved again when he was a child. He entered Franklin High School in Somerset, New Jersey, but his years in a dysfunctional school meant he was now woefully unprepared, struggling and behind. “Students in Franklin High School had continued in the pace I had started in,” he said.

He had become acculturated to poverty. He would not go to college. He would, as so many of his peers did, end up in prison. And it was in prison that he, like many others, found refuge in books and the world of ideas.

“You have a lot of intellectuals in prison,” he said. “There are people who think about things, who read things, who try to connect the dots. People read psychology and science to see how things fit together. You see libraries in some cells. You hear people say, ‘I got to get my library up.’ You would go from one cell with a library to another. It was like a cult. When you first loan a book to someone in prison you loan a tester. You do not loan a valuable book. If the person who borrows the book reads it and talks about it, then they get another book. But if they leave the book sitting on their shelf, if it doesn’t get read, they never get another book.”

“There are a lot of guys in prison who read everything,” he continued. “When I saw that those prisoners won the debate with the Harvard team I was not surprised. I took classes where there were prisoners who had read everything the professor had read. I was intimidated to take classes with certain guys. They read constantly. They retained all the information. And they could relate it to whatever we were talking about. On the outside they never had a chance.”

“Look at the faces of the young kids, when they first start out,” he said. “They have wide, bright eyes. Then look at the pictures of the faces of people in prison. Their eyes are low, slanted, shifty, beaten. They are worn out. How do you get from that child to that man? Look at the community. Look at the schools. Look at what is done to the poor.”

This article is based upon a new documentary movie “Can Our Families Come,” now in production. The film, directed by Michael Nigro, is about the U.S. prison system and the mounting of the play “Caged,” written at a New Jersey maximum-security penitentiary by 28 prisoners with their teacher, Truthdig columnist Chris Hedges. Nigro is a New York City filmmaker, journalist and activist, and his website is at partiallysubmerged.com.

—truthdig, October 11, 2015

www.truthdig.com/report/item/a_pipeline_straight_to_jail_20151011



Continued from page 59

American workers cannot undo the sad history that has brought them to such a terrible juncture, but perhaps they can still learn something. They should learn that they have some power still left if they were willing to exercise it. They should dream of a day when a president calls their actions unacceptable and a business is forced to assure its customers that it can get along with the workers. That will be Labor Day in the truest and most honorable sense.

—Black Agenda Report, October 13, 2015

http://Blackagendareport.com/fr_french_workers_show_how_to_fight

California's Secret Solitary Courts

BY SARAH SHOURD

Despite a new settlement that bans indefinite solitary confinement in California, prisons are finding new secondary excuses to lengthen time in the SHU (Secure Housing Unit.)

A change in policy in California just last month could result in an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 prisoners being released from solitary confinement into the general prison population.

Seventy-eight of these prisoners have been isolated for more than 20 years. Like being confined to a small fish bowl in the dark corner of an attic—these prisoners will suddenly be thrust into a much larger aquarium, teeming with life.

“This is a pretty shocking admission that these people—who have been held in solitary confinement *ad infinitum*—perhaps never needed to be there in the first place,” says Charles Carbone, a part of a team of lawyers who worked on the class-action suit *Ashker v. Governor of California*, which recently ended in a settlement resulting in a pending seismic shift in California's prisons policies.

Ashker v. Governor of California will, in fact, lessen the widespread use of solitary confinement—a punishment the United Nations deems “cruel and unusual”—but internal resistance, retaliation, and a widening definition of what constitutes a gang may keep prisoners in solitary needlessly.

And sometimes, lawyers and prisoner rights-activists warn, those criteria can be arbitrary or even “retaliatory.”

California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) says around 5,000 inmates are validated as belonging to what they call Security Threat Groups (STGs). In 2012, CDCR vastly expanded the parameters of STGs from a mere eight

groups—serious gangs like the Bloods and Crips—to over 1,500 groups labeled vaguely as “disruptive.”

Flimsy evidence of association with any of these groups can be used to “validate” a prisoner as a gang member or “associate” on the basis of possessing a certain book or having a gang-related tattoo.

Among these “disruptive groups” are motorcycle gangs and so-called revolutionary groups. One category in the list is simply called “Black-Non Specific,” so any group with the word “black” in its name can qualify as an STG.

“Let's say a Correctional Officer (C.O.) decides a guy is a real pain in the ass,” says Carbone. “Maybe he has institutional notoriety, maybe he's been filing too many complaints, or the C.O.s just don't like him. They can take an ordinary rule violation, transmute it into gang activity, and make sure said prisoner stays off the mainline for a long time.”

Carbone believes the CDCR saw this as an opportunity to depart from an antiquated policy.

“They've moved their target from prison gangs to a much wider population—the STGs—and they want a strong sanction at their disposal.”

“Guards write false tickets for rule violations all the time,” says Anne Weills, another lawyer involved in negotiating the historic settlement that ended indefinite solitary confinement.

“Prisoners have very few due process rights when it come to being placed in solitary, and no right to an attorney,” she continues.

“Also, prisoners in are under such intense scrutiny—they're experiencing mental health issues, insomnia, and hallucinations—the situation easily leads to breaking more rules and being sen-

tenced to longer and longer periods.”

At first glance, the “behavior-based” crimes listed in the settlement—like murder, escape, and weapons possession—seem to warrant the harsh punishment of isolation.

Yet, further down the list you find vague “SHU-eligible” offenses (the CDCR refers to certain cells as Segregated Housing Units or SHU) such as “harassment” and “disturbance” that could easily be applied subjectively, even in a retaliatory fashion—which is exactly what lawyers are afraid of.

“There's a hard core of guards that are furious about this settlement,” says Weills.

Weills says one her clients, after being released into the general prison population, was approached by someone from another gang who “told him a sergeant was spreading rumors that my client was bad-mouthing him.”

“The guards are trying to start fights and foment violence between different racial groups. They think this settlement undermines their entire system of control.”

Before the CDCR initiated reforms, an inmate could be placed in the SHU indeterminately for being validated as a gang member.

“He didn't even have to do anything,” says Thornton.

“Now the thinking is there has to be a behavior-based offense, what we consider a ‘serious rules violation.’ After all, why should inmates be put in the SHU if they haven't done anything?”

Yet, that's been the CDCR's policy for decades. Prisoners have been sentenced indefinitely to conditions that qualify as solitary confinement by international standards, simply for being “validated.”

Lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) have been arguing in court that this policy was unconstitutional, a violation of the 8th Amendment against “cruel and unusual punishment.”

Last month, on September 2, they won.

As a result, California has agreed to eliminate “indeterminate” sentences to its SHU—a practice rare in other states—and release all prisoners who have been confined to isolation for more than 10 years.

In addition, the CDCR must limit the use of solitary confinement to prisoners convicted of “behavior-based” prison rule violations.

The CDCR is reviewing all cases of individuals put in solitary on the basis of gang “validation.” Seventy-one percent of the 1,478 cases that have undergone review have already been approved for release into the general population.

“It’s an incredible victory but still a terrible situation,” says Weills.

On September 4, two days after the settlement was announced, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) issued a press release “denouncing CDCR’s agreement to end the unlimited use of solitary confinement.”

The press release states (PDF): “Our prisons are even more crowded now than they were in the 1980’s... dangerously low staffing levels add to the challenges correctional officers face. CCPOA believes this settlement will further exacerbate gang activity and prison violence that threatens the security of our institutions, and exponentially increasing risks to the safety of both correctional peace officers and inmates.”

“This is no longer the ’80s,” says Weills. “Thirty thousand prisoners went on a nonviolent hunger strike to force this change to happen.”

Weills thinks the guards are “back in the dinosaur days.”

“Many have a militaristic, war-like mentality against our prisoners,” she says. “They are so threatened by this unity that they’ll do anything to break it up.”

“It doesn’t matter how some correctional officers might feel about the new policy,” says Terry Thornton, deputy press secretary for the CDCR. “They’re hired to do a job. They’re obligated to follow these new regulations.”

“It’s a set-up,” adds Weills. “These so-called ‘wellness checks’ started on August 3rd, the very day we settled. That’s no coincidence. Guards have been waking up our clients multiple times throughout the night in the name of their ‘safety’—but what it really is is retaliation.”

