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SocialistViewpoint

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014 VOL. 14 NO. 5

From Gaza to Ferguson: the Working Class is Fighting Back! - Page 2
Death and Devastation in Gaza - Page 12
False Flag: The Shoot-Down of Malaysian Airliner in Ukraine - Page 19
Nat Weinstein 1924-2014 His Political Legacy - Page 51

Jewish Survivors and Descendants of Survivors and Victims of Nazi Genocide Unequivocally Condemn the Massacre of Palestinians in Gaza

This ad appeared in the *New York Times*, page 13, main news section, August 23, 2014

As Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi genocide we unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine. We further condemn the United States for providing Israel with the funding to carry out the attack, and Western states more generally for using their diplomatic muscle to protect Israel from condemnation. Genocide begins with the silence of the world.

We are alarmed by the extreme, racist dehumanization of Palestinians in Israeli society, which has reached a fever-pitch. In Israel, politicians and pundits in *The Times of Israel* and *The Jerusalem Post* have called openly for genocide of Palestinians and right-wing Israelis are adopting Neo-Nazi insignia.

Furthermore, we are disgusted and outraged by Elie Wiesel's abuse of our history in these pages [*New York Times*] to promote blatant falsehoods used to justify the unjustifiable: Israel's wholesale effort to destroy Gaza and the murder of more than 2,000 Palestinians, including many hundreds of children. Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.

We must raise our collective voices and use our collective power to bring about an end to all forms of racism, including the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people. We call for an immediate end to the siege against and blockade of Gaza. We call for the full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. "Never again" must mean NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!

For a full list of signers go to:

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network

http://ijsn.net/gaza/petition-in-support-of-supporters-of-nyts-letter-jewish-survivors-and-descendants-of-survivors-and-victims-of-nazi-genocide-unequivocally-condemn-the-massacre-of-palestinians-in-gaza/

Never Again...Again

SocialistViewpoint

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CONTENTS

International

Holocaust Survivors' Gaza Ad ..... **Inside Front Cover**
From Gaza to Ferguson: the Working Class is Fighting Back! . . 2
By Bonnie Weinstein
Gaza Massacres and Israeli Apartheid 3
By Bruce A. Dixon
Israeli Civilians as Human Shields 5
By Max Blumenthal
Four Little Boys 7
By Dave Zirin
Stop the Massacre in Gaza..... 8
By The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
Stop Arming Israel!..... 9
By London Palestine Action
Solidarity with Palestine 10
Statement by COSATU
Israel: Stop the Killing of Palestinians...... 11
Statement from the United National Antiwar Coalition
Death and Devastation in Gaza 12
By Ralph Schoenman
Solidarity with the People of Gaza 15
By Graham Durham
Three NUMSA Shop-Stewards Killed..... 16
Statement by NUMSA
Ukraine Debate 17
By Barry Sheppard
False Flag: The Shoot-Down of Airliner in Ukraine 19
By Chris Kinder
For a Revolutionary Iraq 24
Statement by Revolutionary Marxist and Socialist Organizations in the Region

U.S. Politics and the Economy

Bay Area Activists Declare Gaza Solidarity Victory 27
From Ferguson to Gaza We Charge Genocide 28
The Coming Race War Won't Be About Race...... 29
By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
Bombs or Bread 31
By Bonnie Weinstein
Young Black Men Have No Right to Life..... 32
By Glen Ford
The Shortest Distance Between Palestine and Ferguson ... 33
By Jaime Omar Yassin
Making Homelessness Illegal 35
By Evelyn Nieves
The Siege of Detroit...... 36
By Glen Ford
Coming to America: Mercenary Justice 37
By Glen Ford
U.S. War on All of Us 38
By Alex Kane
The U.S. Created the Immigration Crisis 40
By David Bacon
Central American Child Refugees 42
By Bruce A. Dixon
Free, Non-Racist Higher Education?..... 44
By Glen Ford
'Hands Up! Don't Ship!'..... **Inside Back Cover**

Incarceration Nation

The Killing of Prisoners..... 46
By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson
Four by Mumia Abu-Jamal
1-2-3 Fergusons 48
When Children are 'The Enemy' 49
Israel: Settler, Colonialist, Apartheid State..... 49
Beatings 50

Letters to the Editor 50

Nat Weinstein: Memorial and Oral History

Nat Weinstein 1924-2014...... 51
By Lynn Henderson
Nat Weinstein's International Viewpoint..... 54
By Rod Holt
Nat Weinstein and the Permanent Revolution 55
By Jack Heyman
My Grandfather..... 56
By John Gould
Who Was Nat Weinstein? 57
By Kevin Sheppard
Nat Weinstein—An Oral History 58

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From Gaza to Ferguson: the Working Class is Fighting Back!

By Bonnie Weinstein

In this issue we are featuring articles that reveal the growing resistance of the working class from Gaza, Ferguson, U.S. prisons, and all who are suffering the war against working people being carried out by the U.S. commanders of capital.

No matter what spin the commanders of capital put on the growing resistance to oppression across the globe—whether blaming "terrorists, militants, insurgents, religious fanatics or gangs"—what's really happening is that workers are starting to empathize, organize, and build resistance to economic and social injustice.

This resistance is taking many different and contradictory forms, but the standard of living of workers all over the world is being eroded and attacked at an alarming rate; and the capitalist class is resorting more and more to brute force—the full force of it's military and police—in its futile attempt to stop the growth and expansion of this new, working class resistance. They are trying to "nip it in the bud." And, indeed, it is budding!

The resistance demands the killing must stop

From just the beginning of the 21st Century, the U.S. government has been responsible for the deaths of tens-of-thousands of Afghans, Iraqis and Palestinians. The U.S. is also responsible for the deaths and suffering of people from the ghettos of the U.S., to Africa, South America; to the Middle East and Eastern Europe. U.S. troops and advisors and military funding are continuing to kill people and occupy nations in defense of the profits of the wealthy elite—of the commanders of capital.

This year alone, by funding the Israeli military, they are responsible for the deaths of over 2,100 Palestinians living in Gaza. And for the misery of tens-of-thousands more being bombed, shot at and occupied by U.S.-financed Israel on an ongoing basis since 1948.

The commanders of U.S. capital are also to blame for their own military casualties. If they were not at war across the globe against working people, their troops would not become cannon fodder.

This will not end well for the commanders of capital because those who are beginning to resist vastly outnumber them. That is why the U.S. attacks are so violent and massive against any resistance. And that's why they are relying more on drones and aerial bombardment and the militarization of the police forces. They don't stand a chance hand-to-hand against the growing, massive, global resistance.

The chickens come home to roost

In Ferguson, Missouri, August 18, 2014, Governor Nixon called out the National Guard because the people are fighting back. They're not giving up! They are continuing their resistance—not only against the police brutality and violence that caused the death of Michael Brown, another unarmed Black teen, at the hands of the police—but against racism and economic injustice!

Missouri Governor Nixon called out the National Guard because they are cowards and have no real power of their own and are terrified of the defiant and growing mass resistance.

The one-percent and their governments—local, state or national—can neither quell the rebellion that sprung up as the result of the "last straw" murder of Michael Brown, nor solve the economic injustice their system has created. That's because the mass economic exploitation and oppression of the working class by the commanders of capital is rooted in the system of capitalism itself. Economic equality, democracy and justice for all are impossible under capitalist rule.

New world solidarity

We live in a different age now. We not only have instant news from across the globe, we have instant communication. The resisters in Gaza have been watching the resisters in Ferguson and *vice versa* and have come to the conclusion that they have a lot in common. They have tweeted, texted, Facebooked and Instagramed each other.

Here are a few tweets[1] from Gaza to Ferguson:

> "I remember when I used to get tear-gassed. I used to remind myself this pain will pass and to not collapse. It helps! …And of course DON'T wash your eyes with water."
>
> "Always make sure to run against the wind/to keep calm when you're tear-gassed, the pain will pass, don't rub your eyes!"
>
> "Solidarity with #Ferguson. Remember to not touch your face when tear-gassed or put water on it. Instead use milk or coke!"

In a video in the *New York Times*[2], a man in Ferguson is showing a reporter a police tear-gas canister that had been thrown at him. He said he felt he was living in the Third World. And in an August 14, 2014 article in the *New York Times* titled, "Advice for Ferguson's Protesters From the Middle East, [3]" by Robert Mackey,

"Matt Pearce, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, recorded Instagram video on Tuesday night of a man shouting at

officers, "You gonna shoot us? You gonna shoot us? Is this the Gaza Strip?"

Massive resistance is spreading

On August 9, 150,000 people marched in London in solidarity with the people of Gaza.[4] And beginning on the weekend of August 16th and 17th thousands of Gaza solidarity protestors blocked an Israeli ship and prevented it from unloading its cargo at the Port of Oakland, California. And protesters at the Port of Oakland carried signs in support of the resisters in Ferguson. The protest continued to block the ship for five days![5]

The connection is obvious.

The best thing we can do is to continue to express our solidarity, share information and experience our commonality with one another and organize mass resistance against oppression and injustice everywhere.

They can't keep ruling if we are united!

---

1 *http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/15/the-shortest-distance-between-palestine-and-ferguson/*

2 *http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/us/ferguson-missouri-protests.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3As%2C{%221%22%3A%22RI%3A9%22}*

3 *http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/world/middleeast/advice-for-fergusons-protesters-from-the-middle-east.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3As%2C{%221%22%3A%22RI%3A9%22}*

4 See "Solidarity with the People of Gaza," by Graham Durham in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*

5 See "Bay Area Activists Declare Victory, Israeli cargo ship blocked for five days," in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*

Gaza Massacres and Israeli Apartheid

Why our Black political class is paralyzed and silent

By Bruce A. Dixon

Sometimes a silence can be the loudest sound in the room. The silence of our numerous and powerful U.S. Black political class, not just on the current massacres of civilians in Gaza but on the incontrovertible fact that Israel has become a full fledged racist ethnocracy, is deafening.

As Israeli troops massed around Gaza this weekend, the NAACP wrapped up its 2014 annual convention in Las Vegas this weekend without a mumbling word of solidarity with bleeding Palestinians. *Moral Monday's* Reverand Barber was a guest on *HBO's Real Time with Bill Maher* Sunday night as well, but could not spare a single breath to discuss the morality of occupation, house demolitions, or Israeli apartheid to his notoriously Islamophobic host. Al Sharpton is on *MSNBC* nightly, and can't find time to cover the murderous assault on Gaza in any meaningful way. You don't hear so much as a peep from the Congressional Black Caucus or the National Urban League, the National Action Network, Rainbow PUSH, big time Black pastors and business people or the rest of that crowd.

Our Black political class of preachers, politicians, big time academics, pundits and aspirants have not been silenced by threats or fears of economic retaliation. Maybe you can say that about entertainers and athletes, but not our so-called leaders. People like Black members of Congress, Al Sharpton and Reverand Barber are where they are because they don't need to be told what their masters require. What they fear is something deeper, something that threatens the very foundations of their careers and legitimacy.

Their legitimacy depends on the hollow pretense that their Black faces in high places somehow constitute the continuation of the struggle of our people against racism, Jim Crow and injustice in general. We've all heard it summed up with phrases like "Rosa Parks sat and Dr. King walked, so Barack Obama could run..." The name for hollow pretenses like this, when selling the pretense is a serious project, is branding. Their problem is the frank, vicious racism of Israeli apartheid which the Black political class feels obliged to support, at least as long as a Black president does so as well, is a threat to the Black political class's brand as tribunes of the oppressed.

For the most part, our Black political class are not abject fools. They absolutely know that the Israeli state has become a full fledged ethnocracy, the 21st century's premiere apartheid state complete with Jewish-only roads and towns, frequent lynch mobs for Africans and Arabs, laws against recognizing mixed marriages, and completely different judicial systems, housing regulations, voting and property rights, depending on whether, as Max Blumenthal puts it, you've got J-positive blood. They know that for this and the last two Gaza invasions, Israeli civilians and grandmothers gathered on hillsides to eat ice cream, watch the fireworks of white phosphorus and shellfire, and cheer on the death of defenseless Palestinian civilians. They know the Internet makes it trivially easy to find the words of prominent Israeli politicians in the Knesset and in government openly declaring that Palestinians ought to be moved or massacred, or justifying hundreds of atrocities from house demolitions and torture to acts of dispossession, mob and state terror. They know that more and more of their own constituents are learning these things every day.

Our Black political class knows that Israel is, to paraphrase Noam Chomsky, America's landlocked aircraft carrier, weapons research test bed and nuclear-armed military base in the middle of a couple hundred million brown people and a good fraction of the world's most easily accessible oil. They know that unwavering support for whatever Israel does is part of the bipartisan zombie consensus, something that ruling Republicans and Democrats agree on, like privatizations, charter schools and bailing out the banksters. And by now, Black leadership is deep in the slavish habit not just of agreeing with whatever the White House says, but of not speaking at all on policy matters till after the will of the Great Man and his administration have been made clear.

If Bush and Cheney were still in the White House, some of the bravest among them might speak out just a little to remind us that Palestinians are human too. They might even say that occupation and dispossession are the real crimes. But a member of their own class, a Black politician is in the Oval Office, a president who openly insulted and humiliated Muslim Americans at a White House Iftar dinner only last week. They don't need to be silenced; they silence themselves, not out of fear but out of craven opportunism.

Still, daily occurrences like the shelling of ten and 11-year-old boys on a beach kicking a soccer ball make open support of Israel more difficult for them than it used to be. So they do nothing, and they say nothing. Nothing on Al Sharpton's show. Nothing in their *Moral Monday* communiqués and marches. Nothing from the Urban League, nothing from the Black church, which is pretty much an appendage of the Black political class these days. Apart from Cornel West, the sole recognizable Black figure to a national TV audience, not a Black face in a prominent place, not one, has stood up for the humanity of Palestinians and denounced the crimes of dispossession, occupation and invasion. To a man and a woman, it seems the rest of our glittering Black leaders hope the stench of white phosphorus and genocide won't stick to them and tarnish their precious brand, even as they support it with their silence.

There was a time, to hear them tell it at least, when our Black political class opposed apartheid. That was here, and in South Africa. As U.S. Palestinian activist Ali Abunimah, the editor at *Electronic Intifada* reminds us,

> "...Throughout the 1970s and 80s, when Black Americans were leading the struggle against apartheid in this country, when they were the conscience of this country in terms of putting apartheid South Africa on the American political agenda, Israel was one of the key supporters of apartheid South Africa. Israel is the country that systematically violated the international arms embargo on South Africa. The weapons used to beat and kill Black demonstrators and freedom fighters in South African townships were made in Israel, right down to the water cannon used in the townships...the fighter jets, the gunboats, all the heavy armament of the South African military used were in large part supplied by Israel.
>
> "It's less well known, there is less hard evidence about it, although some information is in the public domain regarding Israeli-South African cooperation in their nuclear weapons programs."

Evidently apartheid and ethnocracy in back-in-the-day South Africa were bad things, but in today's Israel not so much. Our Black political class has long forgotten a couple things called international solidarity and empathy, without which, we are, well, a lot less human.

When our people were struggling against Jim Crow and U.S. apartheid fifty years ago, those suffering under colonialism in Asia and Africa looked to us for their inspiration. African governments, Cuba, and China too welcomed, educated and sheltered Malcolm X, Kwame Toure, and many others when they toured the African continent and the world.

When the Vietnamese were under savage attack they used to call to U.S. Black soldiers in the night to ask and remind them, "Black man why are you here? Your fight is at home." It was their official policy until '66 or '67 to spare Black soldiers they could have killed in close encounters when possible. Those brothers came back to inform youngsters like me who would have been drafted the next year so we could help organize in our Black communities against the imperial war.

When a nuclear-armed South Africa invaded Angola repeatedly in the '70s and '80s, Cuba sent 60,000 troops, the majority of them of African descent, and its entire air force, to fly across the Atlantic to fight, and turned the South Africans around.

In the global struggles against colonialism, capitalism, and injustice we are all inextricably connected. We're all obligated to carry a bit of each other's burden, to stand up for each other when required. It's a tradition. It's international solidarity. That's how this thing works.

But our Black misleadership-class are not players. They are being played and playing themselves.

—*Black Agenda Report*, July 23, 2014

http://blackagendareport.com/content/why-our-black-political-class-paralyzed-and-silent-gaza-massacres-and-israeli-apartheid

Israeli Civilians as Human Shields

How Israel used its own civilians as human shields while assaulting Gaza

By Max Blumenthal

Throughout the ongoing assault on the Gaza Strip, perhaps no phrase has featured as prominently or persistently in the lexicon of Israeli propaganda as "human shields." Repeated in stentorian fashion by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a heavily regimented army of 10,000 public relations flacks, the phrase has been ruthlessly deployed to shield Israel from responsibility for the bloodbath it has caused in Gaza. Israel has killed 1,800 civilians in a matter of weeks, including some 430 children, but it was Hamas that forced them to do it.

Like so many Zionist accusations against Palestinian society ("They only understand force," "They teach their children to hate," "They never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity") the human shields slander is a projection. Israel is the most militarized society on earth, with soldiers and military installations honeycombed throughout its civil society. With full military conscription for all men and women and reserve duty required for all Jews until they reach their 40s, Jewish Israelis alternate constantly between the role of civilian and soldier, blurring the line between the two.

Within one of Tel Aviv's most densely populated neighborhoods sits Ha'Kirya, the army's headquarters, a gigantic complex of monolithic buildings that house the offices where attacks on Gaza are planned. The uniformed officers and soldiers who work inside take lunch in the cafes and shop in the malls surrounding their offices, embedding themselves among the civilian population. A military base is nestled in the middle of the campus of Haifa University while Hebrew and Tel Aviv Universities offer military officers free tuition, encouraging their enrollment and allowing them to carry weapons on campus. It is hard to find a henhouse, flophouse, or fieldhouse anywhere in Israel without some kind of military presence.

In an editorial for the Israeli daily, *Yedioth Aharonot*, veteran Israeli military advisor Giora Eiland argued in favor of collectively punishing Gaza's civilian population. "In order to guarantee our interests versus the other side's demands, we must avoid the artificial, wrong and dangerous distinction between the Hamas people, who are 'the bad guys,' and Gaza's residents, which are allegedly 'the good guys.'"

Naturally, Eiland failed to consider the terrible implications of eliminating the distinction between civilians and the armed factions that move among them: If his logic were inverted to apply to Israeli society, where civilians are soldiers and soldiers are civilians, almost every Jewish Israeli citizen could be considered a legitimate target.

Most vulnerable among the Jewish Israeli public are residents of the communities surrounding the Gaza Strip. Many of these working class development towns and kibbutzim were planted during the 1950s in place of the Palestinians who had just been forcibly expelled. In al-Majdal Asqalan, now known as Ashkelon, Jewish immigrants from the Middle East were literally trucked in to replace the Palestinians who had been held within a barbed wire enclosure before being outcasted to Gaza. Today, these largely neglected communities form a human wall against the demographic threat tucked behind a high-tech *cordon sanitaire* just to their south.

Not only do Israel's southern communities exist under the threat of rocket and mortar attacks from those they displaced, they are routinely used as shelters and temporary bases by the Israeli army.

Renan Raz, a 26-year-old waiter and anti-occupation activist now living in Tel Aviv, remembers the anguish he experienced when the army arrived in Dorot, the southern kibbutz where he was born and raised. It was the height

of Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli assault that left over 1400 Palestinian Gazans dead, mostly civilians, between December 2008 and January 2009.

"Most of the days soldiers were fighting in the Gaza Strip in the morning and in the evening they were coming back to our kibbutz, bringing their weapons there, they were sleeping there, and sometimes they were practicing [military drills] in the fields, in the kibbutz grass—they were hiding there and making plans," Raz told me. "The way I saw it, they were using us as human shields."

Raz recalled, "We were right on the border of the Gaza Strip and they were practicing in the fields with weaponry, whether it's with their rifle or armored vehicles. I could hear explosions [from the fields] while they were practicing and maybe even shooting things into Gaza."

"We are a sick military society," he continued. "You can't say Hamas is using their civilians as a human shield when it's obvious that our army is using all of us as human shields. And those of us who live near the Gaza Strip are definitely the biggest human shields."

Raz remembers being almost alone in raising questions about the presence of the soldiers. "People were so happy, they were really proud of them. Each day after they came out of the Gaza Strip, in the [kibbutz] dining room, if it was lunch or dinner, there was food waiting for them," he said. "They came into our houses and used our showers and relaxed there. People wrote letters to them after they left the kibbutz thanking them for risking their lives for us. Not only in the kibbutz but all over Israel they are seen as the most sacred thing. People treat them as angels, as people who put their own lives at risk so civilians can live at peace."

Having already refused army service in defiance of his country's militarist ethos, Raz turned solidly against the attack on Gaza. "Whenever there was a rocket alarm, all the people around me were shouting, Death to leftists! And Death to Arabs! And I just wanted to have a better life for everyone. I don't want to be intimidated by the rockets but I also don't want the people in Gaza to be bombed and massacred for no reason. I realized that this is the oppressed and the oppressor—it wasn't self-defense."

During the current assault on Gaza, Israeli forces have returned to the communities surrounding Gaza to bivouac and stage attacks. However, the fear of "terror tunnels" and rockets has led many of the local residents to flee, leaving virtual ghost towns in their wake.

In a recorded message broadcast on July 29 by al-Aqsa television, Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades general commander Mohammad Daif declared that Gaza fighters were exclusively targeting active duty Israeli military personnel and avoiding attacks on civilians. So far, the Qassam Brigades have killed 65 Israeli soldiers, two Israeli civilians, one Thai worker, and wounded a kibbutz owl.

Max Blumenthal is a senior writer for AlterNet, *and the author of* Goliath and Republican Gomorrah *(Basic/Nation Books, 2009). Find him on Twitter at @MaxBlumenthal.*

—*AlterNet.org*, August 6, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/world/how-israel-used-its-own-civilians-human-shields-while-assaulting-gaza?akid=12098.229473.3Uac0U&rd=1&src=newsletter1014522&t=2&paging=off&current_page=1#bookmark

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Four Little Boys

The price of play in Gaza

By Dave Zirin

When the Palestinian national team secured entry into the 2015 Asia Cup, winning the right to play in an international tournament for the first time in its eighty-six-year history, crowds gathered by the hundreds to dance, play music and watch the triumph of their national team on large movie-sized television screens on the beaches on Gaza. The oceanfront represents the illusion of freedom for a land otherwise encircled by walls and checkpoints. People often gather on the beach to celebrate because it is a refuge from densely populated squalor that defines so much of the land they have been compelled to call home. This is especially the case for children.

That brings us to the four Bakr boys. There was Mohamed Ramez Bakr, eleven years old, Ahed Atef Bakr and Zakaria Ahed Bakr, both ten, and Ismael Mohamed Bakr, nine. They were all killed by an Israeli Defense Forces military strike while playing on the beach in surroundings as familiar to them as a corner playground. The first shell sent them running. The second took their lives. Existing in a land where you are always underfoot, the beach is one of the precious few places a child can freely roam. In Gaza City, which sewage and pollution could make unlivable by 2020, according to a United Nations study, this is one of the only places where the air feels clean in your lungs. In a land where soccer fields are constantly under bombardment—Israel says that parks and stadiums are popular places for Hamas to launch rocket attacks—the beach is where you go to play.

The Bakr boys were killed in an area they believed to be safe. Mohamed's mother, grieving at the hospital, was quoted by *CNN* as saying, "Why did he go to the beach and play—for them to take him away from me?" Several reporters on hand were shocked at what happened. Ayman Mohyeldin of *NBC*, tweeted: "4 Palestinian kids killed in a single Israeli airstrike. Minutes before they were killed by our hotel, I was kicking a ball with them #gaza." After this, Mohyeldin was taken off the air, and was only allowed to return following an online campaign launched to defend him. The reasons behind *NBC's* decision to pull him and then return Mohyeldin to Gaza are still very much in depute. Whatever the cause, Mohyeldin was doing the kind of journalism that forced people to see Palestinians as actual human beings.

When people write, tweet, and message me with their unquestioned belief that Hamas is using the children of Gaza as human shields, I often wonder whether they make these assertions out of unknowing ignorance or out of a deeper kind of "let them eat cake" cruelty.

Maybe they don't know that these same "human shield" accusations, made in 2008 and 2009 during Israel's Operation Cast Lead bombing of Gaza, were found to be without evidence by Amnesty International.

Maybe they don't know that to even speak of "human shields" in Gaza is absurd, because the Strip is fenced-in and residents have little right to come and go as they please. Maybe they don't know that Gaza City is one of the most densely populated areas on the planet, with most of Gaza's 1.8 million people living in the urban heart of Strip.

People in the United States may be ignorant about these overcrowded conditions, but the Israeli military commanders are certainly not. Marie Antoinette's apocryphal quote that if the poor were starving and without bread, we should "let them eat cake," has become Netanyahu's "let them find shelter." He says, "Let them evacuate" when the only truly safe place is on the other side of a checkpoint. Someone fleeing one missile strike may be heading directly into another.

Perhaps these four little boys are examples of the "telegenically dead Palestinians" that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told us we should disregard. Or perhaps what Netanyahu fears is people who see nothing "telegenic" about dead children. Perhaps he knows that there are people who cannot imagine anything more human than a group of children playing on the beach, and cannot imagine anything more inhumane than taking their lives from the sky.

—*The Nation*, July 21, 2014

http://www.thenation.com/blog/180746/four-little-boys-and-price-play-gaza

Stop the Massacre in Gaza

National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) issues call for support for latest demonstrations to stop the massacre in Gaza

By The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

Transport Union RMT today, August 5, 2014, issued a renewed call for the biggest possible turn-out in support of the next round of protests organized up and down the country by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) for an end to the massacre in Gaza.

With nearly 2000 Palestinians killed, 10,000 injured and schools, refuges and hospitals targeted, RMT is urging all members to join the protests and to ensure a massive and continuing trade union presence on the streets as the PSC campaign forces the voices of opposition into the mainstream media.

As the Palestine Solidarity Campaign says:

"Whole neighborhoods have been flattened, and almost half of the Strip was already a 'no go zone,' before the horrific shelling of Rafah yesterday.

"The horror is overwhelming, with Palestinians struggling to dig out the bodies of the dead, hospitals struggling to cope with the bloodshed and death, and shelters struggling to cope with the hundreds-of-thousands attempting to seek refuge. Ambulances, hospitals and UN schools sheltering refugees have all been targeted by Israeli bombs.

"The British government has blood on its hands, reports on the £42 million worth of arms export licenses being granted since 2010 to sell military equipment to Israel, including ammunition, and components for the Hermes drone, which has been widely used to monitor Palestinians and guided missile strikes. It has also licensed a UK company to supply components for Israel's main battle tank.

"International outrage has escalated, with thousands blocking the streets outside the Israeli Embassy in London, and protests taking place across Britain against the slaughter."

This Saturday, August 9[1], a major demonstration will assemble in London at noon at a location to be confirmed and is expected to be massive as the British public send out the clearest possible message to David Cameron and his Government to take action to end the bloodshed. Local demonstrations are being called all the time and a full list, along with updated details of Saturday's London Demo can be found at *www.palestinecampaign.org*

RMT Acting General Secretary Mick Cash said:

"RMT is mobilizing our members in support of the people of Gaza. Our union has a clear policy for the boycott of Israeli goods as one of the ways that we can register our outrage and horror at the massacre that has been unleashed on the Palestinian people.

"The images and reports that we have seen and heard are just pure butchery of innocent people who stand no chance against the arsenal of weapons supplied to the Israeli forces by our Government, the Americans and others around the globe who have blood on their hands.

"Trade unions have a key role to play in harnessing and mobilizing the opposition to the massacre in Gaza and that is exactly what we are doing."

—*RMT.org.uk*, August 5, 2014

http://www.rmt.org.uk/news/support-for-demonstrations-to-stop-the-massacre-in-gaza/

1 Over 150,000 people turned out for this demonstration on Saturday, August 9th in London. See article titled, "Solidarity with the People of Gaza," by Graham Durham in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

Stop Arming Israel!

UK activists shut down Israeli arms factory

By London Palestine Action

For nearly a month, Israel has bombarded Gaza from land, sea and air. More than 1800 Palestinians have lost their lives and war crimes have been committed. To our collective shame, the UK government has not only failed to take action to pressure Israel to stop its massacre, but has refused to take steps to end the material support it provides to Israel's brutal regime of apartheid and colonialism. When governments support crimes against humanity, grassroots movements must take direct action.

A group of activists from the London Palestine Action network have today, August 5, 2014, chained the doors shut of an Israeli weapons factory based near Birmingham in the UK and are now occupying the roof. As part of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement (BDS) and in response to calls for action from Palestinian movements, we are demanding the permanent closure of the factory and an end to all forms of military trade and cooperation with Israel.

The factory that we are occupying produces engines for drones and is owned by Elbit Systems, Israel's largest military company and the world's largest drones producer. Drone engines manufactured at this factory have been exported to Israel in 2010, 2011 and 2012 and Elbit Systems drones are being used in Israel's ongoing massacre. Any claims that components manufactured at this factory are not being used in Israel's current attack on Gaza are not credible.

Drones are a key part of Israel's military arsenal. By allowing this factory to export drone components and other arms to Israel, the UK government is providing direct support and approval to Israel's massacres.

The factory is also a key part of the Watchkeeper program under which Elbit Systems is leading the manufacture of a new generation of drones for the UK military. The Watchkeeper drone is based on the Hermes 450, documented as being used to kill Palestinian civilians during the 2008-09 attack on Gaza. Elbit Systems markets its drones as "field tested"—by which it means that their drones have been proven to be effective at killing Palestinians. The UK government is importing technology that has been developed during the course of Israeli massacres.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron and the UK government have Palestinian blood on their hands. In order to end their deep complicity with Israel's system of occupation, colonialism and apartheid against Palestinians, they must take steps to impose a full military embargo on Israel and close the Elbit Systems factory immediately.

It is more important than ever that the solidarity we build with the Palestinian struggle is effective and impactful. Israel does not act alone but is supported by governments and corporations across the world that have names and addresses. It is time for the international solidarity movement to escalate its direct actions against those that support and profit from Israeli apartheid to take action that can lead to a genuine isolation of Israel.

Join the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement! Stop arming Israel!

Victory to the Palestinian struggle!

—*London Palestine Action*, August 5, 2014

http://londonpalestineaction.tumblr.com/

Solidarity with Palestine

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to intensify campaign in solidarity with Palestine

Statement by COSATU

The Congress of South African Trade Unions held a joint meeting of its Political and Socio-economic Commissions (CEC sub-committees) on August 5, 2014. It resolved to intensify its campaign of solidarity with the people of Palestine and against the brutal military rampage against the people of Gaza by the Israel apartheid state which has left around 1900 Palestinians dead.

The meeting agreed to urgently step up its solidarity campaign and to coordinate it more effectively with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions, South Africa and many other civil society groups. We shall continue to demand the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to South Africa and the recall of the South African ambassador to Israel.

The main thrust of the campaign must now be to organize an economic, trade, investment and cultural boycott that bites. Lists are to be drawn up of all the Israeli companies operating in South Africa, and all Israeli-made products so that we can mobilize a mass movement to boycott them.

In order to hit the Israel economy where it hurts, we are also urging all our affiliates to use their investment and provident funds more effectively to support this campaign and target international companies propping up the regime by supplying Israel with goods and services, particularly those supplying finance, arms and infrastructure that enable it to operate in the Palestine occupied territories. That is the only language the Israeli rulers will understand.

We note and welcome the several countries and organizations all over the world that have taken steps to isolate the apartheid state of Israel and concretely supported the Palestine people's struggle to end Israel's colonial expansionism. We particularly applaud the solidarity action taken by Latin American governments.

Our campaign is to end apartheid and occupation now. There will be no peace in the Middle East unless the world acts with decisiveness, not just for piecemeal ceasefires, but to end the occupation and colonialism by the state of Israel.

The Special Central Executive Committee of COSATU next week will make further announcements on developing this program of action towards building a more sustainable and effective momentum in support of the Palestinian people's struggles.

We shall be drawing on the experience of the international anti-apartheid campaign and studying similar campaigns against Israel in other countries to learn lessons on the best way to put pressure on the Israeli apartheid regime to stop its carnage

We urge all members and supporters to attend the mass rally in Cape Town on Saturday August 9, and all other rallies across the country.

Stop the Israeli apartheid state's war against the people of Gaza!

Forward to a free and independent Palestine!

Patrick Craven (National Spokesperson)

—*Congress of South African Trade Unions*, August 5, 2014

http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=9277#sthash.rlBVAdnx.dpuf

Israel: Stop the Killing of Palestinians

Statement from the United National Antiwar Coalition

U.S. end all aid to Israel, freedom and justice for Palestine

Israel, fully backed by the United States, has engaged in collective punishment of the Palestinian people since 1948 through forced evacuation, war, occupation, apartheid practices, expanding settlements, mass incarceration, and outright terrorism. From its inception, the Zionist objective has been ethnic cleansing and land appropriation.

The Israeli propaganda machine always has a pretext, based on charges of anti-Semitism and "existential" threat, to justify its murderous actions against the indigenous Palestinian population. Today, they blame Hamas for the kidnapping and killing of three teenagers. This comes in the context of the Israeli government's anger at the recent reconciliation agreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

In "retaliation" for the slain Israeli youth, reminiscent of the Southern lynchings in the U.S., a racist gang of thugs kidnapped a Palestinian 16-year old, Mohammad Aba Khudair, and brutally beat and tortured him and finally, burned him alive. Days later, his American 15-year old cousin, Tarek Abu Khdeir, was savagely beaten by masked police and others, and then arrested and held while medical treatment was withheld.

In recent weeks, the State of Israel has carried out thousands of military raids of Palestinian homes, arrested hundreds, encouraged mob violence against Palestinians and their civic institutions, killed and injured hundreds of Palestinians, including many children, and intensified air attacks.

The people of Gaza, living in the world's largest penal colony, who have never recovered from Israel's last major assault of 2008-2009 and the ongoing siege, are once again the targets of a reign of terror from a major military power. On July 8, 2014 Israel launched a new military offensive called "Operation Protective Edge" with a barrage of intensifying missile attacks on Gaza, activating reservists, and massing thousands of infantry and assault units at the Gaza border, threatening a full-scale ground and air invasion.

There is no justification for the latest escalation of massive military and civilian violence and racist hatred directed at the besieged Palestinians. Without U.S. financial (over $3 billion dollars annually) and political backing and military weapons, Israel could not carry out its campaign of terror and ethnic cleansing.

When U.S. State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki justified the support for the Israeli slaughter in Gaza by claiming that Israel has a right to defend itself, the question was asked whether the Palestinians have a right to defend themselves. Despite considerable pressure, Ms. Psaki did not honor the question with a response. In spite of the hugely disproportionate might of the forces arrayed against them, the Palestinians heroically continue to resist. The U.S. antiwar movement must show our solidarity with them and build protests everywhere.

At the UNAC founding conference in 2010, for the first time, a large representative gathering of antiwar and social justice activists took a strong stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. We demanded the U.S. end all aid to Israel—military, economic, and diplomatic—and took a stand in support of the Palestinian Right of Return and the international campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). This stance was a turning point for the Palestine solidarity movement in the U.S. and should be embraced by all who stand for justice.

We demand:

Stop Israeli bombing and killing

End all U.S. aid to Israel

Support the Palestinian call for BDS

—*United National Antiwar Coalition*, July 10, 2014

https://unacpeace.org/

Death and Devastation in Gaza

Defining the cruel reality and the tasks before us

By Ralph Schoenman

What we are witnessing today in Gaza is not a war. The people of Gaza do not have an army. They have no air force. They have no anti-aircraft capacity. They have no means whatsoever of defense against air attack, missile attack, the systematic use of genocidal weapons such as white phosphorous, depleted uranium, fragmentation bombs, gas and chemical warfare, biological warfare involving weaponized genomes of deadly biological agents.

What we are witnessing today is the relentless destruction of the civilian population as a strategic objective—the brutal slaughter that inspired Pablo Picasso's painting "Guernica" during the fascist assault upon the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s. Guernica stood as an emblem of humanity's response to fascism. So it does today for the agonizing victimization of the people of Gaza.

Hospitals, schools, private homes and entire civilian neighborhoods, shelters, U.N. and internationally run centers for medical treatment of a population subjected to mass murder by design are the signature of this barbarous campaign.

It is analogous to the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the military and political operation is taken from the playbook from the Nazi "final solution" imposed upon the Jews of Europe, a crime in which the Zionist movement of the day was fully complicit.

The Nazi-like siege of Gaza is by design intended to strangle the inhabitants of Gaza. It cuts off food and medicine. It destroys sewage facilities and contaminates potable water. It severs access to vital construction materials with which to repair destroyed homes, sustain power, electricity and the means of survival.

The Israelis have calculated a calorie count that is barely above mere sustenance and insufficient to ward off systemic and epidemic disease.

Within the West Bank, the water supply has been seized by the Zionist State and the relentless settlements are aimed at reducing the Palestinians, in the words of former Israeli Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan, speaking in the Israeli Knesset, to "drugged cockroaches in a bottle."

Netanyahu has now declared formally that all the territory west of the Jordan River must be a security area of the Israeli State and under permanent Israeli control.

What is the intent of such policies? The removal of the means of survival for the Palestinian population and the transfer *en masse* to other countries of the surviving besieged Palestinian people, a crime of the near future intended to unfold under the cover of sustained military attack.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that the current Israeli onslaught on the people of Gaza is not about Hamas *per se*. On the contrary, Hamas had accepted the hegemony of the Palestinian Authority and had even embraced the PA's acquiescence in a "Palestinian entity" that legitimizes the Israeli State—a capitulation that sanctions the ethnic cleansing and dispossession of the Palestinian people from 80 percent of historic Palestine.

The Palestinian inhabitants of the village of Huj were subject to slaughter and expulsion to Gaza by the Zionist Negev Brigade's 7th battalion on May 31, 1948. The area, now inhabited by Israelis, is called "Sderot." In *The Hidden History of Zionism*[1], under the heading "Murder in Gaza" [pages 37-38], the continuous Israeli assault on Gaza is set forth:

> "The program of massacre did not end with the formation of the State. Meir Har Tzion's diary describes Israeli commando squad massacres in the refugee camps and villages of Gaza during the early 1950s . . . Machine guns rattle, their noise mixed with a terrible howling.

> We reach the main thoroughfare of the camp. The mob of fleeing Arabs grows larger. The other group attacks from the opposite direction. The thunder of our hand-grenades echoes in the distance."

There is no component of the Zionist leadership that has the slightest interest in "peace" with the people of Palestine. Their sustained policy—the *raison d'etre* of Zionism—is the removal of the Palestinian people from all their land and from history.

A staged event to create conditions for murderous invasion

The abduction and murder of the three settler teenagers was known fully by Israeli military and police authorities immediately. The Israeli government suppressed this truth to create the conditions for a vastly orchestrated and murderous invasion of the West Bank punctuated by the kidnapping, killing and imprisonment of hundreds of Palestinians.

The fact that no Palestinian political group declared responsibility for the kidnapping of these three settler youth was the clearest indication that the event was an Israeli operation. Palestinian political groups who make reprisals against settlers take responsibility for their acts and seek to build resistance based upon them.

The tactic is misguided as a revolutionary means of struggle, but that is a wholly separate issue.

The Israeli regime deployed this event to create the conditions for destroying the recently proclaimed political unity between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. It did so with calculated intent, precisely to provide the pretext for the current onslaught—a sustained slaughter that is unleashed continuously. This murderous assault is, of course, but the latest in a series of such attacks that have unfolded over less than seven years.

The rulers of the Emirates from Qatar to Abu Dhabi to Dubai, from al Fujairah to Bahrain, consist of oil billionaire sheikdoms—country-selling regimes that enslave migrant workers and deploy their billions of dollars to carry out the dirty work of imperialism throughout the region.

The phrase "the global community" is an oxymoron. This euphemism refers to the major industrial powers that are junior partners of U.S. imperialism, corporate capitalist regimes that are military and political instruments of the subjugation of peoples, usurpation of their resources and partners in the neo-colonial exploitation of the mass of the population of the region.

Hence, their power and politics are deployed to sustain U.S. and Israeli hegemony and, as such, these governments and their representatives are complicit in the events unfolding in Gaza as we speak.

What can be more clear than the fact that the United States today agreed to supply arms and ammunition in huge amounts to amplify Israel's genocidal onslaught in Gaza?

It has been revealed that the United States maintains an actual arms depot in Israel consisting of over one billion dollars of ammunition, mortar and attack weaponry, and this one billion dollar arsenal of mass murder is maintained precisely to resupply Israel's obscene military massacre unfolding daily before our eyes in Gaza.

What has this "global community" done in response to this revelation that the United States is the source of arms and money for every murderous act of the Israeli State? The silence is so loud it drowns out the agonizing cries of the children and families of the dying people of Gaza.

As to the Emirates and their designs on Hamas, the corrupt rulers of these sheikdoms are complicit against Hamas even when they give token funds to Hamas since their entire function is that of adjuncts of U.S. and Israeli hegemony.

With respect to a "Two-State" solution, this is nothing more than a political game played by imperialism to provide ideological cover for its predations. It is not "peace" that is the objective here but pacification. "Two States" entail accepting a Bantustan in which the Palestinian population is used as cheap labor under the military and economic control of the Israeli State. It is no more than a deceitful pursuit that will never be implemented but serves to paralyze and disarm politically the Palestinian people.

The Palestine Authority is financed by Israel. It is a key component of Israeli "security enforcement" of which it is a shameful component.

Hamas actually agreed to support this process in the recent rapprochement with the Palestine Authority.

As we see repeatedly, the Zionist leaders of the Israeli State, all of them, have not the slightest intention of allowing any form of Palestinian "statehood"—even that Bantustan to which the decomposed Palestinian mis-leadership has lent itself, only to be humiliated and degraded on a perpetual basis by a contemptuous Israeli political class.

As to the words of Barack Obama, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Joseph Biden or any of the political satraps of corporate capitalism in the United States, these sanctimonious proclamations are uniformly duplicitous. They are aimed at providing political cover for the crimes of U.S. imperialism and its total collusion with its creation and instrument, the Israeli State and a permanent Zionist propaganda machine.

No, there will never be a concord for "Two States." Such an agreement, of course, even if it should momentarily ensue, would do no more than assign to Palestinian servants of Israel and the U.S. the tasks of the most brutal repression of the Palestinian people. The prisons would be funded by Israel and the U.S. The torturers would be

Israeli trained, and the purchased face of repression would be that of Palestinian collaborators.

Israel is a colonial-settler State. It must be removed by popular struggle. The struggle for self-determination in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana—the Algerian Revolution and formal independence in Morocco and Tunisia—were all components of the anti-colonial struggle for self-determination and sovereign independence.

No supporter of the rights of the colonized demanded that in order to enjoy the forms of self-determination they must first accept and guarantee the security of an exclusive settler State in all the major cities and economic centers of the nation concerned. No one demanded that the people of South Africa accept an exclusive Apartheid regime in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban—and this after some 500 years of colonial conquest! Why this indecent exceptionalism when it comes to the people of Palestine?

It is a measure of the political decomposition of our era that the basic predicates of the anti-colonial revolution, elementary 18th century democratic rights—have been abandoned with respect to Palestine.

Increasing numbers of Israelis, Palestinians, aspire to a single Palestinian nation in which all its inhabitants have the rights of citizenship based neither on ethnicity nor religious affiliation. The Palestinian people will join with increasing numbers of the settler population itself who are sick of being deployed as cannon fodder and pitted against the basic rights and survival of the Palestinian people and the peoples of the region. Together the people of Palestine and the growing tens-of-thousands of settlers who aspire to a nation in which the mass of the working population has hegemony and in which the productive forces of the nation are run by the vast majority—the working class at the point of production, will prepare the way forward.

There is no component of the Zionist leadership that has the slightest interest in "peace" with the people of Palestine. Their sustained policy—the *raison d'etre* of Zionism—is the removal of the Palestinian people from all their land and from history.

Democratic Rights for the people of Palestine require nothing less than a State in which this vast working majority has hegemony over the economic and political life of the nation. On this basis alone can democratic rights be secured, a contagious prospect that will unfold through organized popular struggle and in which a Constituent Assembly will assure the rights of all and the restoration to the dispossessed Palestinian people of their homes, their lost property and their livelihoods. So indeed the rights of all will be secured.

As in Palestine so in the region and the world at large. The rights of the mass of the working population to run society is the basis for the realization of the democratic rights of all peoples.

As to the role of the United Nations, as long as its component States are controlled by the corporate capitalist oligarchy of the nation concerned, it can play no positive role.

The people of the world—all with eyes to see—are witness to the war crimes, the genocidal slaughter unleashed by Israel in Gaza. In every country, people must mobilize and demand that their leaders sever relations with the Israeli State and cease all economic and military support for it. The movement to Boycott and Divest that has grown internationally must be vastly expanded. Every Israeli ship and airplane should be greeted by a refusal to allow it to dock or to land.

Trade unions in every country should be enlisted in the struggle to support the besieged people of Gaza and of Palestine, the world's soldiers for justice.

The lies perpetuated by the corporate media in every country must be challenged, and the deceptive deployment of intelligence operatives as "journalists" that take place in every capitalist State must be challenged and exposed. Hired hands of the CIA are not journalists. They are instruments of deception and a component not only of lying propaganda concerning the war on Gaza but facilitators of State propaganda designed to exploit and oppress the peoples of each country concerned.

The truth will set us free, and we must be diligent in proclaiming it.

Ralph Schoenman is the author of The Hidden History of Zionism*, co-author of* Prisoners of Israel *and* Homage to Palestine*, as well as the author of numerous articles and radio programs on Palestine. During the 1982-83 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Schoenman was co-coordinator of the Committee in Defense of the Palestinian and Lebanese Peoples. In 1988, at the time of the first Intifada, he was co-coordinator of the Palestine Campaign which initiated the slogan: End All Aid to Apartheid Israel: for a Democratic and Secular Palestine. For more information, go to* http://www.takingaimradio.com.

—July 31, 21014

1 *The Hidden History of Zionism*
http://www.takingaimradio.com/hhz/index.htm

Solidarity with the People of Gaza

150,000 march in London to extend the fight against U.S./European Commission (EC) imperialism

By Graham Durham

An unprecedented series of four huge national demonstrations in London within seven weeks culminated in the largest ever demonstration on Gaza of 150,000 people on August 9, 2014. Organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop The War and the Friends of Al Asqa Mosque, the march was characterized by the overwhelming presence of youth with over 70 percent of marchers under the age of thirty.

As the march passed the U.S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square, the cry "Barack Obama—shame on you" rose up demonstrating a new found political awareness among some new young British activists that U.S. imperialism is at the heart of support for the racist Zionist state of Israel and that the election of a Black figurehead for imperialism has made no difference to the brutal policies of the U.S. and its allies. The brutal indiscriminate slaughter waged on Gaza by Israel, which receives £3billion U.S. defense spending annually as well as £400million from Britain, has horrified many young people in particular and politicized many young Muslims in Britain. Hundreds of buses travelled from all parts of England for the London demonstration and it was particularly noticeable how towns with many generations of Muslim families were heavily represented. One in ten Londoners now identify as Muslims and are overwhelmingly working-class and they formed a huge contingent on the march.

Political fall-out has also occurred at the government level in Britain with the resignation from the Tory/Liberal Democratic coalition government of Baroness Warsi, the only Muslim member of the government, in protest at the refusal of David Cameron to halt defense export licenses to Israel. Whilst Warsi is a full supporter of the austerity and anti-working class program of the Tories, she has helped expose the military connection with Israel for many Muslims.

On August 9, 2014 a contingent of two hundred British Jews joined the protest behind a banner "Not in my Name." Organizations such as Jews for Justice for Palestinians have been prominent in opposing Israeli apartheid and the violence of the occupation of Palestine and the killing of children on a regular basis across Palestine of which the Gaza bombings were a brutal example.

The attempts to suppress Palestinian resistance in Gaza represents, amongst other factors, the pursuit by Israel of the gas reserves off the Gaza coast. Israel seeks to destroy Hamas as the key Palestinian force likely to destabilize any deal to exploit the £4billion worth of natural gas. Israeli Defense Force Minister, Moshe Ya'alon made this clear when he pointed to the proceeds of future Palestinian gas sales to Israel reaching Hamas and giving them military and financial opportunities to attack Israel.

The new generation of activists is eager to debate and understand the nature of imperialism and which forces can overcome them. A joint initiative by the Labor Representation Committee North West London branch and Solidarity with the Anti-Fascist Resistance in Ukraine, drawing the parallels between U.S. interventions in Palestine directly and by proxy and in Ukraine where the military assault by the Poroshenko government, backed by NATO, on eastern Ukrainian workers resisting austerity led to a further successful picket of the U.S. embassy on August 12, 2014.

Building an anti-imperialist resistance, continues to show that the common enemy is in Washington and London, and that the renewed U.S. bombing in Iraq is motivated by ensuring oil supplies and a compliant state in Iraq, and not by any humanitarian concerns. Great opportunities exist to build this resistance as imperialism shows its ruthless disregard for human life and rights in the pursuit of profit

Graham Durham is a Unite shop steward and has written this article in a personal capacity.

—August 17, 2014

Three NUMSA Shop-Stewards Killed

Statement by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)

August 7, 2014—The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) outrightly condemns what looks like a well-calculated and dastardly killing of its three shop-steward leaders late on Wednesday August 6, 2014 in Isithebe in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

The secretary of Isithebe NUMSA Local Njabulo Ndebele, his deputy Sibonelo "John-John" Ntuli and Ntobeko Maphumulo, were killed in the family home of one of the slain shop-stewards. A NUMSA member Comrade Ntshebentshebe who works at Metso Minerals (South Africa) (Pty) Ltdand, who was with the three at the time, is critical in hospital as a result of the bullet shots he received.

Ndebele, Ntuli and Maphumulo were killed after they travelled back to Isithebe from a union meeting that took place earlier in Durban. The union has been reliably informed by witnesses that an unidentified car arrived where the four NUMSA members were and opened fire, mainly targeting the three. All three died on the scene.

As NUMSA, we are extremely concerned by the killing of these three local leaders. Their untimely and senseless death robs the union of three of its best and promising workers and trade union leaders in our province. It removes three bread-winners from three families.

As a union, while asserting our right to defend our members, we call on our members in Isithebe to remain calm and allow the police to investigate the circumstances that led to the killing of these three leaders. Furthermore, we appeal to anyone that might have information around this barbaric deed to approach the police and provide necessary information.

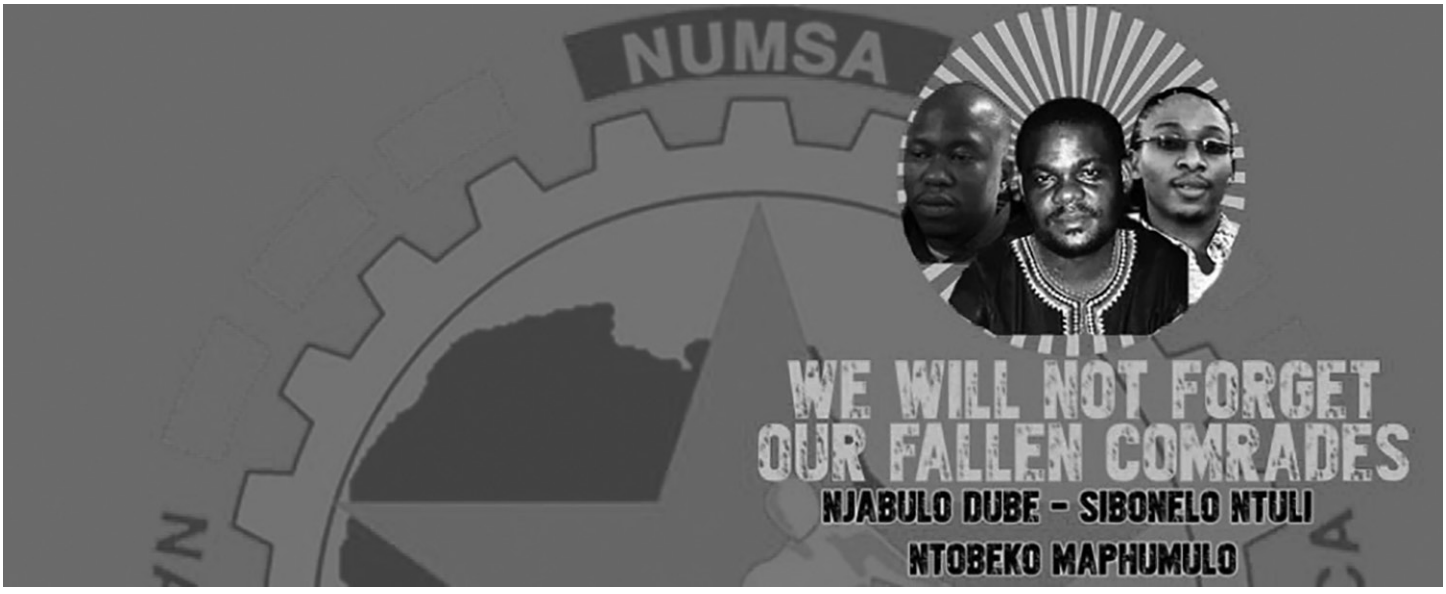
We call on the law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, to apprehend the culprits so that they can face the full might of the law. As NUMSA, we extend our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the families of the three slain NUMSA shop-stewards. NUMSA's regional leadership will visit the families of the three comrades to convey the union's condolences.

We also promise to keep our fallen comrades in our memories by continuing to work for the ideals that they believed in and stood for. We know that working class people and NUMSA activists will face similar incidents as we implement our December 2013 Special National Congress resolution to explore the establishment of an alternative Movement for Socialism.

We are saddened that the assassination of the three comrades takes place on the eve of the International Symposium of Left Parties and Movements that starts on August 7 and concludes on August 10, 2014. Both Ndebele and Ntuli, as members of the union's Mbuyiselo Ngwenda Brigade were coming to the symposium. Their contributions at the symposium will be sorely missed.