“When our clients get released they put them on the most violent yards,” continues Weills. “[Guards are] just waiting for someone to attack them so they can call this new policy a failure.”

Weills points to the case of Hugo Pinell, an inmate murdered just weeks after being released on the mainline after being in solitary confinement for 40 years.

“I fear for them all,” she says.

This settlement has forced the CDCR to acknowledge its past mistakes and correct its policies. Lawyers have helped all sides come to an agreement that promises to benefit prisoners, California’s correctional institutions, and society.

The CDCR says there are 7,397 prisoners in various forms of isolation in California’s prisons. California has no plan to close any of its 33 prisons, nor are any of its SHU units slated for conversion.

Some critics fear that the CDCR is merely reshuffling the deck by ending

unlimited solitary confinement. Is the unstated goal of this change in policy to get the heat of public and prisoner outrage off of the CDCR’s back—or will the numbers of prisoners in solitary confinement actually go down?

“We anticipate the numbers will go down,” says Thornton. “Permanently.”

“The number of people in the SHU will probably remain the same,” says Carbone. “But the duration will go down significantly. More guys will leave their gang, which is a very good thing. Guys will say, ‘I’m out of here, I want to get an education, I want to go home.’”

Carbone believes that the desire of the department to correct these policies actually exists.

“Resistance is at the level of the foot soldiers,” he says. “The good thing is we’re going to have some hawks, at least for two years, keeping vigilant watch.”

“We’re making these changes because it’s the right thing to do,” adds Thornton.

“I believe anybody can be rehabilitated if they want to be,” she continues. “Moses was a murderer, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite, killed him, hid his body in the sand and ran away. Then he went on to write the first five books of the first testament. If there’s hope for Moses, there’s hope for anyone.”

“I’m hopeful things are changing,” says Weills, “but it can all be undone so easily. The real proof is in the pudding.”

—*The Daily Beast*, October 6, 2015

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/06/in-solitary-confinement-for-black-non-specific.html>

California Solitary Success

California ends solitary for gang validation, Texas prisons persist in the abusive practice.

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

Four years after over 6,000 California prisoners united in the first of three mass hunger strikes protesting the torture of long-term solitary confinement (among other things), a major achievement has been won. In a federal class action lawsuit brought on their behalves, *Ashker v. Governor of California*, it was found that solitary confinement constitutes unconstitutional cruel and unusual punishment. As a result, California prison officials must now release over 2,000 prisoners from solitary, many of who have been held indefinitely (some for decades,) for alleged gang affiliation.

I received this news during early September 2015 with a smiling heart, since I’ve been writing for many years about the torturous effects of solitary,¹ and personally know and have witnessed its hardships, because I’ve lived for over 20 years in solitary myself.

From the outset, I—individually and as a member of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party—Prison Chapter—supported the California struggle. I drew the logo that came to represent the hunger strikes. I wrote about them,² and helped spread word amongst other prisoners in the states where I was confined, encouraging them to also join. As a result, many prisoners in my home state of Virginia participated, several of who were consequently transferred out-of-state as I had been. Also, many participated in Oregon, where I was transferred to in 2012 and held for a year, up until shortly before the third hunger strike began in July 2013,

My efforts and involvements in Oregon contributed to my abrupt transfer, yet again, this time from Oregon to Texas in June 2013, just a month before 30,000 prisoners went on that third strike.

Upon my arrival in Texas, I was met with immediate violence at the hands of ranking Texas prison officials, who assured me I’d be broken or killed. I was promptly thrown into solitary for resisting that violence, where I’ve since remained.

Solitary in Texas

Decades ago Texas adopted a California-style policy of indefinitely segregating prisoners for “confirmed” gang affiliation. The “confirmation” process is completely arbitrary, and cannot be challenged at all. Prisoners are “confirmed” upon little or no evidence, often based on just the statement of another prisoner or official who may for whatever reason just want the targeted prisoner removed from general population.

Conditions in Texas’ solitary are worse than California’s. The federal courts have actually found solitary in Texas to be the worst in the entire U.S., and that it invariably causes its victims mental damage—not only exacerbating the problems of the already mentally ill, but also impairing those of sound mind.³

About 80 percent of the prisoners housed in my solitary cellblock are indefinitely segregated because of alleged “confirmed” gang affiliation. My neighbor, Matthew Salazar #1052313, has been held in solitary for this reason for thirteen of his fifteen years imprisoned in Texas.

Their only hope of eventual release is to apply to participate in the GRAD (Gang Renunciation and Disassociation) program. Texas prison officials emphasize that participation in this program is a privilege. Just to get enrolled, a prisoner must jump through a series of hurdles and weather

repeated harassments and meticulous property searches (including having all papers and correspondents’ addresses, etc., scrutinized and often recorded) by GI (Gang Investigation) officials who operate inside the prisons with the greatest impunity. Another condition for enrollment is—just like in California—that the “confirmed” prisoners identify other prisoners as gang affiliates. Participation in GRAD therefore places one in danger, since any participant or graduate of the program is instantly tagged by others as a snitch. One must therefore either endure the permanent torture and mental damage inherent in Texas’ solitary confinement (often upon a false “confirmation,”) or become a known snitch.

Texas prisoners need help!

Upon my transfer to Texas, I immediately set about working to expose those around me to the California prison-based struggle and the growing movement on the outside against solitary, which they needed to tap into. Getting them involved has proven a difficult undertaking, largely because Texas prisoners are deeply apolitical and pessimistic about possibilities for change or gaining broad outside support.

They’ve been left isolated and led astray all too long and often, living under the most arbitrarily abusive conditions, and face severe reprisals for the smallest shows of united resistance against abuse.

Texas prison officials work consciously to keep its segregated prisoners politically backward, divided and isolated from public support. Texas courts—since the death of one of its favorable federal judges, William Wayne Justice—are extremely hostile towards Texas prisoners, and there

exists virtually no willing outside legal or organized public support for them that understands the nature and workings of the prison system.

Very little consciousness-raising literature is allowed into the prisons and illiteracy is high. There are no Texas-based prisoner-oriented media like California has long had, such as *California Prison Focus* and *San Francisco Bay View* newspapers, or former political prisoner Ed Mead's self-published newsletters like *Prison Art*, *Rock!*, *Hunger Strike Support*, etc., which played decisive roles in raising California prisoners' consciousness, and getting their voices and views shared across the broader prisoner body and out to the public, and ultimately overcoming the divisive prisoner culture that California officials cultivated and kept embroiled in violent conflicts.

In fact, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) [sic!], is the only prison system I know of that publishes its own monthly newspaper, called *The Echo*, that uses prisoner "staff writers" to proselytize prisoners with the administration's happy slave and pro-pig indoctrinations. The paper, which has been in publication since 1928, is dutifully delivered "free" to every prisoner in Texas.

I've encountered many Texas prisoners who see the need for and want change; there is just so little faith in the possibility, or even in themselves as potential agents of change. Most who I've struggled to inspire feel that "other" places are different. That what happened in California for example, could never happen in Texas. But I know different. I witnessed that it took decades of struggle, by folks like Ed Mead *via* media he's published or edited, to finally open the eyes of many of California's prisoners to how they were being divided, used, manipulated and exploited by prison officials to their own collective disadvantage. This

prompted a series of early attempts at unity, which grew until it converged in the epic hunger strikes and finally on agreement by all the previously warring prisoners (except those most deeply in pawn to prison officials) to end all hostilities across the entire California prison system and jails.

Hope for change lies in only two areas for us—generating outside exposure and support, and building unity amongst ourselves. And one serves and helps advance the other.

I've seen that sort of pessimism here in Texas before. I experienced, struggled with and to some degree overcame it while I was confined in Virginia, and then in Oregon. It's actually typical of those, who by nature of oppressive conditions such as imprisonment, are conditioned to think individualistically and see themselves as absolutely powerless, unable to overcome cultural and other long-standing divisions, publicly abandoned and despised, and subject to the absolute impunity of officials who are perceived as sole "legitimate" power-holders. But it's been this way for so long in Texas that prisoners can see it no other way. Many are actually afraid to, like slaves cowed by generations of incessant brutality. Actually, this *is* their condition—literally.