—*numsa.org*, August 7, 2014

http://www.numsa.org.za/article/numsa-condemns-killing-three-shop-stewards-kwazulu-natal/



Ukraine Debate

By Barry Sheppard

It is clear that people who consider themselves to be some form of revolutionary socialist do not agree on the facts about Ukraine. We do not even have agreement on whether or not Russia is imperialist, or even what the word means.

I would urge caution and patience in assessing the current situation.

But here is what I think are the facts, culled from various sources.

The Maidan demonstrations were originally sparked by opposition to former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich's rejection of the European Union's austerity conditions for financial aid and his acceptance of Russia's better offer. Maidan grew as Yanukovich unleashed massive repression, with laws and violence. In the physical fight with the police, far-right Right Sector armed groups were in the lead, as could be seen when they took over a government building (city hall?) and erected flags with their modified swastika and the flag of the American Confederacy, and when they beat up leftists trying to join the demonstration.

The main participants of Maidan were not Right Sector, but at no time disassociated from it. They were however, anti-Russian. When the main oligarchs of Ukraine turned against Yanukovich (himself one of them), he was forced to flee. A right-wing government (not fascist but including fascists) was formed. Key posts were given to Svoboda, which has a fascist past and has called for Ukraine to be a white, Christian nation (perhaps that is on the back burner right now) and this sentiment is widespread in western Ukraine.

Maidan has won its main demand, as the new rightist government in Kiev, has accepted the EU's austerity program.

In the 2004-5 "Orange Revolution"[1] the desire for Ukraine to become part of NATO was proclaimed. While that government went down in the flames of corruption, the emergence of a new rightist (many bourgeois analysts say the most right wing in Europe) government in Kiev, Russia correctly assumed that this new government would take control of Russia's naval base in Crimea, its only warm water base, and would start down the path of joining NATO, turning that base over to NATO. That was the reason for Russia's annexation of Crimea.

I am against any demand for Russia to "return" Crimea to Ukraine. Those (including U.S. President Barack Obama) who raise this demand base it on a legality, that then premier of the USSR, Khrushchev, (himself Ukrainian), shifted Crimea from the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Ukraine SSR, not much of a change since Crimea and the USSR's naval base (it wasn't a Russian SSR base) remained in the USSR. This was done likely for technical reasons having to do with the USSR building better infrastructure between Ukraine and Crimea. I find it ironic that Obama and other Western powers look to a technical edict by a Soviet premier for justification of their position. It is even odder to me that many leftists, who didn't support most edicts of Soviet premiers, do so.

When Ukraine won independence (in 1991 or so), Ukraine agreed that the naval base in Crimea would be turned over to the Russian Federation. At that point, Russia had no objection to the rest of Crimea remaining Ukrainian. That agreement was effectively nullified when the new openly anti-Russian government took power, and the Russians swiftly acted.

Ukraine was a major battlefield during the civil war following the Russian Revolution. When Ukraine was incorporated into the USSR, it was as an independent Soviet Socialist Republic, under the Bolshevik's policy of national self-determination of the oppressed nationalities under the former heel of tsarism. Crimea became part of the Russian SSR because it was predominately Russian, and had been by the mid 1800s, after it was captured earlier from the Ottoman Empire by Catherine the Great. (The Crimean War was waged 1853-1856 by France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Sardinia against Russia, not Ukraine, which didn't yet exist.) At the same time, the Crimean Tatars were given self-rule as an autonomous region.

As we know, the Stalinist counter-revolution reversed Bolshevik policy on this and many other questions, and re-instituted Great Russian chauvinism.

All reports from the bourgeois press indicate that the great majority of Crimeans today (except for the Tatars) support being returned to Russia.

The Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine have good reason to fear the new government in Kiev. The fact that it initially voted to outlaw Russian as an official language made that clear, and the acting president's subsequent vetoing of that law under U.S. pressure is a fig leaf. Attacks on Russian speakers began—the worst was the fire in Odessa that killed 40 people. The fire was the work of the Right Sector, according to the British *Guardian*. Most observers say that fire swung most Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine over to support the armed resistance.

The nature of the armed resistance to Kiev in eastern Ukraine is murky.

There appear to be different groups with different programs and these programs are unclear. How much Russia is backing these groups is unclear, but what is clear is that other than in words, Russia is not at this time resisting the destruction of eastern Ukraine by Kiev forces (at least some of which are Svoboda and Right Sector).

This destruction is widespread, as can be seen in photos in even such pro-U.S. and pro-NATO and pro-Kiev papers such as the *New York Times*, the British *Guardian* and British *Financial Times* of bombed-out buildings in cities "liberated" by the rightist government's forces. Eastern Ukraine has become another source of refugees in the world.

According to the British *Guardian* of July 23, 2014:

- About 2000 refugees per day are crossing the border from Ukraine to the Rostov region of Russia, and some 400 refugee camps, run by local authorities, are stretched to the limit.
- Since June 4, more than 220,000 refugees have crossed the border from Ukraine to the Rostov region, Governor Vassily Golubev said.
- Since April 1, over 515,000 people have arrived from southeastern Ukraine, the head of Russia's migration service Konstantin Romodanovsky said.
- Germany's Merkel has called for a ceasefire. Obama is opposed. Obama is giving material and political support to Kiev's continued massive bombardment.
- New Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko has promised to "kill dozens or hundreds" of "terrorists" for each Ukrainian army soldier killed. He is keeping his promise.

Since I live in the United States, my main opponent is my own imperialist government.

Concerning the downing of the Malaysian airliner, it does appear to have been an accident. I don't think either Kiev, the eastern Ukraine fighters or Moscow had any interest in doing this deliberately. But they all would have an interest in denying committing this atrocity. So I don't put much stock in what they say, or what Washington says, or what Britain says, *etc.* Perhaps the situation will become clearer.

In the meantime I wouldn't jump to any conclusions based solely on what all these people assert without proof. And any "proof" must be scrutinized to see if it was faked.

Washington is using the crash like it utilized 9/11 to buttress its arguments for sanctions against Russia and that Kiev must use all the force necessary to destroy any opposition in eastern Ukraine. (Unlike 9/11, Washington can't invade.) The U.S. media has fallen 100 percent behind Washington, whipping up anti-Russian sentiment 24/7.

Barry Sheppard was a leader of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International. He recounts his experience in the SWP in a two-volume book, The Party — the Socialist Workers Party 1960-1988.

—*Links.org*, July 28, 2014

http://links.org.au/node/3973

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1 *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Revolution*

False Flag: The Shoot-Down of Malaysian Airliner in Ukraine

By Chris Kinder

The shooting down of a Malaysian airliner (MH-17) over Ukraine on July 17 played very well into the plans of the Ukrainian government and its U.S. sponsors. As soon as this horrendous crime, which killed all those aboard the plane, became known, both governments wasted no time to start howling that the separatists did it, and Russian *hetman* (Cossack leader) Vladimir Putin was to blame (for allegedly having provided the military hardware that was said to have been used). The shoot-down also moved the European Union (EU) to ramp up sanctions against Russia, which it had earlier been resisting; and it served to change the dynamic of Ukraine's war against the pro-Russian separatists of South-Eastern Ukraine in favor of the Kiev government.

In the absence of any credible evidence, the U.S. government and its servile UK allies and media moguls expect us to believe their separatists-and-Putin-did-it charge. "Putin's Missile" claimed the *Sun*. "Cold War II" proclaimed *Time Magazine*. "The Pariah," with a picture of Putin with mushroom cloud eyes, decorated *Newsweek*; and "A Web of Lies," again with a picture of Putin, adorned the *Economist*. The world's people require some better answers.

What tales we weave

The Kiev/Washington claims did have some initial attractions, however. The plane came down right over the disputed Luhansk-Donetsk area in Eastern Ukraine where the separatists are actively resisting Kiev's military onslaught. Separatist had recently shot down a Ukrainian military cargo plane, and there were some recorded communications in which separatists claimed to have brought down another such plane. Associated Press and other western media displayed a YouTube video that was said to be of a "Buk" (surface-to-air) missile launcher rig being taken back to Russia. Case closed!

Are we to believe that Obama's intelligence sources are good enough, or objective enough, to report what's really going within hours of the event?

Actually, it turns out that at least some U.S. intelligence sources aren't so sure of the official line. Robert Parry, of the *Consortium News* website, says that "some U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that the rebels and Russia were likely not at fault and that it appears Ukrainian government forces were to blame, according to a source briefed on these findings." Parry also reported that according to his sources, "the working hypothesis of the U.S. intelligence analysts is that a Ukraine military Buk battery and the jet fighters may have been operating in collusion as they hunted what they thought was a Russian airliner, possibly even the plane carrying [Putin]." ("Flight 17 Shoot-Down Scenario Shifts," posted August 3, 2014, *Consotiumnews.com*)

Robert Parry is a long-time investigative reporter who has worked for or contributed to the *Associated Press*, *Newsweek*, *PBS*' Frontline, *salon.com* and *Bloomberg*. He broke the Iran-Contra story, including the CIA's "Psy-Ops manual" for the Contras, and the Oliver North and drug-running aspects; and he wrote a piece on how the Reagan administration brought pressure on the National Security Council to cover up the scandal. He left both the *AP* and *Newsweek* over their collaboration with Oliver North, and pressure on him to retract the Reagan cover-up story, respectively. Everything Parry reported on was later confirmed as true by the CIA. Parry also exposed the "October Surprise," concerning the 1980 election, and supported Gary Webb over the publication of his book *Dark Alliance*, as well as covering numerous other stories. Parry's reports of U.S. intelligence assessments which are in total contradiction to the U.S./Kiev anti-Russian narrative have credibility precisely because of their contrarian content—these intelligence sources are in contradiction to their own government's line.

The Russians have revealed their information

Parry is not the only source of another narrative, however. Unlike the Obama and Kiev administrations, which have released no hard evidence of the events of July 17th, the Russians have revealed lots of it. Four days after the crash of MH-17, the Russian military held a press conference at which most global media outlets were in attendance. The Russian military spokesman, Lieutenant General Igor Makushev, presented key evidence, and questions for the Ukraine and U.S. The Russians said that the while the U.S. had a spy satellite directly over Ukraine at the time of the shoot-down, no evidence has been forthcoming from Washington as to a rocket fired from rebel areas, including no images of a Russian Buk system being moved in or out of Ukraine. Russian satellite images, furthermore, revealed that Ukraine moved Buk missile launchers (it's known that Ukraine had these) just prior to July 17th, to sites around Luhansk and Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine, where it's unclear what military use they would have there considering the rebels' total lack of air power.

The Russians also revealed evidence that MH-17 was diverted by 14 kilometers from its original flight path, and told to fly lower than its designated 35,000 feet, by Ukrainian air traffic control. This path that took it to the north, directly over the contested rebel area around Luhansk and Donetsk, as well as lower (to make it an easier target?) Why this move? And why hadn't Ukraine closed this air space to traffic following the recent shoot-down by rebels of a Ukrainian military cargo plane? But perhaps most critically, Russian radar images picked up a Ukrainian fighter jet, which followed the Malaysian aircraft and picked up speed before its final moments. The Russians have handed all this information over to European authorities. What does this tell us? (The *Wall Street Journal* was alone of U.S. major media to cover this press conference. See Mike Whitney, "The Second Aircraft, Was Malaysia Flight 17 Shot Down?" *Counterpunch*, August 6, 2014.)

Evidence from the still-smoldering site

A Ukrainian/Canadian monitor, Michael Bociurkiw, working for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), was among the first investigators to get to the "still smoldering" site of the crash. He was interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on July 31st. "There have been two or three pieces of fuselage that have been really pockmarked," said Bociurkiw, "it almost looks like machine gun fire—very, very strong machine gun fire—that has left these unique marks that we haven't seen anywhere else. We've also been asked, for example, have we seen any examples of missile [evidence], well no we haven't; that's the answer…" Photographs of the pock-marked fuselage bits were displayed during the interview.[1]

German pilot and investigative reporter Peter Haisenko observed the evidence and confirmed the OSCE investigator's report of machine gun bullet holes. "The facts speak clear and loud and are beyond the realm of speculation: The cockpit shows traces of shelling! You can see the entry and exit holes. The edge of a portion of the holes is bent inwards. These are the smaller holes, round and clean, showing the entry points most likely that of a 30 millimeter caliber projectile." (The Ukrainian SU-25 fighter plane carries 30 mm machine guns.)

Bullet holes aimed at the cockpit

"The edge of the other, the larger and slightly frayed exit holes show[ed] shreds of metal pointing produced by the same caliber projectiles," said Haisenko. "Moreover, it is evident that … these exit holes of the outer layer of the double aluminum reinforced structure are shredded or bent—outwardly!... This leaves the examiner with an important clue. This aircraft was not hit by a missile in the central portion. The destruction is limited to the cockpit area."

Hasienko made it clear that it was the cockpit that was specifically targeted, not the rest of the aircraft. Since entry and exit holes are seen on both sides of the cockpit, there had to have been two fighters firing directly at the cockpit from two sides of the plane. And the specific targeting of the pilot's area precluded an analysis of shrapnel from a ground-based missile, which would have affected the whole body of the plane, not just the cockpit, and would not have produced entry and exit holes on two sides of the plane.

Hasienko also clarified two important points. First, the Ukrainian SU-25 fighter plane could have attained an altitude of over 30,000 feet, despite some wrong information about its capacities on the Internet. And secondly, the anti-tank shells and "dum-dums" that compose the ammunition for the SU's guns are designed to explode or splinter on impact, and could have raised the pressure inside the cabin to cause the plane to blow apart "like a balloon." This explains how the largely intact tailpieces could have separated, breaking at their weakest points.[2]

An important witness: "two fighter jets"

While there are no eye witnesses to confirm that a ground missile was fired that day—a telling point, since such firings are hard to miss in day time by anyone in the area—there is an important witness from inside the Ukrainian air traffic control (ATC) system. A Spanish citizen named "Carlos" working in Kiev as an air traffic controller, reported within moments of the incident, that "two fighter jets flew very close to the plane" just before its destruction. Right after the shoot-down, military took over the ATC

center, accompanied by foreign advisors (Americans perhaps?) Carlos was taken off duty, along with other ATC operatives of foreign extraction.

While all this was happening, Carlos fired off some very hasty tweets. Apparently fearing what the military might do to him, he reported that this was no accident, and the Ukrainian military was behind this shoot down: "Warning! Kiev have what they wanted," "Kiev responsible," and "Kiev authorities trying to make looks like an attack by pro-Russian."

Carlos' tweets

He also said, "They will take from our phones and others stuff at any moment." The ATC-to-cockpit tapes were seized by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) immediately after the event, and haven't been seen since. About an hour later Carlos tweeted, "Malaysia Airlines B777 [*i.e.*, a Boeing 777] just disappeared and Kiev military authority informed us of the downing [which they claimed was from a missile]. How they knew?" Carlos even fingered the "interior minister" as the official who knew what the fighter planes were doing, but that the defense minister did not.[3]

Getting back to the Washington/Kiev cover story about the shoot down, what about the audiotape in which rebel fighters in Eastern Ukraine allegedly bragged at having shot down MH-17? Was this an accidental hit on a civilian airliner that the rebels thought was a Ukrainian military cargo transport, an AN-26? It's known that the separatists have shot down at least one of these, as well as some Ukrainian fighter planes. Let's get one thing out of the way first. The rebels don't really possess any surface-to-air (SAM) missiles capable of bringing down a jet airliner flying at over 30,000 feet. The U.S. and its media virtually admit this: the rebels' lack of capacity is one reason they had to invent the phony tale of the Russians supplying the Buk system, and then hastily sending it back to Russia (the other reason of course is that they wanted to get Putin in on the blame).

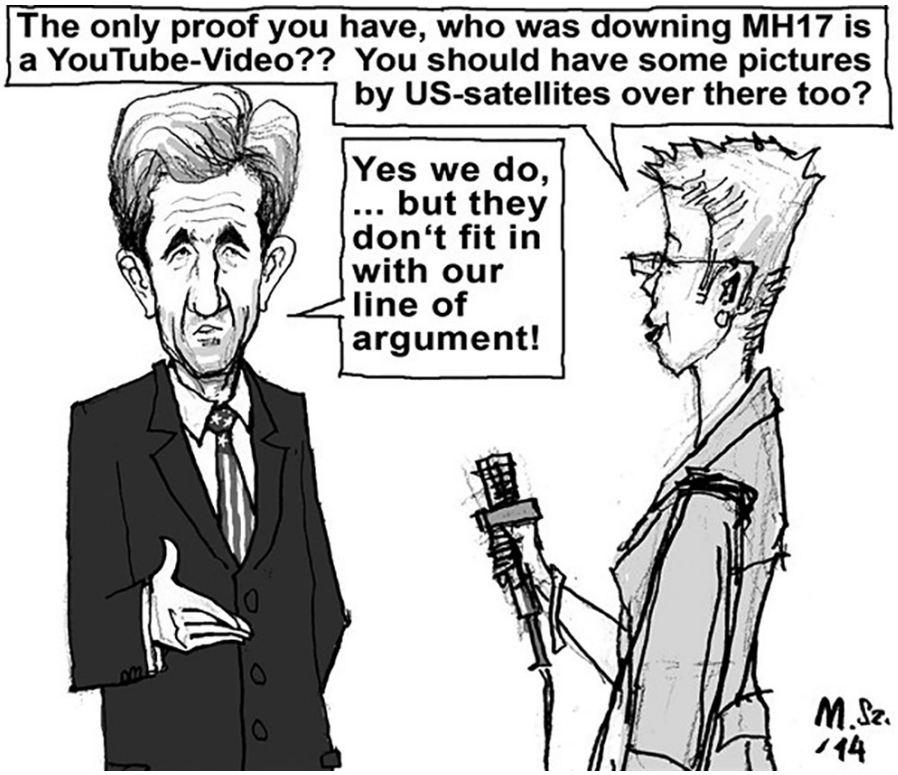
A tape that was faked

So, if the rebels didn't possess SAMs, how are they shooting down Ukrainian fighters and cargo transports? The answer is fairly simple: these aircraft fly at lower altitudes. The Antonov (AN)-26 is an older propeller-driven plane, manufactured in the USSR between 1969 and 1986. It can only fly as high as 7500 meters, which is 24,600 feet. And it's slow, maxing out at only 237 knots, or 273 miles-per-hour. And the fighter plane can only reach over 30,000 feet if the pilot is equipped with an oxygen mask—another aspect that shows advance planning on the part of the Ukrainian military in order to shoot down MH-17. Normally, Ukrainian fighters looking for targets on the ground (the rebels don't possess aircraft to shoot at) would be considerably lower than that. The rebels do have rocket batteries that can reach these lower altitudes.

The main problem with the tape, however, is that it was a fake. According to a panel of experts who analyzed the tape, the recording "is not an integral file, and is made up of several fragments." The first of three fragments mentions the town of Yenakiyevo, which is too far away from where MH-17 crashed to be credible. The second segment, presented as one piece, "was cut into pieces and then assembled...the audio file has preserved time marks which show that the dialog was assembled from various episodes." More than that, these experts concluded that, "the audio tape was created almost a day before the airliner crash." And, "...linguistic analysis also shows that those who made the faked tape clearly didn't have enough material and time," which is why "speech fragments can hardly correlate with each other in terms of their sense, and the spectral picture of audio materials..."[4]

What actually happened to flight MH-17?

While some of this is necessarily speculative, I think the following sce-



nario is the most reasonable, given the known facts. First, this operation was planned in advance by a handful of top Ukrainian military, SBU and probably CIA operatives, and timed to take place just before Ukraine launched a massive three-pronged attack on separatists in Luhansk and Donetsk. The attack on the airliner, blamed immediately on the separatists, pumped up morale in the Ukrainian army, and also had the effect of blocking most international inspectors from accessing the site for days. The movement of the three Buk missile batteries into Eastern Ukraine was part of the plan (although they weren't used, and removed the next day).

On the day of the attack, two fighter jets were deployed to follow the targeted Malaysian Boeing. Three minutes before the plane disappeared from radar, it made a sharp, 180 degree left turn. The analysis of retired Russian Air Force colonel Aleksand Zhilin has an explanation. About one minute before the left turn, one of the fighters launched one of its air-to-air missiles at the aircraft, which damaged the right engine. Hit but not brought down, the plane entered the sharp left turn. Whether this was because of the damage, or as an evasive maneuver will not be known until the plane's black box recording is revealed, if it ever is. Since the new trajectory of the target threatened to take it out of the area in which the perpetrators wanted the plane to be found, something had to be done. (The separatist controlled area was actually quite small at this time.) It must have been at that point that the fighters were ordered to bring the plane down by killing the pilot and destroying the cockpit with gunfire.[5]

False flag operation—who was behind it?

The downing of the MH-17 airliner is looking convincingly to be a "false flag" operation, conducted by elements in the Ukraine military, under the "guidance" of U.S./CIA operatives and advisors, in order to blame the separatists and ramp-up the Ukrainian and European opposition to Russia. But who would have been the actual perpetrators? Carlos, the air traffic controller on the inside in Kiev, said that the defense minister didn't know what was going on, but the interior minister did. The defense minister in the original *coup*-regime cabinet under U.S.-picked Prime Minister Yatsenuyuk was Ihor Tenyukh, a pro-NATO naval commander and fascist Svoboda member. But he was replaced prior to the MH-17 shoot down. The interior minister is Arsen Avakov, of the "Our Ukraine" and Fatherland parties, which are both right-wing nationalist, though not outright fascist.

However, Carlos said that both the interior minister and the defense minster had military units under their control. This leads me to think that by "interior minister," Carlos may have been referring to Andriy Parubiy, the head of the National Security and Defense Council. Parubiy was a leader of the U.S.-backed "Orange Revolution" in 2004, was a co-founder of the fascist Svoboda party, and a leader of the masked Right Sektor fascist thugs in the Maidan earlier this year. His Deputy NSC chief is also a Right Sektor thug, and both have been in parliament for years. These were the neo-Nazis who spearheaded the overthrow of the somewhat pro-Russian government of Yanukovich (who refused the EU's "offer" of austerity in favor of a Russian loan), and paved the way for the U.S.-initiated *coup* government of Yatsenyuk.

Neo-Nazi cretins crawl out of graves, 1991

Perhaps more important is to recognize that Ukrainian fascists have deep roots in Ukrainian governing circles. They emerged from their political tombs immediately as the Soviet Union collapsed in the counterrevolution in 1990-91. They are the heirs of nationalist "heroes" such as Stepan Bandera, whose supporters allied with the German occupiers during World War II, participated in the genocide of Poles and Jews, and fought against the Red Army liberators. Their people went on to lead the CIA-linked "democratic" underground opposition to the Soviet regime in the post-war era. With their re-emergence in 1991, these living-dead reactionaries played significant roles in Ukrainian politics. Current President "chocolate king" Poroshenko has no objection to working with this fascist scum.

If one has to assign ultimate blame for the murderous MH-17 shoot-down, I'd say the fascists, such as Andriy Parubiy and company, who have imbedded themselves into the Ukraine government, are first in the docket. Their visceral hatred of Russians and Poles—the medieval occupiers of major parts of Ukraine for centuries—almost

outweighs their anti-Semitism. This reflects a long-standing sense of victimhood in Ukrainian nationalist circles, just as German Nazis played on the felt-victimization of Germans after World War I, and Israelis today legitimize their noxious "death to Arabs" attacks against Gaza on the basis of the genocide committed against them by the Nazis. Nationalism comes full circle, from victim to oppressor, in Ukraine and in many other places and instances.

The fascist elements, with at least seven cabinet seats in the Yatsenyuk *coup*-government cabinet, and Fatherland allies in close proximity politically, had the opportunity, ability and murderous intent, as well as the U.S. expert advisors in false-flag operations, to pull off this horrendous slaughter that was the downing of MH-17.

Fascists spearhead Ukraine's assault on East

The fascist militias that have sprung to life after 1991 and during the Maidan protests are now the spearhead of the Ukrainian military advance against the East. These thugs of the Maidan now compose the most aggressive units of the Ukrainian army, in the National Guard. They are the ones who advance into rebel held areas after the regular army bombards them with artillery; they are the ones whose motive is to kill Russians, and to make an "ethnically pure" Ukraine. And they are the ones who have benefitted most from the successful false-flag shoot-down of MH-17, as morale is up and desertion down in the Ukraine army.

Much of the evidence discussed here comes from Russian or pro-Russian sources, that's true. Russia is a capitalist/imperialist power with a huge horse in this race: that of saving the last, and most important of its connections to the border lands built by the Czarist empire, and to the territories in Eastern Europe liberated by the Russian Revolution of 1917 (Eastern Ukraine), and liberated from the Nazis by the Red Army in World War II. Putin's Russia has no connection, of course, to the workers state (and later the degenerated workers state) that was the USSR. As an ambitious, if not an outright pro-Czarist autocrat, Putin has just about the slightest connection to bourgeois democracy imaginable. However...

The U.S. (under Obama and predecessors) is the dominant imperialist power since World War II, and no different from Russia in class terms. But the U.S. is clearly the aggressor here; and capturing the Ukraine, with its ancient ties to Russia going back centuries, is a delicious plumb for U.S. imperialism's drive to weaken, surround with NATO allies, and possibly even break up its Russian Federation rival. This does not mean that Marxists would support Russia against the U.S. in any direct military confrontation, which is definitely one danger that the Ukraine Crisis poses. But it does require us to look carefully at the current standoff over MH-17.

For a workers' socialist Ukraine

Why is it that the Russians are the ones releasing most of the relevant evidence, while Kiev/U.S. is hiding evidence or making it up? The Russians have been forthcoming in releasing their relevant material, but the Kiev/U.S. lash-up can't even release the ATC-cockpit tapes from July 17th, or U.S. satellite images, which we know they have. The evidence from the Spanish air traffic controller, from the OSCE investigator and the German pilot, as well as the radar and satellite evidence from Russia, is too much to have all been faked. My conclusion: this was a false flag operation, designed to stiffen Kiev's assault on the separatists and Europe's sanctions against Russia; and build popular support for the U.S. drive to absorb Ukraine into NATO and the U.S. banks'/EU austerity program.

The U.S. is a past master of the "false flag" operation, with which imperialists attempt to coerce popular support and undermine enemies through a devised atrocity, which is blamed on the opponent of the day. Although not exactly a U.S. operation, the Tonkin Gulf incident, which feigned a North Vietnamese attack on a U.S. naval vessel, served the same purpose. Operation Northwoods, in which the downing of an airliner was to be blamed on Fidel Castro's Cuba, is another example (which thankfully was never implemented).

Marxists support the right of self-determination, for autonomy, separation or joining Russia, for the ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking peoples of Crimea, and the southern and eastern areas of Ukraine, from Odessa to Donetsk. This comes without the slightest political support to the reactionary leaderships of the so-called "Peoples Republics" in Luhansk and Donetsk. But most important, the working people of Ukraine must fight together against the fascist-infested government in Ukraine, and the U.S./NATO/EU domination, which looms over the people with its threat of austerity and misery; and for a workers' socialist Ukraine.

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1 *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76PG9RQStFU*

2 *http://www.anderweltonline.com/wissenschaft-und-technik/luftfahrt-2014/shocking-analysis-of-the-shooting-down-of-malaysian-mh17/*

3 Spelling and grammatical errors in original. The complete set of 38 tweets, together with source information and identity of the Spanish translator, are at: *http://slavyangrad.org/2014/07/18/spanish-air-controller-kiev-borispol-airport-ukraine-military-shot-down-boeing-mh17/*

4 "Kiev's Evidence of Militia's Responsibility for Airliner Crash faked—Expert" published by *Itar-Tass* on July 20th: *http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/741521*

5 The opinions of the Russian colonel are reported in "MH17 Verdict: Real Evidence points to US-Kiev Cover-up of Failed 'False Flag'" at *http://21stcenturywire.com/2014/07/25/mh17-verdict-real-evidence-points-to-us-kiev-cover-up-of-failed-false-flag-attack/*

For a Revolutionary Iraq

For a Revolutionary Secular Democratic Sovereign and Independent Iraq

Statement by Revolutionary Marxist and Socialist Organizations in the Region

June 28, 2014—Once again, Iraq is undergoing serious political and security developments. Whole sectors of the Iraqi army have withdrawn from confrontations with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS) and other militias. The cities of Mosul and Tikrit were captured, in addition to several provinces and regions in the western and northern governorates—home to the Sunni majority and the militias are currently advancing towards the capital, Baghdad.

A large-scale security void was created and war, chaos, and terror began to spread. Hundreds-of-thousands of families fled to safer areas, especially to Erbil and Dohuk in the Kurdistan Region.

The battles continue, despite the challenge against ISIS posed by some armed clans, the Iraqi army, and the Peshmerga forces of Kurdistan Region, especially in Kirkuk, Diyala, and nearby suburbs and regions. Hit and run operations continue between ISIS and its adversaries. In Sunni-majority western governorates, security and military institutions have all but collapsed.

However, ISIS could not have launched this dangerous advance or taken on this influential size if not for two main factors. The U.S. occupation, on one hand, and the sectarian-confessional state (a state with a *de jure* mix of religion and politics) it contributed to producing, on the other, had been critical in giving rise to ISIS.

Yet the most flagrant transgressions in the context of this campaign were the sectarian massacres committed by ISIS. There are stories about mass executions, with unparalleled brutality, of hundreds of prisoners, out of the thousands who had surrendered. This is in addition to all sorts of acts of repression, deportation, and persecution for religious and ethnic reasons, not to mention the use of rape against women and girls or forcing them to marry fighters from the armed group.

ISIS control culminated in the imposition of strict Sharia rules after the announcement of the "city paper" in Mosul—a 16-article document dictating the lives of citizens. One of the articles indicate that the Islamic State will be the sole authority in control of the city's resources, and that it will punish anyone who steals from public funds.

On the other hand, ISIS seized the equivalent of hundreds-of-millions of U.S. dollars from banks, government facilities, and municipalities, and confiscated countless quantities of weapons left behind by fleeing soldiers and officers.

The document advises all men to participate in collective prayers and prohibits the sale and consumption of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, among other Sharia restrictions. It also bans all councils, assemblies, and banners, under any name, in addition to carrying weapons, considering these acts as divisive and deserving of the death sentence.

The document reveals the position adopted by ISIS concerning statues and shrines, which it threatens to demolish, in addition to destroying the graves of saints. It calls on women to remain at home except in emergency situations. In summary, ISIS' rule has left people fearful for their lives, including the armed militias "allied" to them (information indicates around 23 groups who joined the campaign).

The reaction of [Iraqi prime minister Nouri] al-Maliki's government to the security and military developments was no less hazardous. It called for the adoption of a comprehensive military response, imposing a state of emergency, and declaring a state of high alert. Maliki's government also asked the U.S., Iran, and other powers to intervene in Iraq and assist in defeating the ISIS invasion.

However, as this situation unravels, the country could be pushed into the throes of a confessional war, destroying everything in its path, with deadly consequences to the Arab region as a whole. This impending threat is backed by the Shia authority in Iraq represented by al-Sistani, who issued a *fatwa* declaring *jihad* against ISIS and calling people to join the army.

Expectedly, these events took on an unmistakable regional and global dimension. Iraq is one of the world's largest crude oil producers and has been the center of more than a decade of political, sectarian, confessional, and ethnic conflicts. The country's situation is tightly linked to Syria and the events in that country, as well as to sectarian and confessional balances in the region as a whole.

The blatant interference of neighboring countries—Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and others—will produce more complications and add impetus to confessional and sectarian strife like in Syria today. This interference will hinder (and even threaten to abort) the efforts and aspirations of Iraqis, from all over the spectrum, to initiate a revolutionary process aiming to establish a democratic, free, and prosperous society.

Such aspirations were apparent in massive demonstrations held in the past and throughout 2013, which were violently and bloodily repressed by Maliki. Furthermore, the growth of

ISIS influence in Iraq will have particularly direct and dangerous repercussions on the conflict in Syria, undermining attempts against the Syrian regime.

As usual, the U.S. will exploit the events on multiple levels, in an effort to compensate for losses incurred during its occupation of Iraq. The security agreement signed between the two countries three years ago did not permit the U.S. to keep a permanent military base in Iraq. Today, however, the U.S. seeks to exploit this opportunity to intervene in the situation militarily, on multiple fronts, through sending troops to protect its monstrous embassy and hundreds of consultants, as well as warplanes to conduct sustained flights in Iraqi airspace and positioning warships in the Gulf.

It is also likely that the U.S. will conduct airstrikes to save the regime headed by Maliki from collapse, even if at the expense of asking for the prime minister's resignation and favoring the inclusion of confessional forces in decision-making positions. Ultimately, these steps merely aim to protect U.S. interests, which have always been and still remain inconsistent with the interest of Iraqis of all sorts and types.

There is no doubt that these are serious outcomes of "the political process" whose roadmap was set by the U.S. occupation. After the fall of the Baathist dictatorship, the Iraqi state was rebuilt according to sectarian and ethnic power-sharing, in the context of the shift in decades-old power balances and the sharp decline in the capacity of the old army, which was disbanded by the occupation. The U.S. administration, which occupied the country, and neighboring Iran, which benefited the most from the occupation, had both contributed to deep transformations in social, political, and economic balances in Iraq.

The most blatant example of this transformation underlies the military campaign spearheaded by ISIS, which aims to become the actual leader of a fragile coalition of several nationalist forces and clans, including remnants of the Baath party and officers and soldiers from the old disbanded army. But this convergence is temporary in essence and risks disintegration, due to ISIS' relentless pursuit for the monopolization of power and control over spoils. Within the "coalition" itself, serious signs are beginning to appear on several fronts about the likelihood of bloody confrontations.

There are those who maintain that an important section of these forces are involved in a real uprising against Maliki's repressive, subservient, and profoundly corrupt authority. They are attempting to distance themselves from the confessional and sectarian mobilization, calling for a truly national struggle against Maliki and confessional forces linked to Iranian aims.

However, those who claim this fail to see that even this section of forces suffers from blatant flaws in its behavior and political positions, the risks of which must be clarified. These flaws appear in these factions' commitment to the alliance headed by ISIS, and their adamant objections to criticisms against the heinous crimes committed by ISIS and its suspect plans. In particular, they are manifested in the lack of confrontation of these crimes by force of arms, and therefore their complicity in these crimes, in order to avoid breaking the "unity" of the forces fighting the regime and Maliki's forces.

Everyday, Iraqis pay the price of the former U.S. war and occupation, in blood and tragedy. They also bear the burden of sectarian divisions and unbridled, extremist Islamist movements, which coincide with imperialist interventions and the regressive rule of sectarian and confessional regimes in the area. Iraqis are hostages of reactionary, traditional forces, which have built the state in their image. In the event of its failure, Iraq might break up into various mini-states and sectarian and confessional emirates. The country's fate is open to all possible and frightening scenarios.

A radical popular leftist movement in Iraq must be created. It could benefit from the actual resentment felt by the majority of people living in areas facing marginalization, exclusion, and deprivation of the majority of social and economic rights. This is in addition to the discontent of the great majority of Iraqis, regardless of their sect or confession, in every corner of the country.

This movement should strive to organize this discontent and orient the resentment and readiness to rise up in a truly revolutionary direction, against the sectarian, capitalist, and corrupt regime established by the U.S. occupation. It should carry the responsibility to defeat obscurantist and terrorist plans prepared by ISIS and similar groups, regressive and imperialist nations, the government of Maliki, and the rabid sectarian forces on which it leans.

The situation in Syria and the assault on the revolutionary mobilization, attempting to crush it by all means, must be avoided. This should be based on severing links with movements and forces that are sectarian/confessional, nationalist/chauvinist, or that seek to prevail and control.

Based on the conviction that the sectarian and confessional calamity looming over Iraq must be avoided and the unity of its people must be regained on democratic, secular, and revolutionary foundations, the following points should be emphasized:

1. All types of intervention in Iraqi affairs by the U.S., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and others must be rejected, as they are not only completely incompatible with the interests of the people of Iraq, but also fuel the fire of a terrible confessional war. We call on

the UN General Assembly, in particular, to hold all countries accountable for their intervention in this situation and subject them to sanctions, according to the Uniting for Peace mechanism.

2. All political disputes in Iraq must be solved by appealing to the opinion, will, and interests of Iraqis themselves. This should be through an advanced democratic process from outside the sectarian system, and that ensures active political participation of all citizens, without any type of discrimination, whether in building their new state structure or through local government in all the cities and governorates.
3. The Iraqi people and liberationist factions must be at the forefront of confronting the bloody terrorism of ISIS and the counter-terrorism against it. This necessitates the self-organization of people in cities, slums, and villages in armed popular committees and councils, to counter the attacks of obscurantist terrorist organizations and all the opposing confessional militias. These groups should be incapacitated, defeated, and their presence eliminated from Iraq. However, this contains also an international task, a mobilization for the widest global campaign to support Iraqis in their efforts to confront the hostile forces and militias, on one hand, and the existing dictatorial sectarian capitalist regime, on the other, aiming for its overthrow. This would advance the aspirations of Iraqis for a future based on justice, freedom, and human dignity, and prevent the disintegration of the country or its partition.
4. In the above context, the revolutionary left and democratic, feminist, and progressive groups in the Arab region should work together to confront the sectarian and confessional approach and policies of Arab regimes, on one hand, and obscurantist and reactionary right-wing groups, on the other. This is in order to defeat the sectarian/confessional threat, which is the main weapon used by the counter-revolution to attack the revolutionary space that could unite the peoples of the region.
5. Finally, there is urgent need to provide the necessary aid to refugees and the displaced, through all sorts of international organizations, to reduce and control the impact of the current humanitarian crisis.

The regional and international conspiracy against the Iraqi people must be defeated.

Down with all imperialist interventions in Iraq.

Defeat the obscurantist assault by ISIS and its brethren.

Victory to the Iraqi people against their internal and external enemies.

For a democratic, secular, revolutionary, sovereign, and independent Iraq.

Long live international people's solidarity.

Signatories:

Revolutionary Socialists (Egypt); Union of Iraqi Communists (Iraq); al-Munadhil-a (Morocco); Revolutionary Left Current (Syria); Leftist Workers League (Tunisia); Socialist Forum (Lebanon).

—*al-manshour.org*, June 28, 2014

http://al-manshour.org/node/5536

Bay Area Activists Declare Gaza Solidarity Victory

Israeli cargo ship blocked for five days at port of Oakland

Historic Port Shutdown Contributes to International Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement Against Israel in Protest of Its 7-Year Siege of Gaza

Oakland, California—For two days in a row[1], August 16 and 17, 2014, the Bay Area community prevented a ZIM Lines container ship, the most prominent shipping company in Israel, from docking and unloading goods at the port of Oakland in response to Israel's latest attack on Gaza and its ongoing occupation of Palestine. Israel's violence over the last month-and-a-half has left over 2,000 Palestinians dead and over 10,000 injured.

The ZIM Pireaus arrived in Northern California the afternoon of August 15 and was scheduled to unload early Saturday morning. As a result of the build up for a mass mobilization at the port, organized by Block the Boat, a coalition of Bay Area organizations and activists, ZIM was pushed back onto the Santa Cruz shores, idling overnight. Organizers called this an early victory, and called for community members to come at 3:00 P.M. to stop the scheduled work crews from unloading the ship. As the 5000-person protest marched toward the gate, organizers were notified that the ship was not going to dock and longshoremen had been told not to report to work. Block the Boat declared victory.

Then, Sunday afternoon on August 17, organizers received word that the ship had arrived and workers were being called to unload it. Within 30 minutes they mobilized more than 400 people back to the port and organized community pickets at Berths 57 and 59. Workers honored the picket lines, stood on the side of justice, and the ship was not unloaded.

According to Lara Kiswani, Executive Director of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center, "Our actions this weekend have sent a clear message to the state of Israel that apartheid and Zionism have never been and are not welcome in Oakland or anywhere on the West Coast."

"We are learning from the historical success of the international movement to boycott apartheid in South Africa," says Sameh Ayesh, a member of Arab Youth Organizing. "Just as we did with the Block the Boat mobilization, we will build on the rapidly growing BDS movement until the Israeli apartheid regime falls." The Block the Boat action has received widespread international attention, and is part of the growing campaign to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel for its ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people with the military, economic and diplomatic support of the United States.

"We hope that this historic port blockade will inspire further port blockades and actions by workers and communities all over the world to isolate Zionism and end the oppression of Palestinians," says Monadel Herzallah, a former labor organizer and current member of the U.S. Palestinian Community Network.

Another ZIM ship is planning to dock in Tacoma and Seattle this week. In both cities, the ship will be met by communities united in their determination to Block the Boat and stand with Palestinians in their struggle for freedom and self-determination.

http://araborganizing.org/

—*Freedom Archives,* August 18, 2014

www.freedomarchives.org

1 The protest continued to block the ship for five days.

From Ferguson to Gaza We Charge Genocide

A Message of Solidarity By The Campaign to Bring Mumia Home and The International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal

Those standing up against police brutality and state repression in Ferguson, Missouri are leading one of the most important human rights struggles of our time.

In the context of the history of Sundown Towns in that region, which legislated that people of color had to leave white towns by sundown, the imposition of a curfew and deployment of the National Guard by the governor represents a racist suppression of the right to self-defense and a gross violation of the freedom of assembly. Its message is clear: the people most likely to rebel against injustice have to be controlled, their right to protest quashed, and the absolute power of the police state restored.

The militarized repression on display in Ferguson is a reflection of a world in crisis. Although separated by thousands of miles, the plight of the people of Ferguson and the Gaza Strip share too much in common for people of conscience to ignore. Michael Brown, an African American youth, could just have easily been a Palestinian youth mercilessly shot by an Israeli soldier.

We understand that in both cases a long history of colonialism and racism justified land dispossession in Palestine and slavery in the U.S. That history is alive today with the continued gross economic deprivation of these communities and their isolation through universally enforced discrimination in housing. This pattern of ghettoization has been inflicted on both of these communities since the founding of the U.S. and Israel. The systematic exploitation, repression and targeting of these populations by the state has led and continues to lead to genocide. According to a 2012 study, a Black person is killed every 28 hours by the police, other security agency, or individuals acting as the police. In Gaza, as of today, there have been more than 2,000 civilians killed from recent Israeli bombing attacks. If we take Gaza's small population into account this killing is proportional to double the entire population of Providence, Rhode Island.

The same U.S. government policies that arm the State of Israel have also turned police departments across the nation into localized military garrisons armed with sophisticated weapons aimed at citizens. As one Palestinian youth tweeted recently, "Made in USA teargas canister was shot at us a few days ago in Palestine by Israel, now they are used in Ferguson."

This police onslaught in Ferguson is reminiscent of what occurred in Philadelphia in 1985 when the police dropped a military grade, firebomb from a helicopter on the MOVE house. That police attack of Black people killed 11 MOVE members, including five children and burned down 61 homes, destroying an entire African American neighborhood.

Political Prisoner and Black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal is imprisoned today because during his youth he exposed this kind of systematic police terror against the Black community. He stands in solidarity with Ferguson and Palestine and we call for his immediate release.

At a moment's notice any of us could face the terror experienced in Ferguson or Palestine. A people subjugated by racist oppression have a moral right to resist.

In solidarity with the people of Ferguson, We Call For:

1. The immediate arrest of officer Darren Wilson and an investigation for justice with full community oversight;
2. Just reparation for the Brown family;
3. The withdrawal of the National Guard, the removal of the curfew and no fly zones, and full media access to the area;
4. The disbanding of Ferguson's racist police department and the re-appropriation of police funds for a massive jobs, housing, and schools program for the residents of Ferguson.

In Solidarity with the people of Palestine, We Call For:

1. The right of return, the right to self determination, and the right to self defense;
2. A Free and independent Palestine;
3. A re-appropriation of U.S. supplied Israeli military funds for an economic reparations program for Palestine.

Join us:

www.bringmumiahome.com

https://www.facebook.com/cbmhome

bringmumiahome@gmail.com

The Coming Race War Won't Be About Race

By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Will the recent rioting in Ferguson, Missouri, be a tipping point in the struggle against racial injustice, or will it be a minor footnote in some future grad student's thesis on Civil Unrest in the Early Twenty-First Century?

You probably have heard of the Kent State shootings. On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on student protesters at Kent State University. During those 13 seconds of gunfire, four students were killed and nine were wounded, one of whom was permanently paralyzed. The shock and outcry resulted in a nationwide strike of four million students that closed more than 450 campuses. Five days after the shooting, 100,000 protestors gathered in Washington, D.C. And the nation's youth was energetically mobilized to end the Vietnam War, racism, sexism, and mindless faith in the political establishment.

You probably haven't heard of the Jackson State shootings.

On May 14th, ten days after Kent State ignited the nation, at the predominantly Black Jackson State University in Mississippi, police killed two Black students (one a high school senior, the other the father of an 18-month-old baby) with shotguns, and wounded twelve others.

There was no national outcry. The nation was not mobilized to do anything. That heartless leviathan we call History swallowed that event whole, erasing it from the national memory.

And, unless we want the Ferguson atrocity to also be swallowed and become nothing more than an intestinal irritant to history, we have to address the situation not just as another act of systemic racism, but as what else it is—class warfare.

By focusing on just the racial aspect, the discussion becomes about whether Michael Brown's death—or that of the other three unarmed Black men who were killed by police in the U.S. within that month—is about discrimination or about police justification. Then we'll argue about whether there isn't just as much Black-against-white racism in the U.S. as there is white-against-Black. (Yes, there is. But, in general, white-against-Black economically impacts the future of the Black community. Black-against-white has almost no measurable social impact.)

Then we'll start debating whether or not the police in America are themselves an endangered minority who are also discriminated against based on their color—blue. (Yes, they are. There are many factors to consider before condemning police, including political pressures, inadequate training, and arcane policies.) Then we'll question whether Blacks are more often shot because they more often commit crimes. (In fact, studies show that Blacks are targeted more often in some cities, like New York City. It's difficult to get a bigger national picture because studies are woefully inadequate. The Department of Justice study shows that in the U.S. between 2003 and 2009, among arrest-related deaths there's very little difference among Blacks, whites, or Latinos. However, the study doesn't tell us how many were unarmed.)

This fist-shaking of everyone's racial agenda distracts America from the larger issue that the targets of police overreaction are based less on skin color and more on an even worse Ebola-level affliction: being poor. Of course, to many in America, being a person of color is synonymous with being poor, and being poor is synonymous with being a criminal. Ironically, this misperception is true even among the poor.

And that's how the *status quo* wants it.

The U.S. Census Report finds that 50 million Americans are poor. Fifty million voters is a powerful block if they ever organized in an effort to pursue their common economic goals. So, it's crucial that those in the wealthiest One Percent keep the poor fractured by distracting them with emotional issues like immigration, abortion and gun control so they never stop to wonder how they got so screwed over for so long.

One way to keep these 50 million fractured is through disinformation. *PunditFact's* recent scorecard on network news concluded that at *Fox* and *Fox News Channel*, 60 percent of claims are false. At *NBC* and *MSNBC*, 46 percent of claims were deemed false. That's the "news," folks! During the Ferguson riots, *Fox News* ran a black and white photo of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with the bold caption: "Forgetting MLK's Message/Protestors in Missouri Turn to Violence." Did they run such a caption when either Presidents Bush invaded Iraq: "Forgetting Jesus Christ's Message/U.S. Forgets to Turn Cheek and Kills Thousands"?

How can viewers make reasonable choices in a democracy if their sources of information are corrupted? They can't, which is exactly how the One Percent controls the fate of the Ninety-Nine Percent.

Worse, certain politicians and entrepreneurs conspire to keep the poor just as they are. On his *HBO* comedic news show Last Week Tonight, John Oliver ran an expose of the payday loan business and those who so callously exploit the desperation of the poor. How does an industry that extorts up to 1,900 percent interest on loans get away with it? In Texas, State Representative Gary Elkins blocked a regulatory bill, despite the fact that he owns a chain of payday loan stores. And the politician who kept badgering Elkins about his conflict of interest, Representative Vicki Truitt, became a lobbyist for ACE Cash Express just 17 days after leaving office. In essence, Oliver showed how the poor are lured into such a loan, only to be unable to pay it back and having to secure yet another loan. The cycle shall be unbroken.

Dystopian books and movies like *Snowpiercer*, *The Giver*, *Divergent*, *Hunger Games*, and *Elysium* have been the rage for the past few years. Not just because they express teen frustration at authority figures. That would explain some of the popularity among younger audiences, but not among twenty-somethings and even older adults. The real reason we flock to see Donald Sutherland's porcelain portrayal in *Hunger Games* of a cold, ruthless president of the U.S. dedicated to preserving the rich while grinding his heel into the necks of the poor is that it rings true in a society in which the One Percent gets richer while our middle class is collapsing.

That's not hyperbole; statistics prove this to be true. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center report, just half of U.S. households are middle-income, a drop of 11 percent since the 1970s; median middle-class income has dropped by five percent in the last ten years, total wealth is down 28 percent. Fewer people (just 23 percent) think they will have enough money to retire. Most damning of all: fewer Americans than ever believe in the American Dream mantra that hard work will get them ahead.

Rather than uniting to face the real foe—do-nothing politicians, legislators, and others in power—we fall into the trap of turning against each other, expending our energy battling our allies instead of our enemies. This isn't just inclusive of race and political parties; it's also about gender. In her book *Unspeakable Things: Sex, Lies and Revolution*, Laurie Penny suggests that the decreased career opportunities for young men in society makes them feel less valuable to females; as a result they deflect their rage from those who caused the problem to those who also suffer the consequences: females.

Yes, I'm aware that it is unfair to paint the wealthiest with such broad strokes. There are a number of super-rich people who are also super-supportive of their community. Humbled by their own success, they reach out to help others. But that's not the case with the multitude of millionaires and billionaires who lobby to reduce Food Stamps, give no relief to the burden of student debt on our young, and kill extensions of unemployment benefits.

With each of these shootings/chokehold deaths/stand-your-ground atrocities, police and the judicial system are seen as enforcers of an unjust *status quo*. Our anger rises, and riots demanding justice ensue. The news channels interview everyone and pundits assign blame.

Then what?

I'm not saying the protests in Ferguson aren't justified—they are. In fact, we need more protests across the country. Where's our Kent State? What will it take to mobilize four million students in peaceful protest? Because that's what it will take to evoke actual change. The middle class has to join the poor and whites have to join African-Americans in mass demonstrations, in ousting corrupt politicians, in boycotting exploitative businesses, in passing legislation that promotes economic equality and opportunity, and in punishing those who gamble with our financial future.

Otherwise, all we're going to get is what we got out of Ferguson: a bunch of politicians and celebrities expressing sympathy and outrage. If we don't have a specific agenda—a list of exactly what we want to change and how—we will be gathering over and over again beside the dead bodies of our murdered children, parents, and neighbors.

I hope John Steinbeck is proven right when he wrote in *Grapes of Wrath*, "Repression works only to strengthen and knit the oppressed." But I'm more inclined to echo Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," written the year after the Kent State/Jackson State shootings:

Inflation no chance
To increase finance
Bills pile up sky high
Send that boy off to die
Make me wanna holler
The way they do my life
Make me wanna holler
The way they do my life

—*RSN*, August 18, 2014

http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/25393-focus-kareem-abdul-jabbar-the-coming-race-war-wont-be-about-race

Bombs or Bread

By Bonnie Weinstein

I received a phone call Saturday, August 9, 2014, from a reporter at a local public radio station regarding my opinion of President Obama's renewed bombing of Iraq. (I get calls from time to time about current events because I publish a blog, Bay Area United Against War Newsletter at *bauaw.org* that lists events and actions as well as relevant news articles geared to antiwar and social justice activists living in the Bay Area.)

My response to the question asked by the reporter was that the U.S. should get out of Iraq and Afghanistan immediately. That bombing people into oblivion is no answer to any conflict.

The reporter then asked me, "Well what about the sectarian violence and the thousands of Iraqis trapped on a barren mountain range without food or water? Who will help them?"

I told him that the reason for this gross injustice—the sectarian fighting and violence—is due to poverty, the lack of jobs, the destruction and/or decay of the infrastructure, the environment, and the general unavailability of the necessities of life for the overwhelming majority of people—not just in Iraq, but everywhere.

The solution for people in crisis everywhere is to provide massive aid to be determined by those in crisis, not by their oppressors. The oppressors must be made to cover the costs.

In Iraq, and in all the violent conflicts across the globe that the U.S. is responsible for, and profits from, the U.S. should be forced to provide massive reparations, not only to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan for the death and destruction that resulted from its unjust wars against them, but to all those who have been plunged into poverty by the vicious quest for profits and control of the natural resources by wealthy U.S. corporations—the commanders of capital—who have been routinely plundering the world.

The only solution to poverty, injustice and war is to supply food, money, and materials to rebuild the lives of those living in poverty. And these funds should come out of the pockets of the CEOs of corporations—from the profits they have stolen off the backs of working people—not from taxpayers!

If everyone had gainful employment, housing, healthcare, education, a bright future to look forward to, we wouldn't have all this hatred and violence.

Violence abroad, violence at home

The next day after that interview, Sunday, August 10, 2014, I read in the *New York Times* about the most recent police-murder of another young, unarmed Black youth, Michael Brown, 18, in a St. Louis, Missouri suburb. The article was titled, "Grief and Protests Follow Shooting of a Teenager," by Julie Bosman and Emma G. Fitzsimmons. According to the article,

> "The killing of the youth, Michael Brown, 18, ignited protests on Saturday and Sunday in Ferguson, Mo., a working-class suburb of about 20,000 residents. Hundreds of people gathered at the scene of the shooting to question the police and to light candles for Mr. Brown, who was planning to begin college classes on Monday. …At a candlelight vigil on Sunday evening, the heightened tensions between the police and the African-American community were on display. A crowd estimated in the thousands flooded the streets near the scene of the shooting, some of them chanting 'No justice, no peace.' They were met by hundreds of police officers in riot gear, carrying rifles and shields, as well as K-9 units."