California, however, has a long history and tradition of prisoner activism. In fact it was a center of the 1960s-1970s prison movement that served as a catalyst and inspiration to the broader outside social movements of that period. Not so in Texas. During and well after the 1960s-1970s, prisoners across

Texas were actually running the prisons for officials with terror and wanton violence as a formal policy of the TDCJ.⁴ Remnants of that culture and attendant mentality still remain.

Not only has solitary confinement in Texas been found by the courts to be the most tortuous and dehumanizing in the U.S., its entire system has been found to be Amerika's most abusive.⁵ So many outrages prevail here one hardly knows where to begin. At the TDCJ prisons I've been confined to, I've witnessed routine beatings of prisoners—once witnessing guards bring an already unconscious prisoner into my assigned pod and then beat him bloody for over five minutes (while he was still unconscious!) with ranking guards looking on.⁶ I've witnessed guards routinely throw the entirety of prisoner's personal belongings away, or confiscate them for completely fabricated reasons. I've seen prisoners starved for weeks on end. I've seen guards kill prisoners. I've both witnessed and endured being compelled to drink contaminated water, receiving grossly non-nutritious meals, denied medical care for acute medical problems, and on and on. All with a green light and/or cover-ups from officials at the highest ranking administrative levels.

Hope for change lies in only two areas for us—generating outside exposure and support, and building unity amongst ourselves. And one serves and helps advance the other.

At my prompting I was able to get a number of Texas prisoners subscriptions to Ed Mead's *Rock!* newsletter, through which I hoped to see them unite with and gain inspiration from the words and examples of California's struggling prisoners. Unfortunately, the TDCJ is one of the only U.S. prison systems that forces all of its prisoners to work, but doesn't pay them even a pittance. Most also have no outside financial help, and even for those who do receive a little, we are not allowed to



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mail stamps to outside sources. Therefore they couldn't support their subscriptions with donations of money or stamps to Ed. So, to both our disappointment, Ed couldn't afford to keep the Texas subscriptions going and was forced to terminate them. Those who did briefly receive *Rock!*, however, were encouraged by its content and the example of California's prisoners, especially their unity and agreement to end hostilities among themselves.

I therefore conclude this with a call to all activists, the public at large, and all who have worked in solidarity with California's prisoners. Texas prisoners need help! We need support toward building a broad-based outside-to-inside support structure for Texas prisoners who are presently suffering all the same outrages and abuses as California's prisoners have been struggling and won recent grievances against. This initiative should be linked up with that supporting California prisoners—Texas and California have Amerika's two largest prison populations—with an eye to extending its reach to all prison systems across Amerika. California has set the precedent that should inspire and benefit prisoners everywhere. If solitary is unacceptable there, it's unacceptable everywhere!

Dare to Struggle, Dare to win!
All Power to the People!

1 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson "Amerikan Prisons Are Government Sponsored Torture," *Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 21, no. 1 (March 2007), rashidmod.com/?p=113; Johnson, "Abu Ghraib Comes to Amerika," *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (March-April 2011) (The version printed in *Socialist Viewpoint* is a condensed version, the original, full-length article can be read at rashidmod.com/?p=119); Johnson, "Oregon Prisoners Driven to Suicide by Torture in Solitary Confinement Units," *Rock!* Vol. 2, no. 4 (April 2013), also San Francisco Bay View, Vol. 38, no. 4 (April 2013) p. B10, rashidmod.com/?p=405; Johnson, "Solitary Confinement is Known Torture: Yet Officials Pretend Not to Know and Play the Debating Game to Curb Protest and Continue the Practice in U.S. Prisons," *Prison Focus*, No. 40 (Summer 2013) pp. 1-2, also *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (July/August 2013) p. 51; Johnson, "U.S. Prison Practices Would Disgrace a Nation of Savages: Texas—A Case on Record," *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January/February 2014), p. 51, Rashid.com/p?=1007; Johnson, "Wasted Minds: An Insider's Look at the Torturous Effects of U.S.

Solitary Confinement," (August 2013), rashidmod.com/?p=899; Johnson, "What Would Compel a Man to Try to Cut His Own Face Off?," *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (January/February 2015) p. 65.

2 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "What is the Meaning of The California Prisoners Hunger Strike?" *San Francisco Bay View*, Vol. 36, No. 11 (November 2011), also *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (November/December 2011) p. 59, rashidmod.com/p?=308.

3 As the Texas federal courts have found, "Texas' administrative segregation units are virtual incubators of psychoses—seeding illness in otherwise healthy inmates and exacerbating illness in those already suffering from mental infirmities . . ." *Ruiz v. Johnson*, 37 F. Supp. 2d 85s, 907 (S.D. Tex. 1999).

4 For an extensive analysis of the operations and uses of inmate guards (aka "building tenders" or "turnkeys"), and its being outlawed by the federal courts, see, *Ruiz v. Estelle*, 503 F. Supp. 1265 (S.D. Tex. 1980).

5 See, *Ruiz v. Johnson*, 37 F. Supp. 2d 855 (S.D. Tex. 1999); *Ruiz v. Johnson*, 154 F. Supp. 2d 975 (S.D. Tex. 2001); also my discussion and analyses of these findings in, "U.S. Prison Practices Would Disgrace a Nation of Savages," op. cit. note 2.

6 The victim of this attack was Dante Roberts #698422. The assault occurred at Estelle Unit in Huntsville, TX on August 7, 2013.



Chattanooga Times Free Press Bennett

'Went in like Gestapo'

Sonoma sheriffs' bloody rampage

BY RICHARD BECKER

A federal lawsuit was filed on October 6, demanding damages and relief for prisoners assaulted and tortured by Sonoma County sheriff deputies inside the county jail on May 28, 2015. The plaintiffs, Marqus Martinez and Daniel Banks, were two of at least 20 prisoners viciously beaten in the jail's Administrative Segregation (high security) section on that day. Other abused inmates may join the suit.

At a press conference in Santa Rosa, about 60 miles north of San Francisco, attorney Isaak Schwaiger announced the legal action, and described the actions of the deputies: "Dressed in black, wearing black body armor, black ski masks and without badges, they went in like the Gestapo. From one module to the other end they carried on the beatings for five-and-a-half hours. Some prisoners were beaten four times."

Joining Schwaiger at the speakers table were Laurie Banks, mother of Daniel Banks, and Karina Arango Lopez, sister of Jesus Lopez, who

received particularly extreme and prolonged torture.

Laurie Banks read from a letter from her son, who was in the last cell attacked: "Mom I knew they were coming, they were going down the line." She continued, "he was scared for his life. He had no idea how bad the beatings were."

The assaults came to light as a result of inmates informing their attorneys of what had taken place. The attorneys urged their clients to write down their accounts of what had taken place in the jail on May 28. The letters were later forwarded to Schwaiger who is known in the area for a lawsuit he filed last December for a man Tasered 23 times by Sonoma County deputies. The original letters were displayed at the press conference.

Sonoma County Sheriffs' Department, Santa Rosa Police Department and other police agencies in Sonoma County are infamous for their records of killings and abuse. As far back as 1999, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission held hearings in Santa Rosa and recommended that a

civilian review board be created.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors have declined to take any such action, even after the murder of 13-year-old Andy Lopez by Sonoma sheriff's deputy Gelhaus in October 2013.

The office of Sheriff Steve Freitas predictably denied all allegations of torture and beatings, and claimed that the deputies were responding to a "riot that interfered with the safety of the jail." What makes this claim ridiculous on its face is the fact that all the assaulted inmates were locked in individual cells, except for the times when they were dragged out for more abuse.

The sheriff has so far refused to release videos, which reportedly showed the beatings.