This article confirmed my comments made to the reporter. Again, the U.S. government's answer to strife and conflict is to call out the police in riot gear, with rifles, shields and dogs—not to stop the police violence—but to punish those who protest it!

Their solution is to use violence as a first response to squelch any attempt by the victims to defend themselves—to organize their community against the constant police occupation, violence and oppression they live under.

There can be only one reason for this and that is to send a clear message to all those who dare to protest, that they, the U.S. government, its military and police will, by any means necessary, try, as Malcolm X said, "to turn the victim into the criminal and the criminal into the victim" just as they are doing across the globe whenever anyone rises up to defend their rights.

Capital's greed and theft of the profits of the labor of others, and the privatization of all the world's natural resources *are* the cause of all the violence and suffering in the world today.

The poverty and injustice capitalism breeds causes despair because it forces us to compete with each other for the necessities of life instead of cooperating democratically with each other to provide all with the things we need and want, while at the same time, preserving and cultivating a healthy and bountiful environment.

There is a clear solution to injustice and strife, and violence has no place in it! The military and police of the world commanded by capital and the weapons they control must be disarmed, destroyed and banned forever. And their obscene wealth confiscated and used to end poverty and injustice—to provide jobs, housing, healthcare, education—all the necessities and amenities of life to all. This is a socialist solution—the only solution.

Young Black Men Have No Right to Life

By Glen Ford

There are lots of pictures coming out of Ferguson, Missouri, a two-thirds Black town just outside St. Louis, where a policeman shot down Michael Brown, this past weekend. The 18-year-old's last words before dying were: "I don't have a gun, stop shooting." The cop kept shooting anyway. The pictures show Brown's body in the middle of the street, where it was left for four hours in the baking sun.

Other pictures show Brown's grief-stricken mother, and his stepfather carrying a sign that said, "Ferguson police just executed my unarmed son." There are plenty of images from the two nights of disturbances in the town, where there isn't really much to loot. However, I think the most poignant picture shows young Blacks blocking the street in front of the Ferguson police department, their upraised arms signaling surrender, just as young Michael did before the cop administered the *coup de grace*.

How different that picture would have been in 1966, when young Black people in California responded to murderous police violence with armed patrols of their own, under the newly formed Black Panther Party for Self Defense. The Party declared that Black people had just as much right to defend themselves as white people, including the right to defend themselves from the police, who act as an occupying army. Which is, of course, a self-evident truth.

The mass incarceration state

The Black Panther Party's vigorous assertion of the right to self-defense prompted the U.S. government to double-down on its monopoly on the use of force—first, with a massive campaign of assassination and false imprisonment against Black radical leadership, many of whom still remain behind bars. Then, as the decade of the Seventies began, mass Black incarceration became the universal policy of the United States—north, south, east and west. A new class of Black politicians filled the void that police repression had created. These were men and women who were quite amenable to corporate rule and made comfortable homes in the Democratic Party. Even as the prison population rose to nine times 1970 levels, the Black Misleadership Class blissfully celebrated its own upward mobility.

Meanwhile, the Mass Incarceration State consumed millions of Black lives and consigned most Black communities to Constitution-free zones, where young Blacks could be arrested for nothing, or shot down in the streets with impunity, as was Michael Brown, and as happens to other young Blacks every day of the year.

The people who rule America no longer need Black labor. What they do need is a class that is forcibly anchored at the bottom of U.S. society, who can be scapegoated for whatever is wrong with America, and whose very presence serves as an excuse for massive urban dislocation and the steady erosion of civil liberties. Michael Brown and countless others have died in order to keep America deeply stratified. That's the only use the United States has for young Black men.

—*Black Agenda Report*, August 13, 2014

http://blackagendareport.com/content/america-young-black-men-have-no-right-life

The Shortest Distance Between Palestine and Ferguson

By Jaime Omar Yassin

The superficially coincidental images coming from both Gaza and Ferguson this month have created some surprising and sudden currents of solidarity. Many have looked on with amazement, for example, as Gazans offer tips *via* twitter to those who have been involved in the uprising and faced the absurd and excessively militarized response to it by Ferguson police. And participants in "peaceful" vigils and more militant confrontations in Ferguson have invoked Gaza by now dozens of times.

Few have looked at images coming out of Ferguson and not been tempted to draw the same allusions between the 2/3 Black suburb policed by a nearly all-white police force, and Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. It would be difficult not to draw that comparison at the moment given the spectacle of the massive armory gifted to the FPD by the federal government in the name of stopping "terror"—which has so often been given a Palestinian face in the U.S.—and the revelation that the former police chief of Ferguson studied "counter-terror" measures in Israel in 2011. Ironically, it seems Black Americans are now the target of anti-terror funding and training, which was ostensibly meant to target those from the Muslim and Arab world.

While there is nothing happening within the U.S. anything like the now-cyclical Israeli slaughter of thousands of Gazans, the reality is that life for Black Americans in places like Ferguson does not vary in much from blockaded Gaza, and West Bank Bantustans in off-attack times. The similarities are not just coincidental in terms of the timing of the events—they are in fact, concurrent and historical.

Ferguson is a majority Black, segregated community, run almost entirely by white people. Almost all of its political representatives, and all but three of its 53 person police force, are white. Such areas, populated by the disenfranchised, are growing throughout the U.S., as the white and associated enfranchised classes move back to the cities and to ex-urbs or new white suburbs, leaving geographically isolated and service-poor communities behind. The result has been, as is on display in Ferguson, an easy to lock-down community full of people the mainstream has forgotten—policed by an authority trained from birth to distrust and marginalize Black people with the full backing of the Federal government. Unbelievably, the FAA declared a no-fly zone over Ferguson and FPD mounted roadblocks at its city limits as it began its peace-keeping operation of its own citizens—chillingly reminiscent of the media-blockade conducted during Cast Lead and during other Israeli operations.

While the struggle in Palestine is often painted in ideological, ethnic and religious terms, it too is becoming not so different than those in the U.S., wedded as much to economic concerns as white supremacist structures. As *Haaretz* recently reported, the larger settlements of the West Bank—which have grown astronomically since the signing of the Oslo Agreement with the Palestinian Authority—are now in the midst of a housing bubble that is outstripping prices in Tel Aviv and its suburbs. Young urban professionals, with no interest in ideology or perhaps even in Zionism, flock to these well-financed and subsidized cities, where the attendant express highways spirit them quickly back and forth from Tel Aviv. Israel's military industrial complex gives them security from the tenants of the land they've stolen.

As these suburbs, grow, perhaps, and as the twisted "peace process" between the compliant Palestinian Authority and Israel evolves, we may in decades to come see a Palestine—or what is left of it—not unlike the U.S.'s

black underclass cities and towns. Perhaps it may yet become a broken and discontiguous economic-ethnic series of hamlets—segregated underemployed communities of service workers kept under lock and key by a less visible series of cages and walls, no less violent than military occupation. Given the current state of negotiations, with Israel shaping a Palestinian Authority take-over of the rubble of Gaza, perhaps one tiny wall separating these two territories will be lifted, and Gaza allowed to enjoy the slightly less onerous open-air prison system of the West Bank.

Perhaps then people will also wonder what the Palestinian's problem is. Why they can't keep out of trouble with the authorities. Why their men line the halls of the entity's prisons. Why they cannot simply learn to stop being racists and love their oppressor. Why they are rioting. This is, in fact, the reality that Israel is striving for in the West Bank, institutional apartheid that becomes so well-camouflaged and accepted over time that it begins to look like the U.S.'s honed version of it—an "unfortunate" remnant of the past that is always explainable, always the victim's fault, and is always in the midst of being fixed, with, not surprisingly, little success. Between the decimation of Gaza and the continued madcap pace of colonization in the West Bank and Jerusalem, they are closer than ever to this goal.

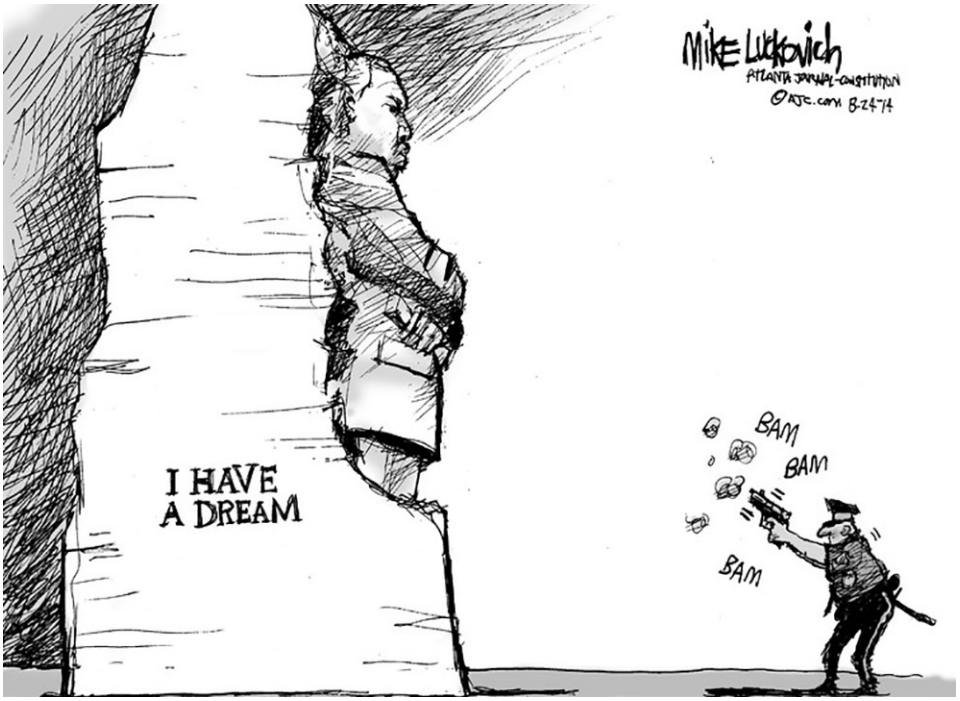
Which brings us to a final, and perhaps most alarming, similarity between Ferguson and Palestine. Both places nominally have a president who superficially represents them, from a similar ethnic and economic background, the product of a historic and unprecedented process. It was an event that overturned years of conventional wisdom that claimed the disenfranchised would never know representative state leaders.

The last dispiriting likeness is the betrayal of that hope—that leader who works for the very structure oppressing the people he seems to most represent, who is revealed to be only the latest trick for a white supremacist system of violence and dispossession that can superficially change, but will not budge. The leader that arms the enemy, kills for them, lies for them, and prevents racial and economic justice for his own ostensible people. For the people of Palestine, it is Abbas. For the people of Ferguson, Sanford, Oakland and other cities, this is Obama—whose bloodless and offensive commentary on the murder of Mike Brown shocked a nation of angry people perhaps as much as the FPD response did. They couldn't seem any more different superficially, of course, but more and more, we see they have the same white supremacist, capitalist boss.

Jaime Omar Yassin is a writer in Oakland, California.

—*Counter Punch*, Weekend Edition August 15-17, 2014

http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/15/the-shortest-distance-between-palestine-and-ferguson/



It would be difficult not to draw that comparison at the moment given the spectacle of the massive armory gifted to the FPD by the federal government in the name of stopping "terror"—which has so often been given a Palestinian face in the U.S.—and the revelation that the former police chief of Ferguson studied "counter-terror" measures in Israel in 2011. Ironically, it seems Black Americans are now the target of anti-terror funding and training, which was ostensibly meant to target those from the Muslim and Arab world.

Making Homelessness Illegal

By Evelyn Nieves

While homelessness is worse than ever in many places across the country, more and more cities are addressing the crisis by making it illegal to sleep, sit or simply be in public.

This decades-old trend is spreading even as the social safety net keeps shrinking and housing is at its most expensive. People with nowhere else to go are cited, arrested and jailed for begging, lying on park benches or curling up on stoops—even though criminalizing activities that homeless people do to survive does nothing to end homelessness and costs more than it would to house them.

So finds a study of 187 cities by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP), an advocacy group that has tracked the way cities address homelessness since 1991. The new report, the first in three years, found a 43 percent increase since 2011 in laws designed to curb the presence of homeless people on the streets (so-called sit-lie laws) and a 60 percent increase in city-wide bans as opposed to more narrow bans focused on downtowns or public parks.

Moreover, in three years, laws that ban sleeping in cars and other private vehicles, the last refuge for many families that have lost their homes, have jumped by 116 percent.

The increase and broadening of these laws means that more cities are handling their homelessness crisis by essentially pushing society's most marginalized, reviled population out of sight. While the U.N. Committee on Human Rights has found that such laws violate international human rights treaties and the 9th Circuit Court has found that people who have lost their homes should not be penalized for sleeping in their cars, the bans and penalties for violating them keep growing.

The bleak findings, which come as income inequality, wage stagnation and outright poverty have become endemic, suggest a compassion fatigue with no sign of abating. The laws are being passed with wide voter approval, in cities that offer few or no alternatives for those living on the streets.

Palo Alto, California, for example, at the center of the high-tech boom, has only 15 shelter beds, serving ten percent of its homeless population, but it has made sleeping in one's own private vehicle a crime punishable by a $1,000 fine or six months in jail. Santa Cruz, California, where 83 percent of homeless people have no shelter options, has imposed bans on camping, sitting, or lying down in public or sleeping in vehicles. Orlando, Florida, where 34 percent of homeless people are without shelter beds, prohibits camping, sleeping and begging in public as well as "food sharing."

Bans on "food sharing," or feeding homeless people, are the latest trend in criminalization laws. Of the cities surveyed, 17 have made it illegal to feed people in public.

Homeless people surveyed reported warrants and outstanding tickets for sleeping outside or in their cars, constant harassment from police, and a hopelessness as to how to change their situation. Many surveyed have had their possessions confiscated for "storing them" in public and jailed for living outside. The Western Regional Advocacy Project (W.R.A.P.), an umbrella group for homeless advocacy organization in several Western states, conducted a national survey of 1,600 homeless people and found that 80 percent have been harassed for sleeping in public and 74 percent have no idea where to go to find safe shelter.

For those who are employed and homeless—44 percent of the nation's homeless population, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless—these penalties endanger their best chance—their jobs—for mitigating their living situation.

Cities grappling with growing homeless populations and less affordable housing (more than 12 percent of the nation's supply of low-income housing has been permanently lost since 2001) are stymied as to how to provide solutions, said Jeremy Rosen, a spokesman for the NLCHP, so they adopt criminalization ordinances.

"We are really trying to wave our hands at this point," Rosen said, "And point out to communities that the approach is generally unsuccessful. They return to the streets again and it becomes more difficult to help them as they have a criminal record and fines and court costs they can't pay."

There are a few bright spots in the report. Cities that have adopted a "housing first" approach to homelessness—providing housing with supportive services—have reduced the costs associated with enforcing anti-homeless laws while providing safe shelter for their most vulnerable population. In Utah, a government study found that the annual cost of emergency room visits and jail stays for an average homeless person was $16,670, while providing an apartment and a social worker cost $11,000. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, by providing housing, the city reduced spending on homelessness-related jail costs by 64 percent.

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—*AlterNet.org*, July 19, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/no-solutions-laws-make-everything-about-homelessness-illegal-have-increased?akid=12035.229473.50nm0B&rd=1&src=newsletter1012038&t=11

The Siege of Detroit

A war of Black urban removal

By Glen Ford

Like the rapist who insists his victim "wanted it," Detroit emergency manager Kevyn Orr claims city retirees were expressing "strong support for the city's plan to adjust its debts" when they voted to accept a 4.5 percent cut in their meager pensions. Corporate media echoed the state appointee's interpretation of the court-ordered ballot, in which about half the 32,000 eligible workers and retirees participated. In reality, Detroit's pensioners were violated in broad daylight, stripped of retirement protections and forced to choose whether to die in poverty or an even more extreme destitution.

Earlier this year, as part of the Shock and Awe of state-imposed bankruptcy, Orr threatened to cut pensions by 26 percent, in defiance of Michigan state constitutional protections. He was backed by federal bankruptcy court judge Steven Rhodes, who has brushed aside every objection from lesser, non-corporate beings. Rather than risk the loss of one-quarter of an already meager $20,000 a year pension, 73 percent of retirees and workers accepted the lesser cut, plus an end to cost-of-living increases. This was not an election, but the cruelest coercion—a rape of the elderly, who were forced not only to acquiesce to their own further impoverishment, but to give up the right to challenge the process in court.

Corporate media routinely ascribe such obscene assaults to "the city," as in "the city's plan to adjust its debts." But the City of Detroit has no such plans; it has no power, and its citizens have no meaningful vote—except, of course, when given an ultimatum to endorse cuts to their own pensions. Detroit's elected officials cannot pass laws, and collect a salary at the pleasure of dictator Kevyn Orr, who is answerable only to the ruling class, as directly represented by the Fortune 500 clients of the law firm that spawned him, Jones Day. (Orr's nominal boss, Governor Rick Snyder, answers to the same people.) The state-imposed emergency manager is authorized to usurp the powers of the city—to act as a dictator—but he is not the city in any but the most technical, legalistic sense. For Orr to refer to himself as "the city" is a sick hubris—a hustler lawyer invoking the royal "We." However, when the media describe Orr's decrees as actions by "the city"—knowing full well how Orr is despised in Detroit government and the city at large—they are liars, pure and simple; co-conspirators in the corporate crime.

The people of Detroit have no rights that corporations and their servants in government are bound to respect. Indeed, the emergency manager laws have been used to disenfranchise the residents of every largely Black city and school district in the state, encompassing more than half the Black population of Michigan. (The people of Michigan rejected the legislation in a referendum, but Republican lawmakers simply passed a near-identical measure, as if nothing had happened.)

The 82 percent Black metropolis is under siege, in the medieval sense of the term. Just as ancient armies deprived towns under siege of food and water, to starve and thirst them into submission, so Kevin Orr has caused the Detroit Water and Sewage Department to cut off tens-of-thousands of residents, in an escalating trajectory of systematically inflicted mass punishment and pain designed to make life in the city unbearable for a huge proportion of the population.

This is a war against a Black city, and a blueprint for future aggressions aimed at shrinking "chocolate cities" across the nation. What Katrina accomplished through the sudden advent of flood, the corporate strategists in Michigan intend to achieve by emergency dictatorship, privatization and blatantly racist official barbarism.

Orr announced a 15-day "pause" in water cut-offs—similar to a temporary "truce" in siege warfare—as much to give cover to bankruptcy judge Rhodes who, while no less bestial than the managing dictator, seems more sensitive to public perceptions. United Nations experts condemned the shut-offs as constituting "a violation of the human right to water and other international human rights." Thousands demonstrated against the cut-offs in downtown Detroit, and others carried out direct actions, blocking the vehicles of disconnect crews. Two lawsuits have been filed to halt the water-torture. One, by the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, the Peoples Water Board, the Michigan chapter of the National Action Network, Moratorium Now, and a host of individuals, challenges Orr's actions as a violation of residents' constitutional and contractual rights. A class action suit, launched by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, says the cut-offs are racially motivated. The private companies that have been empowered to act for Detroit's Water

and Sewage Department "are basically Caucasian companies," said attorney Alice Jennings. "The folks who are being cut off are almost one hundred percent African-American."

And that is, of course, the whole point. The finance capitalists that run this country would like to disenfranchise the entire population so that money could exercise its exclusive "freedom of political speech" and action, unimpeded. In order to generate the least resistance, the model for urban corporate rule must be created in Black America, just as privatization of public education was modeled in the inner cities. White folks won't care, and Black folks don't matter—certainly, it doesn't matter to President Obama, who has signed off on the every element of the siege of Detroit (and has been far more effective than George Bush in privatizing the public schools, as well.)

Most importantly, finance capital—Wall Street, the people who employ Kevyn Orr and his Jones Day law firm—demands the shrinkage of Black urban populations as a prerequisite for full-scale investment in the cities. Urban assets are devalued by the mere presence of large numbers of Black people, for the simple reason that most white people continue to refuse to share space with African Americans. Therefore, the "chocolate cities" must go, as a condition for urban "renaissance." (See *Black Agenda Radio*, July 21, "Banksters Demand Black Removal as a Condition of Investment.")

This is a fight against urban Black expulsion and deportation. If there is more than a whiff of the Third Reich in the connotation, it is absolutely appropriate.

—*Black Agenda Report*, July 23, 2014

http://blackagendareport.com/content/siege-detroit-war-black-urban-removal

Coming to America: Mercenary Justice

By Glen Ford

The trial of four Blackwater mercenaries in the unprovoked massacre of Iraqi civilians in 2007 is probably not the biggest news item of the day for Iraqis, faced as they are with a national crisis of potentially apocalyptic dimensions. However, the events unfolding in a Washington DC federal court should be of critical interest to Americans, who will one day find themselves under the guns of mercenaries licensed to kill with impunity. In fact, it has already happened, in New Orleans, after Katrina.

Two years before the atrocity in Baghdad, Blackwater descended on New Orleans in force in the wake of the 2005 hurricane, setting up a downtown headquarters and deploying its troops in full battle gear, armed just "as they would be in Iraq." Jeremy Scahill, reporting at the time for *The Nation* magazine, said Blackwater troops told him that in addition to having been authorized to use lethal force, they were also empowered to arrest citizens. Many of them had flown in straight from Iraq to occupy a great Black American city.

At least five mercenary companies patrolled New Orleans under contract with Homeland Security, including an outfit of Israeli ex-special forces troops under a company named Instinctive Shooting International. Civil liberties activists warned at the time that placing an American city under mercenary occupation is illegal, but neither President Bush nor Barack Obama nor the Congress or the courts have clarified the question of mercenary deployment. Therefore, it is all but inevitable that legions of hired killers and "instinctive shooters" from around the world will again be sent to U.S. cities, with consequences that will rival the carnage at Nisoor Square, in Baghdad.

The long mercenary legacy

Mercenaries have a long history in the United States. The granddaddy of them all, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, founded in 1850, specialized in both raw thuggery and advanced intelligence gathering techniques to make millions defending ruling class privileges and property. The Pinkertons broke scores of strikes and created the first national criminal database. The State of Ohio outlawed the Pinkertons in 1890, fearing it had become a private army, or an independent militia. By that time, the Pinkerton's were a larger force than the standing army of the United States. In 1999, after almost a century-and-a-half of service to the rich and powerful, the Pinkerton agency was sold to Securitas Security Services USA, which six years later took part in the Katrina occupation.

However, we must be clear that the driving force behind the explosive growth of killer corporations is the U.S. military, which trains the assassins and sends them on missions of murder around the globe, and later hires them at fantastic salaries through mercenary corporations, which in turn become indispensable to the U.S. war machine. As long as the United States is allowed to act with imperial impunity on the world stage, its uniformed and civilian armed forces will recognize no laws, no limitations on their behavior. Private soldiers and mercenary corporations are only reflections of the government that gave them birth.

—*Black Agenda Report*, July 8, 2014

http://www.blackagendareport.com/content/coming-america-mercenary-justice

U.S. War on All of Us

How the War on Drugs and the War on Terror Merged Into One Disastrous War on All Americans

By Alex Kane

It was 1971 when President Richard Nixon declared drug abuse "public enemy number one in the United States." With those words, Nixon ushered in the "war on drugs," the attempt to use law enforcement to jail drug users and halt the flow of illegal substances like marijuana and cocaine.

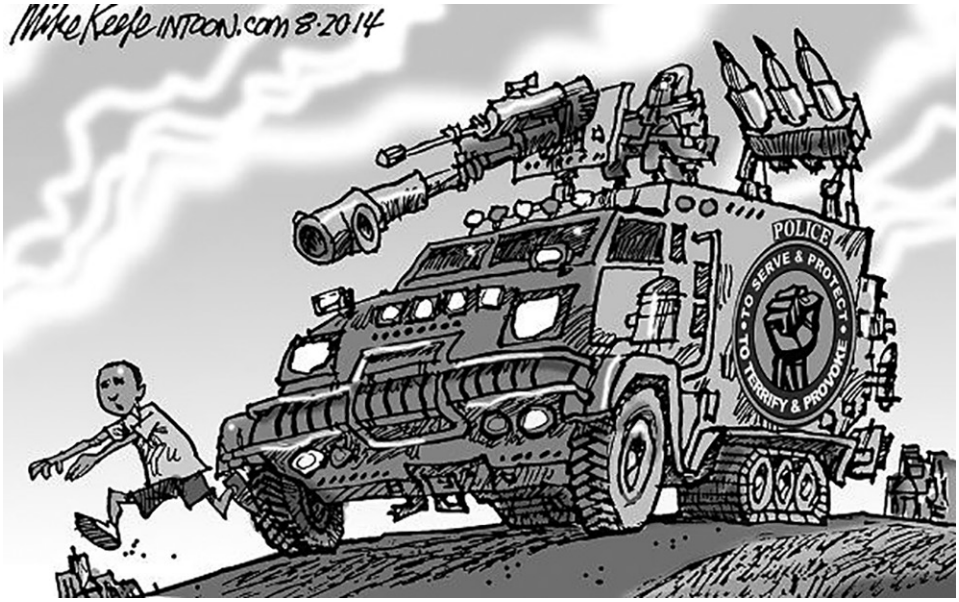
Thirty years later, another president, George W. Bush, declared war on another word: terrorism. But the war on drugs hadn't ended yet. Instead of one failed war replacing another soon-to-be-failed war, both drugs and terrorism remain targets for law enforcement and military action that have resulted in the deaths of hundreds-of-thousands and have cost billions of dollars.

In fact, the war on terror and the war on drugs have merged to form a hydra-headed monster that rapaciously targets Americans, particularly communities of color. Tactics and legislation used to fight terrorism in the U.S. have been turned on drug users, with disastrous consequences measured in lives, limbs and cash. And money initially used to combat drugs has been spent on the war on terror. From the Patriot Act to the use of informants to surveillance, the wars on drugs and terror have melted into one another.

On Octtober 26, 2001, after remarkably little debate, President Bush signed the USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001) into law. Some elected officials admitted they hadn't read the entire legislation before voting on it. The Patriot Act was renewed in 2011 by President Barack Obama.

The purpose of the legislation was "to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world [and] to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools." Buried in the act is a hint that the wars on terror and drugs were being paired. The Patriot Act appropriated $5 million to the Drug Enforcement Administration to train Turkish forces in anti-drug measures and to increase the apprehension of drugs in South and Central Asia.

Even more significant was Section 213 of the act, which legitimizes what are known as "sneak and peek warrants." These warrants, approved by a judge, allow the police to enter into a home without notifying the suspect in that home for at least 30 days—90 days if a judge is convinced the police need it. The 90-day extensions can be repeatedly re-authorized. Authorities are able to enter a home or office, rifle through private property and take photographs all without the suspect knowing, which is contrary to how normal warrants work. While "sneak and peek" authority was allowed in limited cases before the 2001 legislation, the Patriot Act has dramatically expanded its use. And the vast majority of cases where it's used had nothing to do with terrorism, despite the FBI's claim that the warrants are an "invaluable tool to fight terrorism."



From October 2009 to September 2010, law enforcement agents executed sneak and peek warrants 3,970 times, according to numbers obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union. Less than one percent of those cases had to do with terrorism. But 76 percent had to do with drugs. It was much the same story from 2006-2009, according to data compiled by *New York* magazine. In that time period, 1,618 such warrants were issued for drugs. Only 15 were issued for terrorism-related cases, with 122 being issued for fraud.

In November 2009, Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI), questioned Department of Justice official David Kris about the Patriot Act being used to execute the war on drugs. The assistant attorney general's response was telling: "This authority here on the sneak-and-peek side, on the criminal side, is not meant for intelligence. It's for criminal cases. So I guess it's not surprising to me that it applies in drug cases." Feingold responded by pointing out that the Patriot Act was sold as

needed to fight terrorism, not "regular, run-of-the-mill criminal cases."

In addition to the sneak and peek warrants that so concerned Feingold, the full-scale militarization of police in the U.S., accelerated by the war on terror has brought weapons used in war to the homes of suspected drug dealers as well as and innocent people. The ACLU's recent report on police militarization has shined a big spotlight on how the intersection of the wars on terror and drugs have brought destruction to many Americans.

The militarization of law enforcement began during President Reagan's term in office. As journalist Radley Balko, who has tracked police militarization for years, pointed out last fall, "the election of Ronald Reagan brought new funding, equipment, and a more active drug policing role for the paramilitary SWAT units popping up across the country." But the war on terror has fueled the process.

As Balko notes, in 1994, the Pentagon authorized the transfer of military equipment to police departments. Also that year, Congress passed a law to facilitate that type of transfer. Every year since then, with almost no debate, the Pentagon budget passed by Congress has included that provision.

Today, the same type of weapons being used in Iraq and Afghanistan to battle militants are being used in the streets of America. These weapons include machine guns, armored personnel carriers, aircraft, drones, night-vision equipment and mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles. And in the vast majority of cases, these military weapons are being turned on drug suspects. Furthering the militarization of police are Department of Homeland Security grants given to local police agencies, which use the cash to buy military-style equipment. At least $34 billion in such grants, given by an agency created because of 9/11, have been handed out to local police, according to the Center for Investigative Reporting.

This infusion of cash, the ACLU's report on militarization notes, has "led to even more police militarization and even greater military-law enforcement contact, and DHS grants have allowed police departments to stockpile specialized equipment in the name of anti-terror readiness."

One facet of the ever-growing trend toward militarized police forces is the use of informants to figure out which houses to raid. The informants used in the vast majority of drug cases are typically people involved in the drug trade who have escaped a jail sentence—or had a sentence reduced—at the price of helping the police. But informants are not the most reliable of people. They have an incentive to tell the police about alleged crimes, even if their information is not accurate. Nevertheless, the use of informants has not let up in recent decades, even when the information has led to botched raids and the deaths of innocents. This reliance on informants, honed in the war on drugs, is now a major weapon in the war on terror.

Many of the domestic terrorism cases in the U.S. start with plots first egged on by informants, who are typically low-income Muslims who have their own legal troubles. Critics of the use of informants say that the cases these sting operations produce are entrapment of Muslims.

Take the case of Shamiur Rahman. In 2012, the 19-year-old Rahman, a Muslim, spoke out about his informant activities for the New York Police Department, whose Intelligence Division has created a massive spying apparatus targeting Muslims across the Northeast of the U.S. Rahman quit his job and said his activities as an informant were unconstitutional. His activities involved trying to bait Muslims into saying inflammatory things and taking pictures inside of mosques while collecting the names of innocent people who went to study groups on Islam. He sent that information to the NYPD. Rahman got involved with the police after being arrested repeatedly for minor marijuana charges. In exchange for cash and goodwill from the police, he informed on his community.

That's not the only way the NYPD's war on terror has been fueled by the war on drugs. In February 2012, *Associated Press* reporters Adam Goldman and Matt Apuzzo revealed that the White House was funding part of the NYPD's spy program.

The millions of dollars funneled to the NYPD from the White House came from a grant program called High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. Administered by White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, it was created for the war on drugs to give money to law enforcement to fight drug gangs. But since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, at least $135 million flowed to the NYPD for its spying on Muslims.

As the NYPD's funding and informant model shows, it's getting increasingly hard to differentiate the war on drugs from the war on terror. From the federal government to local law enforcement, money earmarked to fight terrorism is being turned on drug users, while cash that started out to combat drugs is being turned on Muslims. And both wars are eating away at Americans' civil liberties.

Alex Kane is AlterNet's *New York-based World editor, and an assistant editor for* Mondoweiss.

—*AlterNet.org*, July 9, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/how-war-drugs-and-war-terror-merged-one-disastrous-war-all-americans?paging=off&current_page=1#bookmark

The U.S. Created the Immigration Crisis

By David Bacon

July 14, 2014—The mass migration of children from Central America has been at the center of a political firestorm over the past few weeks. The mainstream media has run dozens of stories blaming families, especially mothers, for sending or bringing their children north from Central America.

The president himself lectured them, as though they were simply bad parents. "Do not send your children to the borders," Obama said June 26, 2014. "If they do make it, they'll get sent back. More importantly, they may not make it."

Meanwhile, the story is being manipulated by the Tea Party and conservative Republicans to attack Obama's executive action deferring the deportation of young people, along with any possibility he might expand it—the demand of many immigrant rights advocates. More broadly, the Right wants to shut down any immigration reform that includes legalization, and instead is gunning for harsher enforcement measures.

Even Marine Corps General John Kelly, commander of U.S. Southern Command, has sought to frame migration as a national security threat, calling it a "crime-terror convergence," and describing it as "an incredibly efficient network along which anything—hundreds-of-tons of drugs, people, terrorists, potentially weapons of mass destruction or children—can travel, so long as they can pay the fare."

This push for greater enforcement ignores the real reasons families take the desperate measure of leaving home and trying to cross the border. Media coverage focuses on gang violence in Central America, as though it was spontaneous and unrelated to a history of U.S.-promoted wars and a policy of mass deportations.

U.S. foreign and immigration policy is responsible for much of the pressure causing this flow of people from Central America. These eight facts, ignored by the mainstream press and the president, document that culpability, and point out the need for change.

1. There is no "lax enforcement" on the U.S./Mexico border. There are over 20,000 members of the Border Patrol, the largest number in history. There are walls and a system of detention centers that didn't exist just 15 years ago. Now more than 350,000 people spend some time in an immigrant detention center every year. The U.S. spends more on immigration enforcement than all other enforcement activities of the federal government combined, including the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The growing numbers of people in detention—young people as well as families and adults—is being used as a pretext by the anti-immigrant lobby in Washington, including the Tea Party and the Border Patrol itself, for demanding increases in the budget for enforcement. The Obama administration has given way before this pressure.
2. The migration of children and families didn't just start recently. It has been going on for a long time, although the numbers are increasing. The tide of migration from Central America goes back to wars that the U.S. promoted in the 1980s, in which the U.S. armed the forces, governments or contras, who were most opposed to progressive social change. Two million Salvadorans alone came to the U.S. during the late 1970s and 80s, to say nothing of Guatemalans and Nicaraguans. Whole families migrated, but so did parts of families, leaving loved ones behind with the hope that some day they'd be reunited.
3. The recent increase in the numbers of migrants is not just a response to gang violence, although this is virtually the only reason given in U.S. media coverage. Growing migration is as much or more a consequence of the increasing economic crisis for rural people in Central America and Mexico, as well as the failure of those economies to produce jobs. People are leaving because they can't survive where they are.
4. The failure of Central America's economies is mostly due to the North American and Central American Free Trade Agreements and their accompanying economic changes, including privatization of businesses, the displacement of communities by foreign mining projects, and cuts in the social budget. The treaties allowed huge U.S. corporations to dump corn and other agricultural products in Mexico and Central America, forcing rural families off their lands when they could not compete.
5. When governments or people have resisted NAFTA and CAFTA, the United States has threatened reprisals. Right-wing Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-CO) put forward a measure in 2004 to cut off the flow of remittances (money sent back to Salvadoran families from family members working in the U.S.) if people voted for a left-wing party, the FMLN, in El Salvador's national elections. Otto Reich, a

violently anti-communist Cuban who was Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, said the U.S. government was "concerned about the impact that an FMLN victory could have on the commercial, economic, and migration-related relations of the U.S. with El Salvador." Salvadoran papers were full of the threat, especially those on the right, and the FMLN lost. In 2009 a tiny wealthy elite in Honduras overthrew President Manuel Zelaya because he raised the minimum wage, gave subsidies to small farmers, cut interest rates and instituted free education. The Obama administration gave a *de facto* approval to the *coup* regime that followed. If social and political change had taken place in Honduras, we would see far fewer Hondurans trying to come to the U.S.

6. Gang violence in Central America has a U.S. origin. Over the past two decades, young people from Central America have arrived in L.A. and big U.S. cities, where many were recruited into gangs, a story eloquently told by photographer Donna De Cesare in the recent book *Unsettled/Desasociego*. The Maratrucha Salvadoreña gang, which today's newspaper stories hold responsible for the violence driving people from El Salvador, was organized in Los Angeles, not in Central America. U.S. law enforcement and immigration authorities responded to the rise of gang activity here with a huge program of deportations. Most of the kids in gangs in Central America were originally deportees from the U.S. The U.S. has been deporting 400,000 people per year, more than any other period since the Cold War.
7. And in Central America, U.S. policy has led to the growth of gang violence. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, U.S. law enforcement assistance pressured local law enforcement to adopt a "*mano dura*" or hardline approach to gang members, leading to the incarceration of many young people deported from the U.S. almost as soon as they arrived. Prisons became schools for gang recruitment. El Salvador, with a left-wing FMLN government, at least has a commitment to a policy of jobs and economic development to take young people off the street, and to provide an alternative to migration. Even there, conservative police and military forces continue to support heavy enforcement. In Guatemala and Honduras, the U.S. is supporting very right-wing governments who only use a heavy enforcement approach. While punishing deportees and condemning migration, these two governments actually use the migration of people to the U.S. as a source of remittances to keep their economies afloat.

U.S. foreign and immigration policy is responsible for much of the pressure causing this flow of people from Central America.

8. Kids looking for families here are looking for those who were already displaced by war and economic crisis. The separation of families is a cause of much of the current migration of young people. Young people fleeing the violence are reacting to the consequences of policies for which the U.S. government is largely responsible, in the only way open to them.

Two and three years ago we were hearing from the Pew Hispanic Trust and other sources that migration had "leveled off." No one is bothering to claim that anymore. Migration hasn't stopped because the forces causing it are more powerful than ever.

More enforcement will not deal with the causes of the migration from Central America. In fact, the deportation of more people back to their countries of origin will increase joblessness and economic desperation. This is the largest factor causing people to leave. Violence, which feeds on that desperation, will increase as well.

President Obama has proposed increasing the enforcement budget by $3.7 billion. He has called for suspending a law passed in 2008, which requires minors to be transferred out of detention to centers where they can locate family members to care for them. He instead proposes to deport them more rapidly. Both ideas will cause more pain, violate basic rights and moral principles, and fail completely to stop migration.

New York Times writer Carl Hulse writes that the law transferring minors out of detention centers "is at the root of the potentially calamitous flow of unaccompanied minors to the nation's southern border." This report and others like it not only ignore history and paint a false picture of the reasons for migration, but provide the rationale for increased enforcement.

New Jersey Democratic Senator Bob Menendez picked up the cue, declaring, "we must attack this problem from a foreign policy perspective, a humanitarian perspective, a criminal perspective, immigration perspective, and a national security perspective." He called for increasing funding for the U.S. military's Southern Command and the State

Department's Central American Regional Security Initiative. Giving millions of dollars to some of the most violent and right-wing militaries in the western hemisphere, however, is a step back towards the military intervention policy that set the wave of forced migration into motion to begin with.

Instead, we need to help families reunite, treat immigrants with respect, and change the policies the U.S. has implemented in Central America, Mexico and elsewhere that have led to massive, forced migration. The two most effective measures would be ending the administration's mass detention and deportation program, and ending the free trade economic and interventionist military policies that are causing such desperation in the countries these children and families are fleeing.

David Bacon, a former union organizer, is a California-based writer and photographer. He is the author of The Right to Stay Home: How US Policy Drives Mexican Migration *and* Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants. *His photographs and stories can be found at dbacon.igc.org.*

—*The Rag Blog*, July 14, 2014

http://www.theragblog.com/david-bacon-how-u-s-policies-helped-create-the-current-mmigration-crisis/

Central American Child Refugees

What corporate media and corporate Latino politicians won't tell you

By Bruce A. Dixon

Five-and-a-half years into the Obama era, some of his African American supporters finally admit Black voters didn't get much of substance for their nearly unanimous support of the First Black President. Of course the Black political class does its level best to blame everything on evil racist Republicans who don't even like what the president had for breakfast. In a shameful flip on the notion that Black faces in high places should represent us in the halls of power, our Black political *cognoscenti* relentlessly belittle any expectation that the lives of real people down here on the ground ought to improve behind the election of the first Black president as unsophisticated and unrealistic. Meanwhile Black family wealth continues to fall, Black unemployment and mass incarceration remain about the same, and our Black political class continues their glittering careers. It could be worse. At least the First Black President hasn't deported two million of us.

Latino voters and the Latino political class supported the career of Barack Obama almost as solidly as Blacks. They were promised much more than African Americans, but in the end got much less. They were promised that the unjust immigration system would be fixed and a road to citizenship created for the millions of undocumented living among us. What Latino voters and the Latino political class got in return for their support of Obama was two million deportations, hundreds-of-thousands of families brutally separated and scattered by law, not entirely unlike Black families in this country once were.

Just like the Black faces in high places, the Latino political class doesn't represent its people to or within the system, they are actually one of the faces the capitalist system presents to the Latino community. So it has fallen to the Latino political class to defend the president, who by now has deported more people than any president before him, and to defend the U.S. Empire by obfuscating the reasons those child refugees are here in the first place.

Establishment Latino politicians like Chicago congressman Luis Gutierrez blame the Republicans as usual, for not allowing a vote on an immigration bill, and for being heartless, evil racists in general, and ask that the president do something generous and humane. But he won't. It is true that racist Republicans are clamoring for the children to be instantly deported, despite U.S. law which says children from countries not bordering the U.S. are entitled to individual hearings before immigration judges. Even though speedy deportation is illegal, and Republicans don't have the power to make the president do it, Obama has already begun deporting children without the hearings the law prescribes. How they'll manage to blame this on Republicans is a mystery.

What neither corporate media nor U.S. Latino politicians will point out is

that none of the current wave of refugees are coming from Nicaragua, although it has a similar history to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and its just as poor. Why? According to *NicaNet.Org*, a project of the Nicaragua Solidary Committee:

> "...Nicaragua's homicide rate dropped to 8.7 per 100,000 inhabitants. Honduras, with 92 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, has the highest murder rate in the world. El Salvador has 69, Guatemala 39, Panama 14.9 and Costa Rica 10.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants...
>
> "The problem of the children migrants is blowback from U.S. policy in the 1980s when our government trained and funded Salvadoran and Guatemalan military and police to prevent popular revolutions and more recently when the U.S. supported the *coup* against President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras. Those countries were left with brutal, corrupt armies and police forces whereas Nicaragua, with its successful 1979 revolution, got rid of Somoza's brutal National Guard and formed a new army and a new police made up of upstanding citizens.
>
> "Who consumes all those drugs that are causing all that violence and corruption in Latin America? Who has militarized the Drug War and is funding and training repressive militaries and police in the countries from which the children are fleeing? In both cases it is the United States."

The ferocious Central American gangs we hear so much about are integral to the U.S.-oriented drug traffic. Nicaragua isn't part of the U.S.-oriented drug trade because it threw off U.S. rule with a revolution in 1979. In the Reagan era the U.S. fought a bloody *contra* war to overthrow the Nicaraguan government and bring the country under control of its puppets, but despite tens-of-thousands dead, the Nicaraguan people prevailed. Having done so, they can implement real community policing, reduce crime and provide real security to their people in ways neighboring countries can only dream of. Nicaragua's homicide rate is a third that of Mexico, and its socialist government is free to provide low-cost healthcare, education, food security, democracy and hope to its people. Hence Nicaraguans are not interested in smuggling themselves north. You'd think Latino politicians would be eager to acquaint a larger U.S. public with these facts, backed up as they are by irrefutable UN statistics.

But like the Black political class, they owe allegiance to the system, the empire that gave them their careers, not the Latino communities they ostensibly represent. So U.S. Latino politicians, aspirants and most affiliated nonprofits don't dare explain this to their own communities, some of whom know it already, or to the larger American public, which mostly does not.

As long as a Black Democrat is in the White House, neither corporate media nor U.S. Latino politicians will even call these refugees "refugees" even though that's what they plainly are, refugees from North America's drug wars, military *coups*, neoliberal economics and death squads. Refugees however, have certain rights under treaties and international law. They wouldn't want the president's hands, especially their president's hands tied by actually having to follow the law. And no matter who is president, meaningfully questioning the empire is rarely a good career move.

It's often observed that African Americans and Latinos in this country have a lot in common. Sometimes that is not good news, not at all.

—*Black Agenda Report*, July 16, 2014

http://Blackagendareport.com/content/what-corporate-media-and-corporate-latino-politicians-wont-tell-you-about-central-american-c

Free, Non-Racist Higher Education?

By Glen Ford

The dominos are falling in the for-profit college racket, a cauldron of corruption that has crushed the dreams of millions of African Americans in desperate search for tools to navigate their way through a racist, cutthroat capitalist society. Corinthian College's stock fell from a peak of $33 a share ten years ago, to 33 cents last month, when it became clear that the federal government intended to pull the plug on the $1.6 billion a year rip-off. Corinthian—known to victims by the brand names Heald College, Everest, and WyoTech—will soon file for bankruptcy protection, shielding its bankster and hedge fund profiteers from liability for wanton theft and massive life-wrecking. More than 70,000 students at 107 campuses, half of whom were statistically certain to drop out before completing their courses, will struggle to find another route to mobility and dignity.

Corinthian is only the third or fourth-worst offender in the pantheon of for-profit colleges created for the sole purpose of diverting public money to the coffers of hedge funds and mega-banks. Although the titans of this fraudulent industry have committed crimes far larger than Bernard Madoff, none of them will join him in prison, since their victims are largely Black people whose usefulness to Wall Street is limited to availability for super-exploitation, demonization and incarceration.

Corinthian's collapse—and the panic that reigns in the rest of the for-profit education pack—was triggered by the Obama administration's decision to shut off the criminal enterprise's federal funding faucet, which accounted for at least 83 percent of the company's revenue stream. Since Corinthian, like its sister shysters, was created as a pass-through of federal dollars, it could not withstand the slightest pause in payments from various federal agencies. So, it folded. Other corporate educational fraudsters will soon follow Corinthian into bankruptcy, causing a shakeup in the industry that will probably result in a leaner and more vertically integrated structure of dreams-ploitation. Billions of educational dollars will continue flowing straight from federal programs to Wall Street, but with little improvement to the life-chances of the supposed beneficiaries: the educationally deprived.

The Obama administration may abhor the chaos in which players like the University of Phoenix and Ashford University have become the top producers of baccalaureate degrees among Blacks. But the administration—and the Democratic Party, as an institution—also worships at the altar of privatization. Rather than eliminate the felonious educational enterprises root and branch—and spend the money on a nationalized system of free education—Obama will continue to provide tens-of-billions to nourish the poisoned tree.

Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, who was slightly to the left of Obama when they briefly served together, blasted the for-profit education racket a year-and-a-half ago. Durbin laid it out in a letter:

> "For-profit colleges educate only 12 percent of all college students in America. Yet, a disproportionate 25 percent of all federal aid to education goes to for-profit colleges. And a staggering 47 percent of all student loan defaults are among for-profit school students.
>
> "Every year we send $32 billion to for-profit colleges, making that 'private sector' industry the most highly taxpayer-subsidized business in America."

Durbin concluded, "We should be spending that money on schools with proven track records of educating rather than exploiting students, and making productive investments in infrastructure, medical research and effective worker training."

But, of course, Senator Durbin would transfer these monies to existing institutions (or new ones sponsored by billionaires more to his liking, such as Bill Gates), rather than spend $32 billion a year to establish a free or nominal-cost public educational agency dedicated to serving the needs of the same, disproportionately Black students that are now fodder for corporate hucksters and thieves. The very existence of Corinthian, Phoenix, Ashford and the other gangster institutions proves beyond doubt that the vast bulk of the existing U.S. educational establishment is not serving these populations. Shifting federal funds to schools that are incapable or unwilling to accommodate the millions of Black, brown and poor people who are so demonstrably hungry for learning and skills does not solve the original problem.

Senator Durbin points out that $32-billion-dollars-a-year is the spending equivalent of "the ninth-largest agency in our government." If that is the case, then why not create such an agency? With Wall Street no longer skimming profits, $32 billion would go a lot farther in providing free public education and training to the huge population that has already been defined and reached by the predatory for-profit outfits.

In previous decades, African American political leaders would have been out front in demanding a public agency to respond to the phenomenal Black craving for educational services. However, much of the Congressional Black Caucus has succumbed to the bribery of for-profit sugar daddies

who, according to Senator Durbin, "own every lobbyist in town." Among the legions of for-profit lobbyists is Black former Maryland Representative Al Wynn (who, while in office, acted as the Black Caucus bag-man for the corporate Democratic Leadership Council). Florida Congressman Alcee Hastings collected at least $54,500 from the education rip-off industry, according to David Halperin's April 3 article in *The Nation*, "The Perfect Lobby: How One Industry Captured Washington, DC."

Hastings featured prominently in the groundbreaking May 27 *Huffington Post* piece "How the Congressional Black Caucus Went to War with Itself Over Wall Street," which described his "epic argument" with Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) in 2011. Waters blasted Hastings "…for sponsoring a measure that was seen as a gift to shady for-profit colleges. What was more embarrassing than selling out, Waters told her assembled colleagues, was selling out cheap to nickel-and-dime scammers like the for-profit college industry. If you're going to sell your soul, she admonished, have some self-respect and sell high. (Hastings didn't dispute the conflict, but he did dispute Waters' point. 'It would be a mistaken premise,' he says, smiling. 'There are a hell of a lot of for-profit schools.')"

Key members of the unelected Black Misleadership Class are also beholden to Wall Street's for-profit federal educational money conduits. The National Urban League got a $1 million check from now-doomed Corinthian Colleges after president Marc Morial wrote a favorable op-ed in the *Washington Post*. Morial then joined Corinthian's board of directors, a sinecure that is worth between $60,000 and $90,000 a year in cash and deferred stock.

Al Sharpton, the *MSNBC* host and presidential pit bull, reciprocated the University of Phoenix's sponsorship of his TV special Advancing the Dream with a puff piece on the for-profit giant's online offerings, featuring the NFL's Larry Fitzgerald, a Phoenix student and booster. Phoenix University excels all others in funneling Black people's educational dollars directly to Wall Street *via* the Apollo Group, a $5.36 billion corporation with ties to the super-predatory Carlyle Group.

For-profit education has diverted many billions-of-dollars that Black students never actually possessed for even one moment—but will owe for much of the rest of their lives—into the accounts of the fabulously wealthy.

Kai Wright, a brilliant young Black journalist, reported that Black enrollment in for-profit bachelor programs grew 264 percent between 2004 and 2010, compared to enrollment growth of only 24 percent at traditional four-year institutions. Blacks flocked to colleges of all kinds at 35 percent higher rates in the first decade of this century, with most of the increase at for-profits.

If Corinthian and its ilk are to be denounced and indicted—as they should be—then so should the vast bulk of the U.S. educational establishment, which through malignant neglect and outright hostility set Black people up for cruel exploitation by for-profit criminals.

One exception is historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), now reeling from a funding crisis set in motion by Obama administration "reforms" in student aid, which led to dramatic decreases in student enrollment. HBCU's and community colleges attempt to serve much the same demographic that is so grievously exploited and damaged by for-profit vultures. Therefore, these two step-children of American education are the logical starting points for building a publicly funded, virtually free higher educational system, sustained by a lion's share of the $32 billion in federal monies that annually pass through for-profits on the way to Wall Street. (Total federal spending on HBCUs is currently less than $1.5 billion a year, and California's community college system, the nation's largest, is in constant crisis.)

Nobody can claim that the feds don't have the money; Washington spends it lavishly on edu-criminal enterprises. Most importantly, history shows conclusively that most of established U.S. public and private higher education is institutionally incapable of serving anything approaching sufficient numbers of darker and poorer Americans—who are then corralled by scurrilous aid-snatchers and dream-breakers.

The for-profits should be put out of business with all deliberate speed, but it would be a further crime to shift that portion of federal aid to schools that have never demonstrated a willingness or competence to serve the demographic so cruelly exploited by the likes of Corinthian. The federal dollars that made Phoenix and Ashford Universities the top sources of Black baccalaureate degrees (for whatever that's worth) should not be diverted to institutions that are manifestly hostile to Black people, based on enrollment figures.

America needs more than just a free education; its excluded classes need a new system, free of the class and race bias that pervades the current higher educational order.

—*Black Agenda Report*, July 16, 2014

http://blackagendareport.com/content/how-pay-free-non-racist-higher-education

The Killing of Prisoners

Revisiting the killings of prisoners by Texas prison officials

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

On April 11, 2014 I wrote and subsequently sent out for publication an article titled "Texas Prison Officials and Medical Staff Kill Prisoners and More To Silence Witnesses."[1] That article dealt with retaliations by Texas Department Of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) officials against a prisoner, Jaicourrie "Romero" Finley, for his role in exposing and challenging the involvement of officials in the death of another prisoner, Joseph Comeaux.

In that article I reported how Comeaux was believed to have died on November 13, 2013 from inability to breathe and the failure of prison medical staff and guards to provide him medical aid. Further information indicates that Comeaux was at the very least brutally beaten by officials after he was taken out of his cell in medical distress to locations where other prisoners could not witness his treatment, and possibly violently murdered by officials.

Reassessing Joseph Comeaux's death

My account of Comeaux's dying in the Clements Unit Medical Department reported what amounts to narratives spread by officials, of which I should have been suspicious. In fact only days after he died, a group of guards conspicuously came to my neighboring prisoner's cell and asked if he wanted to go to dental, which he declined. Yet they stood in front of his cell for several minutes talking about Comeaux's death in tones I could clearly hear. These guards were Tyrail Crosby, David Dwight, Thomas Ibisen and one other.

I should have suspected a staged performance. I've seen officials do it many times, staging conversations around prisoners to generate rumors or spread amongst prisoners accounts of controversial events that they want us to believe. In Comeaux's case they certainly had an interest to control or determine what was circulated, especially if he'd been violently killed, and because his death was likely to raise questions and demands for answers from people outside the TDCJ. And who better to target with misinformation or selective information but me, since I'm known to actively publicize prison abuses, and had just been involved in exposing the witnessed killing of another TDCJ prisoner, Christopher Woolverton.[2]

The group of guards standing by my cell described how Comeaux was taken to the medical examination room where he persisted that he could not breathe; that he remarked he was dying and going to defecate on himself, both of which they said he did. At this point Crosby remarked without elaborating that "what happened" to Comeaux and his dying spooked him. To which Dwight replied that Crosby should get used to seeing prisoners die at the unit, because it was a routine occurrence. They went on to talk about how "at least no force was used, everything was done by the book." I've since found this to have been a lie, which casts into doubt the entire account that Comeaux simply died complaining of breathing complications.