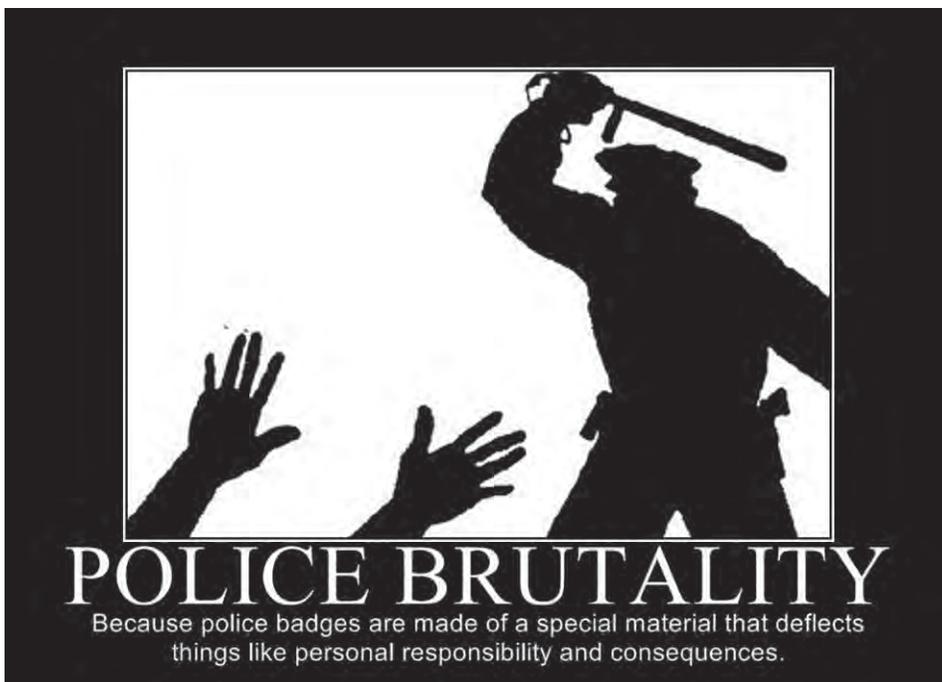
Schwaiger stated, "If he wants to call them [the abused inmates] liars then show me that video and I'll be very happy to withdraw the lawsuit and walk away."

He said that he believes "there are several hundred videos" at the jail documenting similar events.

Description of abuse

The following are excerpts of a press release from the office of Attorney Isaak Schwaiger, with graphic descriptions of some of the abuse suffered by prisoners on May 28, drawn from the federal court filing.

A federal complaint filed today by the Law Office of Izaak Schwaiger on behalf of two Sonoma County men charges the County of Sonoma, Sheriff Steve Freitas, and other named Deputies with violations of the U.S. Constitution for heinous and inexplicable beatings of more than twenty inmates on May 28, 2015 in the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa, CA.



The allegations set forth in the complaint describe in minute specificity the unconscionable events of May 28th, perpetrated by Sonoma County Deputy Sheriffs and ratified by Sonoma County Sheriff Steve Freitas.

“They grabbed Montes and threw him to the ground, handcuffed him, then slammed his head into the floor, striking several rapid and violent blows about his head, shoulders, neck, and back. One deputy kicked Montes in the head. Another deployed a Taser against the inmate. Deputies then removed Montes from the unit to administer “yard-counseling,” a practice that is common in the jail and routinely involves the application of physical violence to inmates. Deputies dressed in all black wearing ski masks dragged Montes to the shower; ordered him to strip naked, and told the inmate he was their “bitch.” While naked and defenseless, deputies threw Montes to the ground and began another round of savage beatings...”

“...deputies then began a third round of violent beatings, punching and kicking Lopez and smashing his face into the concrete. As the beatings continued, the lieutenant told Lopez that he was to blame for the violence. Lopez cried that they were treating him worse than an animal. The response from the deputies was swift. Lopez felt an unknown deputy punch the back of his neck and other deputies began punching, kicking, and body-slaming Lopez to the point of involuntary defecation. They placed shackles around Lopez’s feet and attached them through his handcuffs to a chain secured around his waist. A mask was put over his head and Deputy Medeiros began bashing his face into the floor. The deputies dragged Lopez to the mental health unit and stripped him naked. Covered in his own feces, Lopez pleaded for toilet paper. The deputies ignored his pleas, laughed at him, and locked him naked in isolation covered in his own feces for two days...”

“...Martinez repeatedly called for medical assistance for over an hour with no response. Due to his injuries, he was unable to pick himself up off the floor where the deputies left him. For two more hours he listened to screams of pain and torture from the other inmates as jail staff proceeded down the tier, removing each individual from his cell and subjecting him to similar beatings. Laying on the floor unable to move, Martinez heard his door open again. Hoping that it was the doctor, the inmate looked up just in time to see the SERT team returning to his cell wearing all black, with their nametags removed and ski masks covering their faces. They entered his cell and attacked him with overwhelming force, kicking, punching, and kneeling him and knocking his head into the floor. They called him a “bitch” and “a piece of shit.” They spat on him and threatened to continue the beatings if he were to ever yell out again...”

“While the housing module filled with the screams of other inmates, Daniel Banks, laid face down on his mattress with his hands behind his back. For hours he had listened to the beatings all around him. He hoped that by his show of submission he would avoid being beaten as well, but the deputies merely saved him for last. His cell door opened and four deputies wearing black entered the small cell. All but one was wearing a ski mask. The four deputies jumped on top of him and began kneeling and punching him in the back and wrenching his arms above his head, causing him excruciating pain. The deputies yelled, “stop resisting!” and smashed a pair of handcuffs around

his wrists, causing the metal to cut into him and leaving him with bruising, swelling, permanent nerve damage and pain. Though face down, Banks turned to see his tormenters, and observed that one was not wearing a ski mask. He brought his face close to Banks’ and yelled, “That’s right—get a good look at me, you punk bitch—This is our house!” and spit in his face. The deputies brought Banks out of his cell, down the stairs, and into the yard where the beating continued...”

Santa Rosa criminal defense and civil rights attorney Izaak Schwaiger received more than twenty letters from inmates following the beatings. A former prosecutor and Marine Corps veteran of the Iraq War, Schwaiger called the systematic assaults on the prisoners “gut-wrenching” and “beyond the pale.” Schwaiger’s early investigation reveals that jail staff videotaped a large portion of the beatings, and that those videos are in the possession of the Sonoma County Sheriff. “This is like a horror movie,” said Schwaiger. “And we have reason to believe this was not an isolated incident.”

The complaint seeks unspecified damages and injunctive relief.

—*Liberation*, October 7, 2015

<http://www.liberationnews.org/went-like-gestapo-sonoma-sheriffs-horrific-rampage/>



Our Broken Judicial System

BY LORENZO JOHNSON

With the rate of exonerations at a historic high, wrongful convictions can no longer be ignored. Every Sunday, people can tune in to *CNN* to watch “Death Row Stories” or *BET* for “Vindicated” and see how the judicial system has failed many innocent men and women. The time these wrongfully convicted individuals have spent in prison can be anywhere from a year to three or four decades.

Society gets an up-close look at judicial corruption from TV shows like these. Some viewers will never look at the judicial system the same way again—their faith in the courts has been shattered. Once, society was used to accepting whatever officers of the court said; we never questioned why or how a person was criminally charged or convicted. Now, we have the opportunity to sit back and witness how an innocent person is framed, maliciously prosecuted, and convicted. The same system that was believed to protect us from harm can be seen destroying innocent people’s lives. Society’s faith in the judicial

system has been shaken by wrongful convictions. Can it be restored?

First, let me clarify—I would be lying if I said that the whole judicial system is corrupt. But why do the good people in our judicial system stand by while such misconduct takes place, instead of calling out those responsible? From the crooked cop all the way up to the judge who refuses to do the right thing for innocent people who have been wronged—many people are responsible for securing wrongful convictions. When criminal prosecutors have absolute immunity in initiating a prosecution and in presenting a state’s case, how can they ever be held accountable for falsely prosecuting and convicting innocent people? Consider last year’s record-breaking number of exonerations—125 in all. How many prosecutors, police officers, judges, or lawyers were fired for their participation in these 125 wrongful convictions?