In a recent letter from Comeaux's widow (who's given me permission to write about her late husband's mistreatments) she described the condition his body was in when delivered by the TDCJ:

> "When [his] body came and we viewed his body, I had to practically stare for ten minutes before realizing that it was indeed him. He had bruises on his face and a black eye, and [his] nose appeared to have been dislocated or broken."

Obviously Comeaux was violently attacked while still alive in order to cause the numerous contusions, making it highly likely that he died violently and not merely by medical neglect, which would explain Jaicourrie Finley's being confronted [with hostility] by TDCJ "investigators" demanding to know why he was saying officials killed Comeaux, looking to discover what he knew.[3]

The incident, and the widow's account of the condition of Comeaux's body, is eerily reminiscent of another prisoner's death at this same unit, whose body showed evidence of a brutal beating and likely murder, which didn't match the official story of how he'd supposedly died.

The murder of Theodore Scherber

In the early morning hours of Sunday, October 21, 2006, the mother of Theodore Scherber was called at her

job by a TDCJ chaplain and was told that her son, a prisoner at the Clements Unit prison, was found dead and unable to be revived on Saturday, October 20, 2006. He quickly offered her a state burial. Instead she persisted to know how her son died, which the chaplain claimed not to know, but upon her insistence said he'd find out and call her back. A few hours later he called her again to report it was allegedly a suicide.

Later that morning she called the prison. After a bit of hassle she was put through to a supervisor whom she described as "rude and hateful," and who told her that her son was witnessed inflicting superficial scratches on his stomach and arm in an apparent suicide attempt. Consequently he was moved into a suicide precaution cell on a 15-minute watch, where he'd supposedly hung himself with a heavy tear-proof suicide precaution blanket prisoners are given in those cells. She was told no further information was available until that Monday.

On Monday, October 22, 2006, an assistant warden and the warden repeated the suicide story, which the mother interrogated. How, she asked, could her son, while in a suicide precaution unit and cell, and under suicide monitoring, shred a suicide precaution blanket and hang himself to death and not be revivable, all in the span of 15 minutes? None of this added up and no sensible explanations could be given.

Then her son's body disappeared. With her persistence it was later found halfway across the state at a Fort Worth, Texas Coroner's office with an autopsy completed. In her own words, the mother wrote:

> "I feel they stalled us the whole weekend while they smuggled his body off for a rushed autopsy so we could not get a private one. (COVER UP!). When we brought the suit to the funeral home I seen him for the first time in two years. I was in shock. He looked like an old man. He was starved down to 138 pounds. He was a big boy—six feet tall. First thing I seen was the top of his head was bashed in. Then I seen bruising resembling strap marks across both hands, bruising on side of head, ears, *etc.* After the memorial service my fiancé Bob and my son's father went in the back room with mortician and they removed his frail body from the coffin and undressed him. They took over 25 photos and a video. His body was beaten, stabbed. There are two sets of strangulation marks on his neck. One up high resembling a rope or cord and down further; a wider one that looks like the blanket story. The bend of his arm was duct-taped and shrink-wrapped. The mortician removed the bandage, which he put there because he was afraid the embalming fluid would leak out. There was a big, round, black hole like a stab wound about the size of a quarter. Very, very deep wound."[4]

TDCJ—Murder Inc.

Numerous prisoners who've been housed at Clements Unit for several years have told me it is well known that officials have murdered numerous prisoners here, and continue to do so. Most of these prisoners don't want to be identified for fear of retaliation or being targeted themselves. One, however, who has agreed to be a witness and identified (although I think it wise not to name him here) told me about a past lieutenant named Roberts, who revealed to him and others how Clements Unit officials were selectively targeting prisoners for killings, especially troublesome and mentally ill ones. Roberts was trying to enlist prisoners to get involved to help expose the killings.

Roberts told them how the officials would check prisoners' backgrounds and monitor their correspondence to ensure they had no ongoing contacts with loved ones on the outside. Once certain there would be nobody to enquire about the prisoner's death, he was a candidate for a staged suicide or beating to death. And as in the cases of Comeaux and Scherber, they have crooked coroners who falsely certify unremarkable causes of death and overlook irregularities in the conditions of the corpses. Because of his efforts Roberts was targeted by Clements Unit officials as a "dirty guard;" and claimed he was bringing contraband items in to prisoners, *etc.* He ended in giving up his lieutenant rank, returning to the lowly rank of a regular prison guard, and transferred to a position with TDCJ's transportation department from which he recently retired.

As evidenced by the deaths of Comeaux and Scherber, everyone up to the warden at the prison cooperates in the cover-ups of even obvious prisoner murders, where the corpses show clear evidence of violent treatment preceding death.

Clements Unit is a non-mental health prison, yet it houses over 1800 documented mentally ill prisoners. Many are held in long term segregation in violation of past federal court rulings against TDCJ, requiring that such prisoners be held at mental health facilities where they can receive appropriate care.[5] Not coincidentally this prison boasts the state's highest rates of use of force and chemical agents on prisoners, in numbers that experts call "overwhelming," and in situations where, "there's no particular indication that there's an immediate danger of any kind."

Conclusion

Clements Unit is a sort of domestic black site prison where abuses and murders of prisoners have been normalized, where select cases that officials want "handled" can be sent. This is likely what happened to Comeaux, who was greatly disliked by TDCJ officials at all levels. At this unit they persistently prevented his ability to communicate with his loved ones. His widow recounts how even lawyers warned that his life was in danger. He was denied life sustaining medical care.

It's no coincidence that I've been sent to this prison and have endured

many of the same efforts to isolate me and denied medical care as Comeaux endured. In fact, as I previously wrote, I was threatened with transfer into just such conditions if I didn't stop publicizing abusive prison conditions as I continue to do.[6] I anticipate that I may meet a similar end, as it seems Comeaux did but I am not deterred. Officials at this Clements Unit have tried repeatedly to provoke me into situations where uses of force by them might be speciously justified, while trying to falsely portray me as some violent fanatic who wants only to hurt prison staff. What they fear is exposure, which is why they try to disguise their abuses. On top of extreme routine abuses, prisoners at this unit are being outrightly murdered, and in most cases, no one outside the walls of this death camp even suspects.[7]

We need the broadest exposure and public challenge, as they are victimizing the most vulnerable of people here—the mentally ill—and because the prisoners lack outside help.

Dare to Struggle - Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

Write to:
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1 This article can be read at *rashidmod.com*; and was also published in *San Francisco Bay View*, June 2014, pp. 19-20, *www.sfbayview.com*

2 See, Karl Kersplebedeb, "Asthmatic Prisoner Doused With Pepper Spray, Refused Medical Care, Dies: Just Another Day In The Texas Prison System," *Socialist Viewpoint*, Jan/Feb. 2014 p. 57; also in *San Francisco Bay View*, Dec. 2013, p.6.

3 As the federal courts have found, TDCJ investigations of abuses of force on prisoners serve to condone not punish or resolve such abuses.

"The extent to which force is used in TDCJ, combined with the inability or failure of the prison system to control use of force incidents, reflects what can only be described as an affirmative management strategy to permit the use of excessive force for both punishment and deterrence. It is clear that while [TDCJ investigative agencies] goes through the motions of filing paperwork on cases, it seldom finds officer misconduct. The result is to send a clear message to line staff that excessive force will be tolerated." Ruiz v Johnson, 37 F. Supp. 855, 939-990 (S.O. Tex. 1999).

4 A full statement of the incident was written by the murdered prisoner's aggrieved mother and can be read under "Son Murdered in Clements Unit by Staff Texas Prison," at *http://www.prisontalk.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-266252.html*

5 See Ruiz *v.* Estelle, 503 F. Supp. 1265, (S.D. Tex. 1980).

6 Brandi Grisson, "A Tie To Mental Illness in the Violence Behind Bars," *New York Times*, Sept. 21, 2013; "Force Against Texas Inmates On The Rise," *The Texas Tribune*, April 3, 2014, *http://www.texastribune.org/2014/04/03/force-against-texas-inmates-rise/*

7 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Political Struggle In The Teeth Of Prison Reaction From Virginia To Oregon," *Socialism And Democracy*, 2013 Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 78-94. The entire article is downloadable for free from *http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08854300.2012.760266*

1-2-3 Fergusons

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

For over a week, the media and millions of viewers and readers have been focused on the ever-changing events of Ferguson, Missouri, where a local teenager, Michael Brown, was shot to death by a white cop.

What has been consistent, and unchanging, has been the level of outrage among Black Ferguson residents—men and women who have resisted every attempt to silence or sidetrack their efforts.

Their efforts?

To achieve the arrest, prosecution and conviction of the white cop (Darrel Wilson) who shot and killed Mike Brown.

They are fueled by fury, and a long train of police repression.

They haven't let anything—promises, provocations, politicians or police—turn them away from their objective.

The System has used weapons of war; sniper rifles; armored personnel carriers; submachine guns and other implements of military violence to intimidate the people; to threaten the people; to silence the people.

They only continued their marches for justice for Mike Brown.

They faced sweet talking politicians promising peace; police with dark faces promising protection; preachers praying for placidity—and they kept on marching.

They were threatened with arrests if they broke curfew; and received the acrid rain of tear gas—and they kept on marching.

Marching for justice for Mike Brown.

A reporter for a national cable outlet asked five teens clad in baseball hats and bright red bandanas to identify themselves.

One by one, they announced their names: Mike Brown.

They were all Mike Brown.

As they marched past fear, they are indeed Mike Brown.

As are all.

—PrisonRadio.org, August 17, 2014

When Children are 'The Enemy'

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

I've been watching for days now, as media reports display the growing hatreds at the arrival of Central American children across the Mexican-U.S. border.

American voices crackle with bile as they begin the drumbeat for their immediate deportation.

Vile names are called against them, and they are described as "invaders," "sick," and "dirty."

In truth, they are refugees from want and war, almost all the result of U.S. interventions in Central America, in support of murderous military governments and the mindless drug war.

These are the grandchildren of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement,) the economic policy which leached wealth from Mexico and its neighbors, for U.S. corporate greed.

That said, this antipathy shown toward children is deeply disturbing.

It reminds me of the era of World War II, when a bill was submitted in Congress to allow the entry of thousands of German-Jewish children. The Wagner-Rogers bill would've saved 20,000 kids living in Germany, but President Franklin Delano Roosevelt opposed it—and the bill quickly died.

Actually, many American elites opposed it, including Roosevelt's cousin, Laura Delano Houghtelling, and wife of the U.S. Immigration commission, who argued: "…20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults."

Such crude racism portrays the ugliness of Americans, and the day will come when we will look back at how these children are treated today—and we will not feel pride.

This frenzy, this political and social fear whipped up by petty, ambitious politicians will yet pass.

But left behind will be our shame, at how a nation that claims so much greatness can be both so small—and so cruel.

—*PrisonRadio*.org, July 13, 2014

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Israel: Settler, Colonialist, Apartheid State

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Six years ago, when Israel launched its blitzkrieg against Gaza, it left only after some 700 Gazans—men, women and children—were dead.

This occurred under George W. Bush; with the U.S. neocon administration winking, nodding and blowing kisses of approval.

Today, under neoliberal rule, we see that something indeed has changed under President Barack Obama: It has gotten worse.

For, this time, Israel may double the death toll from July 2008. It's already close, with 1,350 deaths of Palestinians.

When one looks at the news, one must remember the old adage that, "In war, the first casualty is truth." For despite the P.R.-war that projects Israel as "avoiding civilian casualties" in their battle against the government of Hamas, the fact is Israel intentionally targets civilians, which is a war crime.

Don't take my word for it.

Zeev Schiff is Israel's preeminent military analyst, and he has stated in *Ha'aretz* newspaper, "…The Israeli Army has always struck civilian populations." Schiff added that they did so "purposely and consciously."

Schiff explained that the Army "has never distinguished civilian (from military) targets… (But) purposely attacked civilian targets."[1]

One wouldn't know this listening to U.S. news coverage, which makes Palestinian suffering virtually invisible, while privileging Israeli voices and perspectives, even when absurd.

Lost too, is the real source of this carnage; over half-a-century of Israeli violations of international law, by massive land theft, water theft, and the imposition of a cruel military occupation by a settler, colonialist State, which had no use for the indigenous peoples of Palestine, and yet lusts for its lands.

Gaza has become an open-air prison—the largest on earth, presided over by an apartheid government that kills its inhabitants like it's killing chickens.

Obama, echoing his predecessor, Bush, talks about Israel's massacres by saying, "Israel has the right to defend itself."

But, one wonders.

Doesn't Palestine have the same rights, as well?

—PrisonRadio.org, July 30, 2014

1 Chomsky, Noam and Ilan Pappe, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians*, Chi. IL: Haymarket, 2010, 82

Beatings

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

The scenes are, unfortunately, all too familiar.

A person is beaten, ruthlessly, relentlessly, by a cop (or group of cops).

A video is released, and, at least initially, public sympathy flows to the beaten figure on the bottom.

Before long, however, the counter-narrative emerges, the beaten was belligerent, combative, resisted arrest—or, worst of all—was on drugs!

Then, the story goes away. Done!

In California, a 51-year-old grandmother is pummeled by a cop, throwing something like a dozen punches in bunches. He is hitting her like she's a man.

In occupied Palestine, a teenager, 15-year-old Tariq Abu Khdeir is seen punched, kicked and stomped by black uniformed cops, who then place the child, now beaten into a stupor, into a waiting vehicle.

The grandmother? Police say she was playing in traffic.

The teenager? Cops said he was with boys with knives.

Yeah. So they beat them.

The videos are chilling. They are Rodney King, without the batons. They are Delbert Africa, without the rifle butts.

And they are SOP (standard operating procedure).

It's what cops do.

—*PrisonRadio.org*, July 7, 2014

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,

Michael Brown was murdered and it was premeditated murder in the first degree; yes, and it can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt! The motive is the same motive for the killing of hundreds of Black men—the need to keep the former slaves oppressed.

The murder was not assassination, for although Brown was a potential leader at 18-years-old, he wasn't one yet. Soon, however, the U.S. government will need to begin assassinations of the leaders who oppose them.

Assassination has become one of the favorite methods of the U.S. ruling class and is fully approved by both political parties, the media and the well-paid intellectuals. It is the accepted tactic for a small, stupid, dying ruling class for it needs only a small number of highly-trained psychopathic killers to do the job for them; killers that they can call heroes and give the medal of honor to.

This is not a new tactic. Dying ruling classes have used this often to hold on to a few more years of power; and it does give them extra time; and it does seem to be unstoppable.

However, it can be stopped and defeated. Democracy has many advantages and one of them is that it is a good defense against assassination of workers' leaders.

When a leader is assassinated, ten more leaders step forward. How many leaders have the Zionist Israeli government killed and now they are faced with ten new leaders for every one they have murdered.

True, the assassination of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the leaders of the Black Panther Party was a body blow to the Black struggle. Now with the development of new leaders and democracy, the struggle will win.

The U.S. government's "democracy" is democracy for a small conspiracy of extremely rich men. Congress is a "thieves kitchen" where they cut up their spoils. Capitalism, by its very nature, cannot be democratic.

The groups struggling for a new society not only can be democratic, but must be to exist and be effective. They should be like a fist joined together and strike as one, but the point of contact chosen by the many.

Today, in the U.S., there is a necessity for the development of Peoples Assemblies—a place where the representation and members of the many different organizations can consider, democratically, what is to be done and how to do it. Such Assemblies need to become parliaments of the working class and a rival power to the dictatorship of the capitalist class we have now.

Such Peoples Power Assemblies will be the defense against assassinations. But they will not be defense against military attacks by the capitalist state. Then it will be a situation of the relationship of forces. We shall win!

In the spirit of Crazy Horse,

Joe Johnson

Dear Editors,

I have consciously watched the psychology and character of the U.S. ruling class for three-quarters of a century. It has changed. Now, as the ruling class is coming to its end, this is what I see it is like:

1. They are very small in numbers; not 60 families; but 20 to 30 families—less than 100 people!
2. They have very little intelligence. The reason for this is that they have their "hired help" to do their work *and* their thinking for them.

Continued on page 56

Nat Weinstein 1924-2014

His Political Legacy

Presentation at the June 22, 2014 celebration of Nat Weinstein's life

By Lynn Henderson

I've known Nat a long time and I get the feeling that a lot of people here today also knew Nat a long time. I was trying to think back when Nat recruited me to the Socialist Workers Party. It was in 1960, 53-54 years ago. To tell the truth it's a little scary when I think about how long ago that was.

I was in New York City as a graduate student at the New School for Social Research. I went there because I had the impression that it was a progressive, kind of liberal, even radical institution. I couldn't have been more wrong. It was staffed by professorial types who had been reactionary social democrats in their flaming youths and their politics had continuously gone south since then. While there, I quickly developed a stomach ulcer and every class I went to my ulcer got worse. As bad as their politics were and even though I considered myself some kind of socialist and Marxist, I just didn't have the political and intellectual tools at the time to take these people on. It drove me crazy.

My wife at the time, Mary Henderson and I, just by dumb luck, had gotten a rent-controlled apartment right in the heart of Greenwich Village on 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues, a short half a block north of Washington Square. I think we paid $87.50 a month rent. It was a top floor, four-story walk up but we were young so we didn't mind that. One day I'm sitting in the apartment, nursing my ulcer, being more frustrated than ever and I hear something and look out the window and across the street, which, if you know New York, was the old 8th Street Bookstore on the corner of MacDougal St. A socialist street corner meeting was taking place. I looked down and there were about 20-25 people gathered around listening to the speaker so I scurried down there and there were about five or six members of the Socialist Workers Party. Some of them were selling *The Militant*, others were talking to people in the crowd and the speaker standing on a ladder for a platform was Nat Weinstein. I was enthralled.

I had never heard of the Socialist Workers Party; never saw anybody ever holding a street corner meeting on socialist ideas. There were questions and answers going on with the audience too, and there was one guy there that I could tell immediately was an exact clone of the professorial types I was dealing with at the New School. He had a tweed jacket on, with suede patches on the elbows and was puffing on a pipe. Nat was making remarks on the role of U.S. imperialism at the time and this guy comments, "Well, you know, colonialism wasn't all bad." He says, "The British Empire introduced a modern educational system into India, they introduced parliamentary democracy into India and all this was very helpful in India's subsequence independence, blah-blah-blah. Well, Nat took him on and just politically devastated him, not in a mean way, but he was able to answer him and make him look ridiculous. And not only did he make this guy look ridiculous, but I could tell that he was winning over numbers of the people in the crowd, he was having an impact on them. I thought, "Wow," these are people that have the political tools to answer phonies like this guy. I could feel, or at least I thought I could feel, a sharp reduction in the acid that was usually flowing down onto my stomach ulcer. I thought I've got to know more about this. I was really kind of torn. I wanted the meeting to go on so I could learn more from the speakers and I also wanted it to end so I could buttonhole them and learn more about them, who they were, and how I could learn from the things they were talking about and acquire the political skills they were demonstrating.

Well, needless to say, within weeks I was a member of the Socialist Workers Party. I never went back to the New School for Social Research. As a matter of fact I ended up in the next weeks going to meetings that Nat organized in Brooklyn where he lived; I think it was called the Brooklyn Educational League. It was a meeting of a small number of Black workers, kind of a socialist discussion club, the core of which were the Franklin brothers, who if you were around the New York SWP at that time you might remember. One of the Franklin brothers was an ex-prize fighter who was a member of the SWP. I learned more in those four or five meetings that I attended every week for a month or so than I learned in my whole previous political education. So that's how Nat Weinstein recruited me to the Socialist Workers Party.

A leading worker activist

Nat, even at that time, was a leading worker activist in the SWP; I think he was already on the National Committee. He was part of a thin layer of workers

that were recruited toward the end of World War II, really the last layer to be recruited to the SWP directly out of the working class. He was a merchant seaman and was recruited by an SWP shipmate while working a ship to Venezuela. As a worker activist he was a leader and an activist in all the events that were going on and would continue to develop in the emerging civil rights movement. He was a defender of Robert Williams and Malcolm X, and was a defender of Black Nationalism. He was instrumental in having Malcolm speak at the SWP's Militant Labor Forum at the New York branch headquarters. The SWP was the only organization on the left that had an appreciation of Black Nationalism. Trotsky, in meetings with SWP leaders during his exile in Mexico, had educated the party on the revolutionary nature of the Black Nationalist movement and had predicted its re-emergence.

Nat was also a defender of the Cuban Revolution and a union activist in the painters union in New York City. That's how he ended up in San Francisco. He came out here because there was a fight in the painters union in San Francisco against the conservative bureaucracy and Nat came out to participate in that.

As significant as Nat's role was as a leading worker activist in all these areas, Nat's most important historical contribution, in my opinion, was later on. It was leading the fight against the political and programmatic degeneration in the SWP that was subsequently and surreptitiously organized by Jack Barnes. Nat emerged as the principal leader in that fight. In some ways this is surprising. There were others in the Fourth International and the SWP that certainly seemed to have more impressive intellectual and theoretical credentials for leading that fight, but they did not. It was this worker activist, Nat Weinstein, who recognized, analyzed and consciously organized against the break with the SWP's political program and the core programmatic acquisitions that Barnes was determined to jettison. These included abandoning Trotsky's concept of Permanent Revolution; abandoning the transitional program, as embodied in the founding document of the Fourth International; and rejecting the 1928 Program of the Left Opposition that launched the fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Barnes had come to the conclusion that all of these fundamental positions of the Fourth International and SWP were fatally flawed and, from their inception, anti-Leninist. He didn't present his ideas for democratic discussion in the party, but rather kept quiet about them until he could prepare an organizational terror campaign after which they would be unilaterally imposed.

It was Nat Weinstein then who authored the key programmatic and theoretical documents answering the new Barnes politics, and defending the program of revolutionary socialism. He played the key role. Barry Sheppard, who is here, not too long ago wrote a two-volume work documenting his time in the SWP and the history he went through. I believe it's a valuable two volumes and anybody here who hasn't read it and wants to know about the history of this period, I encourage you to read it. The first volume dealt with the SWP before the organizational degeneration and in general is an excellent account, reminding us of how valuable the healthy SWP was in intervening in the class struggle and moving it forward.

The second volume deals with the organizational degeneration of the SWP. Sheppard gives us an insider's look, often in horrific detail, of the organizational degeneration carried out under Barnes' direction. In this he is uniquely qualified, functioning for most of the period as Barnes' chief organizational enforcer. Expressing what I believe is sincere regret; he details the pressure that led him personally, step by step, into playing this role. Many devoted and talented political activists went through the trauma of the SWP's degeneration. Some were expelled, some became demoralized and resigned, others just drifted away. Many were completely disoriented by the experience. For many, what happened and how it happened remains a political mystery. To his credit Barry Sheppard survived that experience still defending today the founding program of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International—that is defending Marxism-Leninism.

Where Sheppard's account comes up short is explaining the political degeneration of Barnes and subsequently the SWP. One thing that we were always taught in the healthy SWP was that political questions come first; organizational questions are secondary and flow from the more fundamental political questions. Sheppard's narrative implies that the primary factor in the SWP's degeneration was a sudden (and essentially unexplained) personality change in Jack Barnes. Barnes inexplicably began functioning as a "star," as a "one man band" and morphed into a cult leader.

The rise of the so-called "Barnes cult" was not the result of some new personality shift; rather it was the result of a fundamental shift in his political views. Having secretly reached sweeping political conclusions, which in reality represented a rejection of the historic program of the SWP and the Fourth International, Barnes concluded, not illogically, that he had little chance of reshaping the party in this completely new political direction by openly presenting his views and engaging in a democratic political discussion of them. He consciously chose a different course. Barnes deliberately avoided openly expressing or debating his new views in the party but instead opted for changing the party through organizational intimidation and expulsions.

One of the first manifestations of Barnes' new politics was his announcement for a turn to industry, which in its initial presentation sounded pretty good. But very quickly this turn to industry morphed into an absolutely bazaar policy called "talking socialism." One thing the SWP had a long and successful history at was doing trade union work. In the 1930s they had an influence in the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo and in the San Francisco general strike, and played the key leadership role in the Minneapolis Teamsters strike by applying the transitional program in a revolutionary way in the union movement. All of that was rejected by Barnes, who proposed instead a policy of going into the unions but not engaging in the struggles of the unions, not engaging in a struggle against the conservative class collaborationist bureaucracies, but going in as kind of socialist missionaries to "talk socialism." It was a disastrous policy. It isolated those members who actually carried the line out and made them appear, in the eyes of healthy union members, like some kind of Jehovah Witness weirdoes. Other members, who maybe were a little more perceptive, went in, and while they continued to support the line and vote for the line and even attack anyone who criticized the "talk socialism" line, didn't actually carry it out in their unions because they knew it would make them look like jerks.

This had a devastating effect on the membership. You see, there is nothing more demoralizing then to play-act at politics, to say and vote for one thing and do another thing. And we challenged that; Nat challenged that in the 1981 convention. At that convention, Nat and I, as the two minority NC members, presented two documents. I presented (written jointly by Nat and myself) the Minority Trade Union Report and Nat presented the other document, "The Transitional Program, The Road Forward." And we took on the "talk socialism" policy. Also at that convention, because we could foresee Barnes move toward denouncing and breaking with Permanent Revolution—Nat posed to the Barnes steering committee the question, do you still support Permanent Revolution? Well, you know the whole Presiding Committee got up and said, Oh yeah. As a matter of fact I think they were honest in this because Barnes had not yet told them that Permanent Revolution was not going to be any longer a part of the program of the Socialist Workers Party. And when Barnes, not very long after that, did reveal that Permanent Revolution was anti-Leninist from top to bottom, none of these people raised any objections, and from taking the position of saying that it was silly to say they were breaking with Permanent Revolution they flipped over completely.

What then followed was a long series of trials and expulsions of members, and not just people who had minority views. Most of the people that eventually were expelled in these trials didn't directly express any minority views; they were expelled for completely arbitrary and sometimes silly reasons. Barnes was doing that because he wanted to create an atmosphere in which you could be expelled at any time for all kinds of reasons, if you showed any kind of opposition to the Barnes regime, no matter what it was.

The most sweeping organizational move Barnes made was then in 1983, as the pre-convention discussion period was to begin, he canceled the party convention. This was a direct violation of the SWP constitution, which required a convention of the party every two years. I think he did this for two reasons. One, even though the minorities had been expelled and even though he had carried out this suppression of any workers democracy in the party, he was still afraid to have a convention in which any of the political questions could come up for a discussion and a vote. So that was one reason; but there was another reason. I think Barnes wanted to test the membership that was left in the party. Would they accept this blatantly illegal organizational move without any opposition? The test proved positive for him. Not one person got up and objected to the cancellation of the 1983 party convention, which was in direct violation of the SWP constitution. Barnes then finally felt free to reveal his new political positions, which *ipso facto* would be the party's new political program. Even then these were not presented to the party for a vote but rather published as two articles in a public magazine the *New International*—"Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today," in the Fall 1983 issue; under Jack Barnes' name, and "The Workers and Farmers' Government: A Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship," in the Spring 1984 issue; under Mary-Alice Waters' name.