I’m a victim of a wrongful conviction, and for 19 years the prosecutors in my case intentionally withheld portions

of my case discovery—documents that show they knew I was innocent from day one. You might think that, after turning this favorable evidence over, the prosecution would no longer stand in the way of justice. But instead of doing what’s right, my prosecutor is trying to prevent me from appealing my conviction. He said that because his office had an “open file” policy with my prior attorneys, I have no grounds for appeal. But my prior attorneys have signed affidavits stating they never saw these crucial documents in my case discovery before now. This means that my prosecutor is not even arguing about my guilt or innocence anymore—he’s arguing that I should not be able to appeal my conviction because I should have found this evidence (which his own office hid) sooner.

It’s extremely sad to say but, for these crooked prosecutors, the motto may as well be: “Get a conviction by any means and let the chips fall where they may.” Prosecutors commit crimes by imprisoning innocent people and then hide behind their absolute immunity when a prisoner’s innocence is finally revealed. The million-dollar question is how can society’s faith in the judicial system be restored?

Let’s start by enacting a law that enforces mandatory minimum prison sentences for all officers of the court who knowingly and intentionally arrest, prosecute, and convict innocent people. A showing of zero tolerance by our judicial system to the culprits behind wrongful convictions would show society that a change has finally come. Until that happens, unfortunately, wrongful convictions are here to stay. Tomorrow, you could become the next victim. Meanwhile, wrongfully convicted prisoners like myself will continue to suffer and spend decades behind bars for crimes we never committed.





THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT

Wrongful convictions hurt far more people than just those of us who are incarcerated. It starts with the original victim of the crime and their family, who believed that the person who was arrested and convicted was the person responsible. Then, their mental and emotional scars are reopened when they find out the person they were told was guilty in fact was not. Then there are the families, friends and supporters of wrongfully convicted people. Their lives are crushed by these ordeals. But the people responsible for all this pain do not even lose sleep over it. Tomorrow, they'll just go back to work in our judicial system. And let's not leave out that the culprits of these crimes are seldom even charged.

Our highest court can also help solve this problem and restore faith in our

judicial system. The time has come for the U.S. Supreme Court to revisit *Imbler v. Pachtman* (1976). This case involved the deliberate introduction of false testimony by a prosecutor and established the prosecution's immunity from civil suits in such situations. The U.S. Supreme Court has to do away with prosecutors' absolute immunity. When this takes place, our judicial system will help us start our healing process *en route* to restoring our confidence. But until then, we all must pay attention to what's going on and hold the people we vote into office accountable.

Lorenzo Johnson served 16-and-a-half years of a life-without-parole sentence, from 1995 to 2012, when the Third Circuit Federal Court of Appeals ruled there was legally insufficient evidence for his conviction. He remained

Wrongful Convictions by the Numbers:

125—how many people were exonerated in 2014; a record high number.

\$8 million—how much money spent on wrongful conviction settlements in the past year alone.

52 percent—how many of New York's DNA exonerations involved eyewitness misidentification.

48 percent—how many of New York's DNA exonerations involved a false confession.

150—how many actual perpetrators were caught after 330 DNA exonerations in New York State.

Information from: www.FreeLorenzo-Johnson.org

free for four months, after which the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously reinstated the conviction and ordered Lorenzo back to prison to resume the sentence. With the help of Michael Wiseman, Esq., The Pennsylvania Innocence Project, The Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation for Justice, The Campaign to Free Lorenzo Johnson, and others, he is continuing to fight for his freedom.

Sign his petition and learn more at:

<http://www.freelorenzojohnson.org/sign-the-petition.html>

Email: lorenzojohnson17932@gmail.com

—The Huffington Post, September 18, 2015

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lorenzo-johnson/>

FREE LORENZO JOHNSON

Writing On The Wall

A review of Mumia Abu-Jamal's eighth book

BY CAROLINA SALDAÑA

Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Editor, Johanna Fernandez. Foreword, Cornel West. City Lights Books, 2015.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's eighth book written from prison cells in the state of Pennsylvania, USA, is a selection of 107 essays that date from January 1982 to October 2014. They cover practically the entire period of his incarceration as an internationally recognized political prisoner. Most of the pieces were written while he was on death row after being framed for the murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner on December 9, 1981 in the city of Philadelphia. Some were aired on *Prison Radio*. The most recent writings date from 2011, when his death sentence was finally ruled unconstitutional and commuted to a term of life imprisonment.

The title of the book brings to mind the traditional gospel song, "Handwriting on the Wall,"¹ based on the bible story told in the *Book of Daniel* about letters written by a mysterious hand on a wall during a great feast given by the King of Babylon. "Somebody read it. Tell me what it says," goes the song. "Go get Daniel, somebody said." When the prophet and former prisoner Daniel was brought in to interpret the handwriting, he told King Belshazzar that his days were numbered and that his kingdom had come to an end. The prophecy was fulfilled that very night.

Somebody trying to make sense out of what goes on in our times might well say, "Go get Mumia." He is an adroit interpreter of the signs of the times and even in his extremely vulnerable position has never hesitated to speak truth to power. But even though the rich and

powerful would do well to pay him heed, he doesn't write for them. Long ago he began to express his solidarity and share his insights with people struggling to survive in the Black communities, working people, students, teachers, artists, musicians, activists, people who've never had a job and probably never will, prisoners, freedom fighters, entire peoples slated for extermination, the subjects of empire who have nothing to lose and everything to gain from resistance, rebellion and revolution. Mumia always writes from the ground up and never bows down to power.

In his prologue to the book, Cornel West speaks of Mumia Abu-Jamal as not only an outstanding writer and journalist, but "a living expression of the best of the Black prophetic tradition." The philosophy professor defines this tradition as a "principled and creative response to being terrorized, traumatized and stigmatized"—a response to slavery, white supremacy and other manifestations of oppression with "a vision rooted in analysis," that leads to organization and mobilization. In the field of Black journalism, says West, Mumia follows in the footsteps of anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells Barnett, whose courage was incomparable.

In his essay, "The Historic Role of Journalism Among Black People," Mumia Abu-Jamal expresses his own high regard for the woman who was so successful in exposing the justifications for the lynching of Black people that leaders of civil rights groups at the turn of the century avoided her for being "too militant, too outspoken." Mumia writes:

"...white terrorism, perpetrated through lynching, was the peculiar American custom that wasn't spo-

ken of in polite society. So, quietly (except for Ida B. Wells), Black bodies hung and burned by the thousands across America, the courts and law deeming it mere local custom, beyond their control."

Editor and history professor Johanna Fernandez, in her Introduction to *Writing on the Wall*, notes that Mumia Abu-Jamal articulates many uncomfortable truths.

His voice reveals the centrality of Black oppression to the project of American capitalism and empire, the unbridled racism of the U.S. justice system, the immediate and rippling horrors of war, the unfinished project of American democracy, and the possibilities of a liberated society not just for Black people at home, but for everyone, everywhere.

In this volume we get a glimpse of the Black Liberation Movement that Mumia comes from and the organizations he is most closely identified with: the Black Panther Party and the MOVE Organization. These pages tell of historic figures who inspired rebellions and movements that, in turn, gave rise to leaders who inspired him, including Papaloi Boukman, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Ella Baker.

The book opens with writings about Mumia's own arrest, imprisonment and trial in the social context of injustices faced by thousands and the historical context of slavery.

"For centuries, people of African descent have entered the courts of their oppressors....Black men paraded before such 'tribunals' have come shackled, manacled, chained,

imprisoned with slave bracelets. Once there, they are sure to hear lofty principles such as ‘presumption of innocence,’ ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ ‘due process,’ *ad nauseam*. After lofty words, however comes the bitter truth—slavery by decree of ‘Judge Hoofinmouth...’”

Where was the presumption of innocence for Mumia when his \$250,000 bail was revoked one day after it was set? Non-existent, he says, given that the deceased was a white Philadelphia cop and the accused an outspoken activist and MOVE supporter.

A major courtroom battle centered on Judge Albert Sabo’s denial of Mumia’s right to represent himself in court, with John Africa as his advisor:

“It has become clear that this ‘court’ has no intention to hear from me: its action, pre-planned, no doubt, to revoke my supposed constitutional right of self-representation, was designed to silence, to gag, to muzzle me, to render me ineffective in the defense of my life...”

After he heard the verdict, Mumia told the jury: “Today’s decision comes as no surprise to me...I am innocent despite what you 12 people think, and the truth shall set me free!... On December 9, 1981, the police attempted to execute me in the street; this trial is a result of their failure to do so.”

In the 1970s, as a radio journalist in Philadelphia, Mumia Abu-Jamal had gotten to know the multiracial MOVE Organization when he covered their numerous trials resulting from conflicts with the Philadelphia city government. He was drawn to the anti-authoritarian, communal way of life of these urban revolutionaries who considered all life sacred and defended nature, animals and human beings against a death-dealing system. As Mumia gradually grew closer to MOVE, he gained a tremendous respect for their founder John Africa.

Ever since the City of Philadelphia committed its first act of urban warfare

against MOVE in 1978, when nine of their members were taken prisoner, followed by the second military attack in 1985, when their house was bombed and 11 members killed, Mumia has demanded justice for the organization and supported the freedom of the “Move 9.” His earliest writings on MOVE are among the first that we read in *Writing on the Wall*.

“Philadelphia, try as it might, cannot escape May 13. Nor can Black Philadelphia,” writes Mumia. The MOVE bombing was ordered by Philadelphia’s first Black mayor, Wilson Goode, who does not escape Mumia’s scathing commentaries:

“Today, a mayor who claims faith in Christianity entered U.S. history books as a Black man who ordered the bombardment and obliteration of a home where Black rebels lived. One thing can be said: here was a neo-slave who imitated his malevolent masters well!”

The Black leaders that have inspired Mumia are of a different tradition: one of resistance and rebellion punishable by prison, exile or death.

Pan-Africanist Marcus Mosiah Garvey was accused of “rabble-rousing” for daring to suggest Blacks look to Africa for economic, social and spiritual strength. The charismatic Reverend Nat Turner, who dared rebel against that most un-Christian of American institutions, human slavery, was damned as a fanatic. Martin Luther King Jr. received accolades for his non-violent ministry, but Malcolm X received assassination for his ministry of militancy. When Reverend King began to emerge as a vocal opponent of America’s genocidal war on Vietnam, his life clock was stopped. In a young nation born in bloody resistance to England’s crown, resistance is still the ultimate offense by Africans.

Mumia’s essay “1967: Year of Fire, Year of Rage,” tells of the flames of rebellion that swept Roxbury, Tampa,

Cincinnati, Buffalo, Newark, New Brunswick, Paterson, Elizabeth, Palmyra, Passaic, Plainsfield, Cairo, Durham, Memphis, Minneapolis, and Detroit that summer.

“People didn’t rebel all across America during 1967 for a Black boxing champ. They didn’t rebel because they wanted a Black mayor....They rebelled because they wanted Power: the power to better their lives. They also wanted an end to the violent repression of the cops.”

The urban rebellions that had begun in Watts, Los Angeles on August 11, 1965, gave rise to Black organizations that sought to channel spontaneous rebellion into coordinated revolutionary action.

The essay titled “Decolonization: The Influence of Africa and Latin America on the Black Freedom Movement,” focuses on the Martinican born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, who had joined the Algerian independence struggle and written two major books on European colonial domination. Fanon had a profound influence on the two founders of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. Mumia cites Kathleen Cleaver on the importance of Fanon’s writings for Black revolutionaries in the United States:

“His books became available in English just as waves of civil violence engulfed the ghettos of America, reaching the level of insurrection in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Fanon died in 1961, a year before Algeria obtained the independence he had given his life to win, but his brilliant, posthumously published work *The Wretched of the Earth* became essential reading for Black revolutionaries in America and profoundly influenced their thinking. Fanon’s analysis seems to explain and justify the spontaneous violence ravaging Black ghettos across the country, and linked the incipient insurrections to the rise of a revolutionary movement....Fanon

explained how violence was intrinsic to the imposition of white colonial domination, and portrayed the oppressed who violently retaliate as engaged in restoring the human dignity they were stripped of by the process of colonization...”

Another major influence on the Black Panthers and on Mumia in particular was Malcolm X, who took the civil rights movement to the level of human rights, insisted on the right to self-defense, and argued that instead of being a “minority group,” Black people in the United States were part of the majority of the world’s peoples in Africa, Latin America and Asia seeking liberation.

“For me and my generation of that era, to hear him speak was like listening to thunder,” said Mumia. “One could not help but be moved, outraged, energized—radicalized. I became, in my heart, a Malcolmite. That influence, coupled with the April 14, 1968, assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (his closest competitor for Black America’s heart), would propel thousands of young men and women to join the nearest formation of the Black Panther Party. Indeed, this writer (in his 15th year of life) helped found and form the Philadelphia branch of that group.”

At that young age, Mumia learned journalism as a young Black Panther working on the organization’s national newspaper. And at that young age, he became a target of FBI surveillance.

The Panthers’ armed self-defense against police violence, their daily Breakfast for Children Program, and their community programs for health, education and housing, mainly led by women, attracted thousands of members in 42 cities in the United States and inspired young people in the Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American movement and radical white groups. Internationally, the Black Panthers viewed themselves as part of anti-colonial struggles for self-deter-

mination and national liberation and sought to build ties with Palestinian and Vietnamese revolutionaries, among others.

Half a century after Fanon’s death, colonial rule is still a reality in Palestine and Puerto Rico, says Mumia, while the most important lesson learned by many African leaders schooled in Eurocentric capitalist thought “was how to re-create colonialism, not how to destroy it.” At the same time, he writes, “The American Empire utilizes force, brutal and terrifying, to intimidate the populations of other nations, and this, when alloyed with the mesmerizing power of the corporate press, serves to whitewash what is actually taking place.”

Moreover, since 9/11, people across the United States have been subjected to an unprecedented erosion of civil liberties, government spying and the exercise of blatant police power as hard-fought workers’ rights have been decimated.

And what is the state of Black America half-a-century after legal gains made by the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for freedom waged by the Black Liberation Movement? Many Black people in the United States had illusions that things were getting better, that their children would have a brighter future, says Mumia.

“Then came Katrina. In a flash, in an hour, in a day, in a week, we saw with our own eyes the loss, the waste, the death, and perhaps worse, the dismissal of Black life by virtually every agency of local, state and federal power, and the media as well.... If U.S. Blacks had any illusions, the dark, fetid waters of Katrina washed them away. Nationalism, citizenship, belonging to the White Nation were lies. The waters of Katrina cleared the crust of sleep from our eyes, and taught us that if you’re Black and poor, you’re utterly on your own.”

In *Writing on the Wall*, Mumia exposes what goes on in the monstrous

U.S. prison system, which has the highest incarceration rates in the world and a population of over 2.2 million—ten-times greater than in 1972. As schools close in Black communities and jobs are harder to find than ever, thousands of youth swell the prison population.

“When we enter the modern era, we see a panorama of Black pain that is as unprecedented as it is silent. I speak of mass incarceration, the targeting, imprisonment and criminalization of dark people in ways (and in numbers) the world has never seen. For decades.”

During the time that he spent on Pennsylvania’s death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal’s writings against the death penalty fueled an international movement to abolish it. He became the voice of thousands facing this punishment considered barbaric in most of Europe, Latin America and Africa.

But wouldn’t the election of a Black president be a solution to the woeful state of Black America at the beginning of a new millennium? Many had high hopes that Barack Obama would bring much needed change to their communities and to the country as a whole. On January 20, 2009, in Pennsylvania’s Camp Hill prison, this is what happened:

“Men were sprayed with hot pepper mace in the face, stripped naked, beaten, stomped, shot with stun guns, insulted and subjected to death threats for having filed suit against the treatment they received in the Special Management Unit. At that very moment, during the inauguration ceremony of the first Black president of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama was telling the world: ‘We don’t torture.’”

The torture revealed at Abu Ghraib some years before didn’t begin abroad, says Mumia. It can be traced back to “genocide, mass terrorism, racist exploitation (also known as ‘slavery’), land-theft and carnage...in the heart of the Empire,” and especially inside its prisons.

Mumia reports that the U.S. Department of Defense chose a man named Lane McCotter, a private prison company executive, to run the now-notorious Abu Ghraib gulag on the outskirts of Baghdad. At the time, the Management and Training Corporation was under investigation by the U.S. Justice Department for brutality charges. McCotter had been the director of the Utah state prison system, until a scandal forced him to resign from his post in 1997. A naked prisoner had been shackled to a chair in one of his prisons for 16 hours, until he died.

“Whatever can be said of McCotter, it can’t be said that he wasn’t qualified for the violence and depredations that would emerge at Abu Ghraib,” writes Mumia. “Who better to run this colonial outpost of barbarity than one who ran internal gulags, both for the State and for the Dollar?”

One of the worst forms of torture practiced in United States prisons is solitary confinement. Mumia Abu-Jamal knows something about it. He experienced it for almost three decades. This is what he says:

“Solitary is torture. State torture. Official torture. Government-sanctioned torture. Some may call that hyperbole, or exaggeration. But I’ve lived in solitary longer than many—most, perhaps—Americans have been alive. I’ve seen men driven mad as a hatter by soul-crushing loneliness. Who have sliced their arms until they looked like railroad tracks. Or burned themselves alive.... As America embarks on its second century of mass incarceration, breaking every repressive record ever made, it’s also breaking every record in regard to solitary confinement: locking up, isolating and torturing more and more people, for more and more years....”

The issue of police terror is addressed in many of the essays in this volume, including the nationally televised beatings of Delbert Africa and Rodney King and the police killings of Amadou

Diallo, Sean Bell, and Mike Brown. For Mumia, the murder of unarmed Amadou Diallo was a “harbinger of greater violence against unarmed Black and non-white life by the cops.” The unarmed Guinean immigrant was standing just outside his door when four New York City plainclothes cops fired 41 bullets at him, killing him instantly. All four cops were acquitted.

Have politicians used their political power to stop this terror? Hillary Clinton, a candidate for the U.S. Senate at the time of Diallo’s extrajudicial execution, issued the recommendation that “police officers should work to understand the community, and the community should understand the risks faced by police officers.”

Mumia asks: “Do you really think that this is a promise of safety if and when she gets elected? If this is what she says when she wants and presumably needs Black and Puerto Rican votes, what will be said after the election?”

Fifteen years later, the name of a relatively unknown town in Missouri would become “a watchword for resistance” after people rose up against the murder of Black teenager Mike Brown by white cop Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014. In Ferguson, says Mumia,

“...the youth—excluded from the American economy by inferior, substandard education; targeted by the malevolence of the fake drug war and mass incarceration; stopped and frisked for Walking While Black—were given front-row seats to the national security state....Ferguson is a wake-up call. A call to build social, radical, revolutionary movements for change.”

The publication of *Writing on the Wall* underscores the failure of the Fraternal Organization of Police and corrupt politicians to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal. In the face of attempts to execute him, smother his voice behind steel walls, slander him in the news media, intimidate supporters, pass laws

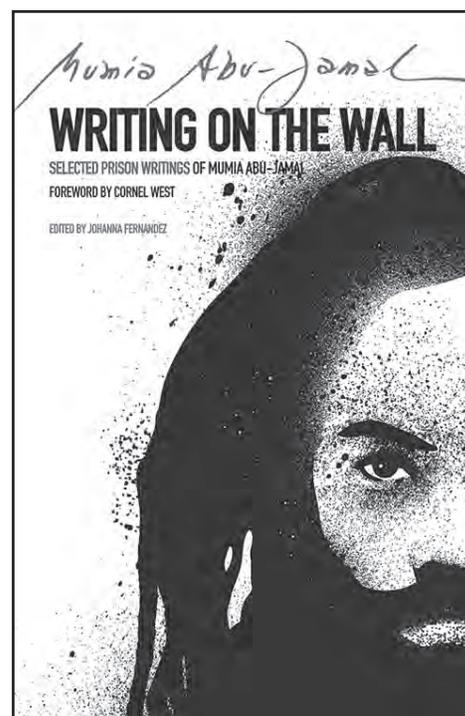
to try to keep him from speaking out, and most recently, kill him through highly intentional “medical neglect,” Mumia simply refuses to shut up. Like many other political prisoners slated to die in their dungeons, he has what his captors will never have: spiritual strength, dignity, integrity, love for the people, a commitment to revolution—and the ability to read the handwriting on the wall. His message carries the insights of his own generation of Black revolutionaries combined with truths born in struggles in many parts of the world. The time is right. As emerging movements gain strength, vision, and breadth, Mumia finds, in this book, a new channel for sharing his ideas with people eager to bring down walls.

Carolina Saldaña is an independent journalist based in Mexico City, who also works with the Amigos de Mumia en México collective.

—Counter Currents, September 5, 2015

<http://www.countercurrents.org/saldana050915.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pseEVLE4ioU>



Dear Editors,

The working class in power must completely re-adjust and transform production, not just take it over from the capitalists. This is the conclusion that needs to be derived from the current political and ecological threats to both humanity and the planet. Of course the revolution must defeat fascism, feed the world, and produce for peoples' needs; but the question of HOW this is to be accomplished is ignored by too many Trotskyist and other Marxist groups. Agri-business mono-cropping, mountain top removal, shale oil extraction and fracking—continued use of fossil fuels or toxic nuclear energy just doesn't cut it.

Current environmental news, such as the draining of the aquifers in California, causing land subsidence (which means the aquifers can't be restored;) the rapid demise of glacier-fed rivers all over Asia; and the looming death of the oceans—not to mention an expected sea level rise of five to ten feet this century alone—points to not just a climate catastrophe, but to an imminent collapse of civilization. Add to that the limitless mounds of spent fuel rods and other nuclear waste material, which no one now knows what to do with, and which will be dangerously radioactive for tens-of-thousands of years! Who is going to take care of that? These problems are not solvable under the present exploitative, profit-driven system. How are the capitalist/imperialist governments going to be able to handle the relocation of hundreds-of-millions of people from coastal areas, the starvation of hundreds-of-millions more who are deprived of water for their fields, as well as moving people out of desert cites such as Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Los Angeles (which likely will be required as water supplies dwindle,) when they can't even handle the mass

of refugees now from all the wars, exploitation and devastation they've caused in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America?

This system of rule by the bourgeoisie will come down, one way or the other. Will it be through a mass die-off of humans (as well as animals,) followed by a stone-age existence for those few who survive; or will the working people make a revolution? A worldwide planned economy, including all industries and agriculture, run democratically by a revolutionary workers government, and based on the abolition of capitalism is the only real hope for humanity. Such an international confluence across all borders will assure that humanity enjoys a worldwide "commons," through which it can remake and transform the economy, and so facilitate saving both itself and the planet. The article, "Ecological Crisis and the Tragedy of the Commodity," by Stefano B. Longo and Brett Clark, that appeared in Volume 15, Number 5 of *Socialist Viewpoint* (the September/October 2015 issue) contributes an important point, namely that the elimination of the commons through individual privatization is only one small aspect of the emergence and maturation of a much larger phenomenon: the capitalist social system with its commodification of everything. The subordination of the use value of a product to its exchange value on the international market can be seen lurking behind every problem today, large and small, including the total domination of finance capital over the world economy.¹

—Chris Kinder

¹ *The two authors, Stefano Longo and Brett Clark, are the authors, with Rebecca Clausen, of a new book, The Tragedy of the Commodity: Oceans Fisheries and Aquaculture, published by*

Rutgers University Press (2015), on the decline and imminent death of the oceans. See article: "Ecological Crisis and the Tragedy of the Commodity," By Stefano B. Longo and Brett Clark in the September/October 2015 issue, Vol. 15, No. 5, of Socialist Viewpoint at: http://www.socialist-viewpoint.org/sepoct_15/sepoct_15_31.html

Dear Editors,

I hope that recent events in the Israeli occupied West Bank have awakened more people to what's really going on in Palestine and has helped them to clearly see who are the oppressors and who are the oppressed in this situation. And that this will embolden more people to speak up and do something to help and support the Palestinian people. Because Palestinians have already suffered far too much, for far too long, the loss of their homeland, displacement, ethnic cleansing, dispossession, cruel abuses, atrocities and hundreds of thousands of deaths. The west cannot remain indifferent to the plight of the Palestinian people and be silent because Jews were persecuted by others during the Second World War. Why must Palestinians continue to pay the terrible price for this past tragedy, which was nothing to do with them. An injustice committed against one people does not justify an injustice inflicted against another people. Without justice, respect and the restoration of Palestinian rights there will be no real peace in Palestine. Let's not ignore cruel repression or allow the maiming and deaths of thousands more Palestinian children, women and men to go unnoticed and without doing something to stop this ongoing gross mistreatment. The Palestinians deserve the utmost empathy and solidarity of all people of conscience and for all those concerned about righteousness to act and show support. To

witness such Israeli human rights abuses and other brutal crimes and not speak out is blatantly morally wrong. Our voices and actions can make a positive difference in ending this heart-breaking catastrophe.

—Steven Katsineris, October 11, 2015

Dear supporters and future supporters,

I hope and pray all is well with everyone and your families. Your continued support of my cause and innocence is highly appreciated. My journey has been long and has taken a serious toll on my family, friends and myself. I've watched from afar as my kids turned into adults. I still recall my oldest daughter sending me pictures she had drawn in elementary school of stick figures and the words: "I miss and love you." Fast-forward two decades later—she has gone to college, lives in her own house and now is a mother...

The wall that injustice has placed between family, friends and supporters of the innocent is literally indescribable. Our constant nightmare is relived every time we open our eyes still in prison. Wrongful convictions do not only affect innocent prisoners, it tears family structures apart. One thing we can NEVER get back is the lost time. I have a brother and two sisters that have never come to see me during these 20 years. I've had no contact with my biological father in over 20 years. No choice of my own. Before my wrongful conviction was reinstated, I forgave them and let them know how much I

needed them. I'm known to smile a lot and even through these tough times, my smile remains. Am I angry, bitter, frustrated and disappointed due to my situation? Without a doubt. I take this constant pain and anguish and direct it towards my fight to prove my innocence, at the same time educate society first hand on the struggle of innocent prisoners. There is no idea in regards to what it's like to walk in the shoes of us innocent prisoners—there's no ifs or buts about that.

I now have a new judge and I'm awaiting court dates, which should be very soon. In a lot of situations, the truth can help, hurt or change someone. For Lorenzo Johnson, the truth will eventually set me free. The sad thing is, the people society rely on to make sure justice is served are personally responsible for false arrest and conviction. They knew I was innocent from day one. Meanwhile, for 20 years an innocent man is in prison while a murderer walks the streets... A lot of times innocent prisoners get a backlash from speaking out in concerns with their wrongful convictions. I totally disagree with the notion that you don't want to make noise about our innocence. As if innocent prisoners and our families are supposed to be silent while we are steadily being tortured for being innocent. If our rolls were reversed, they also would want everyone to scream at the top of their lungs to whoever would listen. I'm a firm believer that by being silent, that helps wrongful convictions continue to be swept under the rug until necessary action is taken—that's if that action is ever taken.

I'm human and at times I fall into mental slumps. I've been blessed to have exoneree Jeffrey Deskovic as a best friend. Just recently, I was falling into a mental slump, I called Jeff and after speaking to him for a half-hour, I was good. Innocent prisoners may have family, friends or supporters—but, no one can relate to our pain like someone who had/have our shoes on. I would like to thank the following exonerees who have been in touch with me: Jeffrey Deskovic, Derrick Hamilton, Eugene Gilyard, Obie Anthony, Jarrett Adams, Harold Wilson and William Lopes (RIP).

Once again, I want to thank ALL of my supporters. Please continue until we can make a difference. Feel free to use my articles. For those who can make a financial donation please do. It's needed. Everyone who writes me knows I personally respond. Feel free to contact me. For those outside of the country and would like to help raise awareness about my injustice, contact me.

"The Pain Within"

Free The Innocent,

Lorenzo "Cat" Johnson

—Free Lorenzo Johnson, October 17, 2015

<http://freelorenzojohnson.org/>

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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.

Politicians: Servants of the Wealthy

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It is impossible to look at the current crop of political presidential aspirants and not be struck by their level of subservience to the wants and needs of the owner class.

Like Puppies panting in the presence of their masters, the politicians, emboldened by the unconscionable Citizens United decision, are at the feet of the billionaires for scraps to better serve their betters.

Now, one billionaire can field half-dozen pols, and by so doing, can determine not just who runs, but who wins—and what laws will be passed.

Why not? They own them, don't they?

But still, that is not enough. For witness the emergence of New York real estate executive Donald Trump.

Trump brags, at every opportunity, of his enormous wealth. By so doing, he intimidates his potential rivals, who are used to bending their knees to such men. But he also represents the distrust of his class, for rather than hiring politicians, he runs himself, to lock in his class dominance.

Nor is this solely a Republican affair, for Democrats, who run on emotional appeals to labor unions and working people, once in power bend to the interests of Wall Street—the source of the lion's share of their donations.

Their strategy, of talk labor, while pleasing capital, was seen in the destructive NAFTA pact, which decimated manufacturing jobs in the U.S. by the millions.

Bill Clinton hustled NAFTA like a street dealer sold crack, selling dreams that turned to dust.

Now, the Clintons return, posing as the saviors of the working class, when their treasured NAFTA ripped away tens-of-thousands of jobs annually, undermined unions, and transferred vast wealth to Wall Street.

When Texas businessman and 1992-96 presidential candidate, H. Ross Perot predicted NAFTA would produce a “giant sucking sound” of lost jobs, the media pundits laughed at him, making him sound like a fool.

History proves his words were true.

Politicians—servants of capital; promoters of progress, but bringers of disaster.

—*PrisonRadio.org*, September 9, 2015

Locking up Kids for Profit

BY ZAID JILANI

An explosive new report from the *Daily Beast's* Betsy Woodruff looks at how the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), one of America's two large private prison corporations, has seen its profits explode, thanks to a little-noticed move by the Obama administration.

Woodruff notes that before last summer, there was virtually no “family detention,” referring to the detention of migrant families crossing the border, children included, in U.S. immigrant detention facilities. But as Human Rights Watch's Antonio Ginatta noted, “now we're in the thousands.”

It started last summer, when large numbers of families fleeing violence in Central America started crossing over into the United States. The Obama administration opened a facility in

Artesia, New Mexico, to detain these families; after controversy, that facility was closed and a new one operated by CCA opened in Dilley, Texas, with a capacity of 2,400 beds.

Woodruff notes that CCA's quarterly report shows its profits in the second quarter of 2015 were \$49 million higher than the same period in 2014, largely due to the expansion in detaining migrant families. The Dilley facility alone generated \$36 million in revenue during the quarter.

“In just one year, these investment companies have profited millions off of the illegal detention of children and babies fleeing unthinkable harm in Central America,” Bryan Johnson, an immigration attorney representing many of the immigrants at Dilley, told

the *Daily Beast*. “Because these companies wanted a bigger quarterly dividend, dozens of children, including some of my clients, were denied medical treatment to such a shocking degree that their lives were put at imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm.”

“The only reason I can see that people are still in family detention is because there must be incredible pressures to keep it going on the basis of its profitability,” Laura Lichtenberg, an immigration attorney, told *Daily Beast*.

—*AlterNet*, September 8, 2015

<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/private-prison-company-getting-rich-locking-kids?akid=13459.229473.XFgb27&rd=1&src=newsletter1042126&t=8>



The U.S. airstrike against a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan that killed staff members and patients was approved by U.S. Special Operations Forces.. Read *Kunduz Hospital Attack Was No Mistake* on page 3.

On the Front Cover: In South Africa, planned hikes in tuition fees sparked a week of nationwide protests. Read *Student Victory in South Africa* on page 25. ►



U.S. cargo ship El Faro sank with 33 crew onboard during Hurricane Joaquin. Read *What Doomed El Faro* on page 29.



Socialist, Jeremy Corbyn, is the newly elected leader of the Labor Party of the UK. Read *Corbyn Wins Labor Leadership* on page 44.