A giant political legacy

You know, the pace and timing of historical events are almost impossible to predict. Marx and Engels, with all their political skills, thought there was a good possibility of decisive socialist revolutions in 1848 in Europe. But they were wrong. While the pace of events and how they actually unfold are very difficult to predict, the re-emergence of a working class radicalization cannot and will not be postponed indefinitely. You can be sure that at some point, we don't know when, we don't know how it will emerge, but there will be a reaction in the United States and other countries to what is happening and a working class radicalization in response to that. When that occurs, the ideas that were expressed by Barnes in his rejection of the revolutionary program will play no role, they will be irrelevant, they will be largely forgotten. But Nat's programmatic and theoretical defense of the revolutionary program will not be irrelevant, will not be forgotten. It will be a part of the rich Marxist heri-

Continued on page 63

Nat Weinstein's International Viewpoint

Presentation at the June 22, 2014 celebration of Nat Weinstein's life

By Rod Holt

In keeping with the general theme, I will tell a story about Nat, which relates directly to his international viewpoint and his conviction that the key to understanding society today is to understand the class struggle.

Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989, as you will remember—in fact, we just had the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square debacle where the Chinese sent an unarmed army into Tiananmen Square to disperse the students. It failed to do so. So then they were sent back with arms, and the students agreed to move. There was a dispute about who shot who first, but it turns out that the Chinese government did everything they could to avoid bloodshed but the obvious thing—acceding to the students' demands. This was a serious confrontation, which the students lost. The question naturally arose as we heard the news in the U.S. was whether the news was accurate. It didn't make a whole lot of sense that the Chinese army would go in and shoot people asking for democracy. Nevertheless, that was the story from the *New York Times* and all the other bourgeois press, except from occasional reports from the overseas press, which indicated that the situation was not quite that way.

So, Nat, I and Jim Henle all agreed that what we needed to do was to fly to Tiananmen Square and find out as much as we could first hand of what had gone on. So we did. Two weeks after Tiananmen Square, we landed in the airport outside of Beijing with a translator who came from Seattle who was a brilliant and wonderful person. With our translator—there were four of us. After we recovered from jet lag we went to Tiananmen Square where the marks from the tank track ribs were still in the grass and we had people standing around wearing uniforms carrying AK-47's or whatever the automatic rifle was at the time, and so it was a very peculiar thing. But, we decided that we would just walk around and we did.

We spent most of the day just walking around. You know, here, on the side of the room, you'll see a picture of Nat Weinstein shooting pool with Chinese people in the background, and let me try to explain that. As we were just wandering with no specific aim in mind, we came across a construction site where there were hundreds of workers just pretty much in grey working pants and grey shirts, looking like any other worker you'd find on a construction site, except the uniformity of the clothing was surprising. It was lunch hour and we were near this restaurant and these women came out—there were four of them carrying a pool table. They carried it out—they set out two pool tables and they sold food to the workers and to passers by and everybody else as this was going on. So Nat, I and Henle and our translator stopped and we were looking around and the translator went over and asked a couple of people in Chinese, of course, whether we could play pool too. After Nat played a game to warm up, the spectators went and got the local pool ace, urging him to play the American tourist. So Nat then was challenged by the best pool player of all the construction workers and of the neighborhood.

And Nat, of course, couldn't turn down a challenge, so immediately he was ready to go and you could see by the determined expression on his face that Nat wouldn't have lost that match for anything whatsoever. And he won, and there was quiet, then a lot of them smiled. At Nat's suggestion, our translator then asked whether they would be interested in what he had to say since he was the head of a socialist group in America. They were. Shortly thereafter Nat was invited to get up on top of the pool table—I can't remember if he was wearing his shoes there or not—he got on top of the pool table and gave a speech to the Chinese workers, it being interpreted by our translator who had a loud voice, as did Nat—no PA system.

And the thing I wanted to relate in particular was what Nat talked about. What he tried do was explain that American capitalism wasn't what it claimed it was, that the Chinese Revolution had accomplished much that the Americans had yet to gain. So Nat compared the situation of the Chinese worker on the one hand with that of the American working class, which he said socialists are trying to move forward. In particular, Nat compared the poverty of our healthcare with theirs, our struggle with unemployment which was almost unknown in China and so forth. The Iron Rice Bowl, incidentally, was still in existence

in China—this was 1989, 25 years ago. So, as he worked back and forth on this, he tried to explain simultaneously as a logical consequence, that his viewpoint and the viewpoint of those he represented was to build a class struggle in America to catch up with the Chinese, so to speak, to carry out the revolution in America the way the Chinese have carried out the revolution in 1949. And he received then—I'm abbreviating the whole thing—but he received a lot of smiles, nodding heads and all of that.

The conclusion was that we were met very shortly thereafter—it was about a minute—by three uniformed men one with no insignia but clearly the authority, and the other two carrying AK-47s. They came over to us and they asked for our passports, and, in China, when somebody comes up carrying weapons and asks for your passport you are in trouble. And so we gave them our passports. Then our translator got the leading man off to one side and explained to him, we found out later, that we were rich Americans who had come to look at the construction of the building because we wanted to buy a hotel or an apartment building.

And this argument, this back and forth explanation by our translator actually won the day, and this guy who, although he carried no insignia, was obviously a man of distinction and a superior Chinese military person; at any rate, he relented and then handed us our passports and spoke to our translator in Chinese and they turned around and left, and we left also—very shortly thereafter—beaming. I don't know how many workers were there—but it was a victory not just for us, but a victory for all the workers. And I think it gives you just an idea of how Nat could do something so remarkable, that he was in touch with the working class even under the strangest and most obscure conditions which we had there, you know, a few blocks from Tiananmen Square.

Nat Weinstein and the Permanent Revolution

By Jack Heyman

Presentation at the June 22, 2014 celebration of Nat Weinstein's life

First, I want to express condolences to Debbie, Bonnie, Kevin and the Weinstein family.

I only knew Nat, just over the last several years. I didn't know him back in his SWP days. He always impressed me as an honest person, very political, and he had this irrepressible fighting spirit that was with him for 70 years. He was committed to the liberation of the working class through his views of Trotskyism, and one thing that Nat and I had in common was that we were both in the merchant marines and both recruited to Trotskyism out of the merchant marines, he during World War II and me during the Vietnam War.

At that time, I was recruited to the then revolutionary Spartacist League whose genesis began in the SWP as the Revolutionary Tendency. We had differences with the leadership over the question of the characterization of the Cuban revolution, the Cuban state that evolved from that, and with Black Nationalism and we were expelled for that. But the one thing I did in my understanding of Trotskyism through the Spartacist League was to build class struggle caucuses within the trade unions and we did that in the National Maritime Union. We built the Militant-Solidarity Caucus based on Trotsky's Transitional Program, recognizing that the workers with their consciousness of the present day could be brought to the realization that their liberation can only come through a socialist revolution, and through those series of transitional demands we were committed in the NMU, the National Maritime Union, to bringing seamen around to revolutionary politics and we did manage to recruit a few, including myself.

I quit the Spartacist League after moving out here to the West Coast, but I continued to do class struggle work in the ILWU, longshore union, of which I had become a member. I worked closely with Howard Keylor who is a member of the International Bolshevik Tendency. In 1984, he was one of the leaders and the initiator of the motion to boycott the next ship that came in from South Africa during the apartheid years. Actually, Bob Mandel, who I see sitting out there, [at the Celebration of Nat Weinstein's Life,] was the one who actually conceived of the idea. He had realized that the ILWU with a long history of opposing racism and the apartheid regime hadn't yet taken any job action to bring down the apartheid dictatorship. So Howard made the motion and we organized an 11-day boycott against the next ship that came in from South Africa. I think it was those kinds of actions that impressed Nat. He saw that while we have our differences, that what we were doing was showing the potential for the proletariat to organize along a revolutionary basis.

In 1999, we organized, along with the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, an action here in San Francisco, but not only in San Francisco—up and down the whole West Coast. We shut down all the ports in April of 1999 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and we led the march that was called by the Mobilization to Free Mumia here in the city of San Francisco. We had about 25,000 people marching that day. So it was a significant step forward. A couple of years ago, 2008 on May Day, the Longshore union, again, stepped up and we shut down every port on the West Coast and the resolution within the Union stated, "Against the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—that workers have the power to bring these imperialist wars

to an end, and that simply voting for Democrats who talked 'peace' but made war, wasn't going to do it." Unfortunately, the Longshore union was the only union that took action to that extent.

I visited Nat in the hospital the week before he died, and he spoke very passionately about the inevitable demise of capitalism, over-production and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and he was convinced that socialism would prevail, that the workers would make a revolution. I wanted to read what he was most enthusiastic about on May Day, which was going to happen a week after I visited him. We were bringing over one of the leaders of NUMSA, the Metal Workers Union of South Africa, which is engaged in a very militant class struggle there. They're calling for the building of a workers party to fight for socialism in South Africa. And so just the other day I received by email this document of the Metal Workers Union. When Nat and I were talking about this his eyes just lit up, because he saw the real tangible possibility of a workers revolution being able to actually take root in this world in his lifetime.

Of course we didn't know that how few days he had left. But let me just read this from the Metal Workers:

"The Central Committee called on the working class not to be fooled and blinded by anyone, but to understand that in a capitalist state or a class divided country like South Africa, the state will always act in the interest of the dominant class, the class that own, control and commands the economy, political and social life. This is, after all, the real reason for the existence of any state, and in the South African case, we understand the dominant capitalist class to be centered on the minerals, energy, finance complex and axis. We are therefore not surprised that the post 1994 South African state and government, a state and government whose strategic task and real reason for existence is the defense and sustenance of the minerals, energy and finance complex, will do anything to defend the property rights and profits of this class, including slaughtering the working class." (And this happened, the massacre of striking miners in Marikana where the ANC and the SACP government bloodily repressed that workers strike.) "NUMSA, the Metal Workers Union, is extremely disgusted by this display of police brutality. The actions of the police confirm that we have not post-1994 transformed the apartheid state and its violent machinery. The actions of the police make a mockery of everything else we thought was transformed, including parliament. By this singular act, the police have violently reminded us once again what Marx and Lenin taught us about the state. That is, it's always an organ of class rule and class oppression and that the bourgeois democracy is nothing but the best political shell behind which the bourgeoisie hides its dictatorship."

And for Nat and me and so many others to be following what's happening in South Africa—what the NUMSA struggle is about and the miners struggle is about—the working class of South Africa is demonstrating that Trotsky's Permanent Revolution is the way forward and that's why in my last visit with Nat, he was so moved to hear what's going on in South Africa and it was for him a confirmation that Trotsky was right about the permanent revolution.

My Grandfather

By John Gould

I'm Johnny Gould, Nat's grandson. My comments are not going to be long; I just want to take this opportunity to express my love and gratitude to my grandfather for being such a force of stability in my life. His presence was unmatchable and his spirit still lives on. I can feel it, especially, in this room, and it's really nice. There are so many memories; that's why I wasn't able to write anything. Memories of me and my cousin Reshad going to play baseball after school and practicing the times tables in the car on the way home. Every memory I have is a good memory and that's the truth. So, I just wanted to say that; and that I love Nat and I'll miss him.

Continued from page 50

3. They have no courage. They have their workers do *all* their fighting; they do none—a rich mans' war a poor mans' fight!
4. The have little or no compassion; not even for other members of their class.
5. They have little imagination or ability to see the future.
6. They have a poor ability to see, hear, speak or listen.
7. They have little love for anyone or anything—animal or human—except money and power.
8. They do not know or care about art, science, beauty, music, love or life—again, they care only for money and power.

They can't last much longer. Our job is to make their going as fast and easy as possible.

Only a revolutionary party can do this.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

With warmest love,

Joe Johnson

Who Was Nat Weinstein?

Presentation at the June 22, 2014 celebration of Nat Weinstein's life

By Kevin Sheppard

Who was Nat Weinstein? Was Nat a lifelong fighter for socialism? Was he a fighter for union and workers' rights? Was he a fighter for civil rights? Was he a fine artist? Was he a family man, husband, father, grandfather and mentor? Or was he a young Jewish stickball player and pool shark from the streets of Brooklyn? He was all of these things and more. Nat was my constant throughout my life. He was there whenever I needed him; there was no problem too small or too big that I couldn't talk to him about. He would always lead me in the right direction, whichever choices I made, or he guided me through it.

When I was in grade school he would pick me up from school almost every day and we would play handball, tennis or plain old catch for a good half-hour or 45 minutes after school. That's when he taught me how to throw a knuckle ball, which he actually threw very well. He would tell me stories of how good he was in sports when he was a kid. After we were done playing, which ever sport, on the way home in the car, then it was time for the timetables; he did them over and over and over again—9 x 8, 8 x 8—every one of them, because he believed that you should know these, second nature. You should just be able to say them and the answers should just pop out of your head. So this was every day, never a break.

Nat believed that you were never too young or too old for learning; he thought you should gather as much knowledge as you possibly could, no matter what the subject. As I grew older, he never stopped being my teacher. He took me under his wing and taught me my trade—his trade—painting. While working with him, I also learned to play checkers, which we did often during lunch. He would actually let me win once in a while; he was a great checkers player. One of the things I knew that would always get me a longer lunch break was towards the end of lunch, when I could tell he was getting ready to make us go back to work, I would ask him a question about Trotskyism—I'd get at least 15 more minutes, if not longer. But the reality is that Nat knew his trade and he knew it better than most.

Other trades people would often tell me that although Nat may not have had the best techniques to do a particular job, he had a great sense of how things should look and feel, and the balance of what he did was better than most. This is what made him so good. He created his own techniques out of necessity. As a matter of fact, I just learned today—Darrel Myers just told me a story about once, when Nat couldn't get a material to work on a job site they were on, he took it to the bathroom and peed in it and then the material worked—I just learned that today. No matter what someone asked him to do, it didn't matter, he would figure out a way to do it and get it done.

He once did a room for a famous designer named Michael Taylor. Michael wanted the entire room to look like old knotty pine and when Nat was done it was knotty pine. Michael told him, "Nat, I never knew what knotty pine was until you came into my life." We worked on antique sculptures, antique paintings and other antiques. We made the new look antique and we made the old look fresher. There was nothing Nat couldn't do with paint or plaster. One of his favorite jokes he would tell his clients, and I stole it from him and use it pretty regularly to this day, is he says, "What did Michaelangelo say to the Pope before he painted the Sistine Chapel—What-a color you like?" Nat would always get laughs with this. It is because of Nat that I have never told any client, "No I can't do that." I always can figure out how to do it, or at least make it look like I know what I'm doing. Nat instilled in me the belief that if someone made it, someone can fix it, so why not me?

One of the things that made Nat so special was his willingness to listen to your ideas and he could put his views aside and understand your point of view. This by all means does not mean he agreed with your views, just that he could understand them. He took great pride in this. He would always tell me that to win an argument you need to be able to put yourself in the other person's shoes and show them they are wrong using their point of view.

Growing up, I was at Nat's house almost every day and it was like visiting a farm. Nat always complained about all the animals Sylvia would bring into the house. She had rabbits, chickens, goats, birds, fish, cats and dogs. He would complain, however, as he was building the new cages for the birds outside, or the fence to keep the animals off his deck so he could read in peace. Through all this complaining, when no one was looking, he would be the one in the corner petting the dogs and cats or talking to the birds as they sang. That was Nat. He cared about everyone and everything.

If you were visiting from out of town he would insist you stay at his place rather than a hotel. Although he cared deeply about his politics he cared even deeper for family and friends. This is what I will remember the most about Nat. His devotion to his wife and our family and that he never wavered from his beliefs. He was a socialist to the core, but he was also a husband, a father and a grandfather and no one could have been better at that than him.

Nat Weinstein—An Oral History

In November 2007, Nat Weinstein sat down with Conor Casey, an intern at the Holt Labor Library, to talk about his life as a trade unionist and revolutionary socialist. Nat had a chance to review the transcript once and append his comments, but his political and family commitments and declining health prevented him from further preparing the text for publication. Following his death on May 9, 2014, Socialist Viewpoint *now presents Nat's reflections on his life in order to illuminate the conflicts, intellectual evolution, and moments of both deepest disappointment and sweetest victory in a life of socialist struggle. The version of the text that follows has been lightly edited and reorganized by Sophie Hagen in order to clarify the trajectory and ideas discussed therein. All efforts have been made to preserve both the content and style of Nat's remarks.*

Part I: My Childhood

Nat Weinstein was born in 1924 in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up there.

I lived in a Catholic Irish neighborhood and I learned a lot about the Irish. These kids were all anti-Semitic. I was afraid to tell them that I was Jewish, so I told them my name was Sonny, which is what my mother used to call me. It said "Foley" on my doorbell, so they thought my name was Sonny Foley and I didn't correct them, because I was sensitive. They'd sometimes come out of parochial school and be mad as hell because they had just learned about the killing of Christ. That happened more than once. I'd see them coming out of school and they're looking for a Jew! To get their revenge!

So that's my background. In a way, I'm sorry for telling them what I did, but I was a little coward at the time and I'm ashamed of that. I don't tell people this story.

I'm telling you because I have to tell the truth, and somebody's going to record it.

Then, when I was a little older, maybe 11 or so, we'd go out and play games in the street. Mobs of kids in the street. Everything is an apartment house in Brooklyn, pretty much, a tenement house, four family houses, walk-ups—mostly five stories. They were illegal in many cases, but the state doesn't enforce it. You had to walk up: no elevator.

My mother

My mother immigrated from Russia when she was nine years old in 1910. She went to work in a factory here—a sweatshop—when she was still very young, probably ten or eleven. She was a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and was a strong union person—not very intellectually interested in trade unionism, but she appreciated the union. At the same time, she had all the faults of workers: She was always complaining about her fellow workers and her chairlady (the union delegate), and the forelady or the foreman, and some of her complaints were legitimate and others were a reflection of the piecework system that prevailed—still prevails, I think—in the garment industry.

They had a minimum salary, and you'd get paid depending on how much you produced. But if they produced too much, the employers would reduce the rates. So they were all watching each other not to produce too much. My mother would hold back her "tickets" and not turn them in. She'd get little tickets for every job she completed: a dozen of this, a dozen of that, and so on, and I remember that when she'd do her arithmetic, she'd always ask me for help with the times tables.

My mother's father was a trade unionist, a social democrat from Russia, and a painter. Like I'm a painter, too—a coincidence. He died when I was just seven or eight years old. He was a very nice man.

My father

Nat's father was a prizefighter who went by the name Ruby Stein and had achieved some degree of local fame, so Nat's birth was announced in the newspapers.

My father's parents were born in Russia, too. He kept fighting for the money long after he should have stopped, which people had to do. He got pretty badly beat up because he was the kind of a fighter that never gave up, you know? By the time I was six years old, the stock market had collapsed and the Depression had started. My father always had a hard time making a living.

My father's family, especially, had a middle-class mentality. They weren't middle class, although my grandfather was a butcher who had a reputation for keeping his thumb on the scales and so he never made a success of his career as a butcher and he retired as soon as he had children old enough. He had a lot of kids; they supported my grandmother and grandfather. He was a petty bourgeois asshole and a hypocrite! He made everybody obey the laws of kosher—no smoking, no lighting a fire on Friday night and Saturday and so on—and he used to sneak around the corner and smoke! But he would forbid anybody from breaking any of the rules. And he was an asshole, and he didn't like me and I didn't like him so it worked out fine.

My father knew all kinds of people and he used to walk down the streets and stop every few blocks because somebody would recognize him and say, "Hi, Ruby! How ya doin'?"

On religion

When I was 11 years old, I became an atheist. I asked my grandfather, the bad guy: "If Adam and Eve had Cain and Abel, where did they get their wives?"

He said, "They went to another town."

These religious people don't have an answer to that. So I got into lots of arguments, and I got pretty good at presenting my case. Most of the kids hadn't thought about the things that I thought about, the questions I asked myself and asked my grandfather and so on. So I got pretty good at it and I tended to win every argument.

On reading

I was a reader. That was my main virtue, and it helped me. I learned to read very early, when I was six-and-a-half or seven. I never finished high school. In fact, after the first year of high school I stopped paying attention and started reading books and magazines—science fiction, mostly—in school. They let me do that because I was in a vocational high school and was not a good student. All my teachers told me I was smart, but I didn't try. I never did homework. I could get by very easily by listening. I like to hear a good teacher talk, and I listened and I absorbed a lot because when you listen and you read you also are thinking. You're absorbing it, or—what's the word—digesting. You start digesting as you're hearing it, as you're reading it, you see.

I didn't think I had to study, and that was a big disadvantage for me. I could coast through without studying. What I did do was read the geography and history books all the way through the first day I got them. It took me two or three days to read through the whole history book for the term and the whole geography book for the term. I read them all. It was a story. If it's a story, I'll read it.

During boring summers when there were no kids out playing and there was nothing to do, I would spend the summer reading fairy tales and going to the library. There are only so many fairy tales and then you grow older and you don't want to read fairy tales anymore. That's when I went to Norse mythology. I found that very interesting. It's imaginative, it tells me about the world. Norse mythology and Arabic mythology, which was mostly about warriors, as well as great warriors like King Arthur.

Every candy store had a magazine rack. That's where I found science fiction: magazines like *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic Stories*, *Astounding Stories*, *Unknown*. That last one was a unique mixture of magic fantasy and science. I learned a lot about science from reading science fiction. Magazines like *Astounding* and *Amazing Stories* always had one factual article in every issue. It was an introduction to science, you see. I became very much oriented to the scientific method, without knowing there was a scientific method. I grew up with it. That takes me to socialism.

Depression-era politics

My whole youth was the Depression: I was six-years-old in 1930. I was politically aware: I used to read the headlines on the newspapers all over New York City. It was in the air. I remember when I was probably around eight-years-old, I was standing outside of the schoolyard at lunchtime with a whole bunch of kids, and we saw a guy running down the street with blood all over him and a bunch of guys running after yelling, "Scab!" They were on strike in a furniture factory in the neighborhood. I found out that one of my older cousins who was about 18 or 19 at the time was working there and he was a "scab." I said to my aunt after I saw this incident—not thinking anything in terms of criticism of him or anything—"Doesn't Mendel work there?" She got upset. She thought I was criticizing her. I was eight-years-old; I didn't know nothing, you know? She started saying, "He has to work! He's got a family to support!" Defending the fact that he was working. I didn't ask whether he was working or not. It never occurred to me. I knew he worked there.

Wherever I went, there was a picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President Roosevelt, in working people's homes. In Brooklyn, that was the psychology.

Stalinists had a great influence in the working class in those days. There were more pro-social democrats, I would say, than there were pro-communists. They didn't think in terms of Stalinism; they thought in terms of communists and socialists in those days in Brooklyn.

So one of the things that affected my eventual political orientation was playing out in the streets. We'd play in the streets and there would be older kids, mostly college kids, who were spouting socialistic ideas. I didn't think of it as socialism. I didn't understand it. I just knew that they were smart and they said interesting things and that's about all the impression that it made on me.

So I wasn't hostile to socialists. I wasn't pro-socialist, but I wasn't hostile. If anything, it just seemed like the natural thing, to be a socialist.

Everybody in my generation—all the people I knew—were all pro-union. The radicals and the progressives were for the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] and the conservative workers were for the AFL [American Federation of Labor].

My mother was living with a guy who was a steamfitter and a strong union man, but pro craft union, you see. He was a good, strong union man, but a typical AF of L'er, very much in favor of the unions and of unions, but he kept saying: "The CIO is bad. The AF of L is good." The CIO was for mass production workers, essentially, and then they proliferated throughout the economy. They were more attentive to the needs of the unemployed and they had an organizational mentality. Build the union, grow, and so on.

In a way, class-consciousness in the 1930s was very high compared to today. But social and political consciousness was not as high in the 1930s as it is today, paradoxically enough and contradictorily enough. Today, for example, capitalism is more unpopular, and you can see it when you're reading the newspapers where they talk about the "super-rich" and the poor and the pay gap, the income gap—because it's growing, it's so wide, and so on—and there's a subliminal consciousness that is very radical. People are aware of all these things; that's why they put it in the newspaper. In order to maintain credibility they have to talk about what really exists.

I quit school when I was 15, in June of 1940, and I joined the Army.

Part II: The Military

The Army

I signed up for three years in the Army when I could have signed up for a year because it was just before World War II. I had to get my mother's signature, lie about my age, and lie about my name. I used my mother's boyfriend's name, and made my name "Jonathan Foley." I kept the "Nathan" in my name. It was a stupid name. But nobody challenged me on it. Maybe because the people from the Army that I was with were mostly from out of New York; they didn't know too much about Jews and New Yorkers and so on. A lot of them were from the South.

I was assigned to an Army base at Fort Wadsworth in Staten Island. I was in the First Division, which was the "Big Red One," a sort of famous division. We had *Croix de Guerre* around our shoulders, which was awarded to the First Division in the First World War by the French government for bravery, or whatever. The First Division went to Africa early on in the war and if I hadn't gotten out, I'd have been dead. Almost everybody was killed in Africa, all the guys in my company. The captain was killed in Africa. They were among the first to be killed, because they were the first to go.

While I was in the Army, we practiced beach landings. One of the reasons I left was because we went to Puerto Rico and we did combat preparation. We got into boats and circled around the transport ship that took us there and back until everybody was off the ship—the landing boats were little motorboats that held about 20 or 30 soldiers each—and we'd go up onto the beach, we'd jump out, and then we'd go like we were invading and climbing a steep hill. We climbed all day; we started at four or five o'clock in the morning and we didn't get to the top until it got almost dark, twilight. We were going as if we were attacking, taking cover, and then running—sending a few guys in at a time until the whole squad would go and so on and so forth.

I was in the Army and I got a less than honorable discharge because I told off an officer who asked me embarrassing questions about my mother. I said, "I don't think it's any of your business, sir!"

And he said, "Tear up that honorable discharge and give him a blue one." The blue discharge got me rejected, so it saved me from getting killed in World War II. The chances were high, because I would have gone in '42.

The Air Force

When I was 18, 19, I was very patriotic. Once I was 18, I went down to the Air Force. It was a separate agency of the government, the Air Force, and I wanted to be a pilot. I passed all the tests until they asked me if I was patriotic, and I said, "I'm not a flag-waver, but I'm patriotic."

They didn't like the "flag-waver" and they began asking me a whole lot of other questions. This was a psychological interview that they do, and it's a routine thing, normally. I guess they were on the lookout for radicals. Maybe it was just a peculiarity of this particular doctor who was interviewing me, because most socialists were pro-war, especially Stalinists and social democrats. They were very patriotic. I was patriotic, I was for my country and I was against the Germans—obviously—and the Japanese—because they had attacked my country. Without being fully conscious of what it told people about me, I picked up the term "flag-waver." Of course, when I heard the term, and in the context that I heard it, it was a put-down if you were a flag-waver. The term was used by patriots to ridicule people who overdo it. That's the sense in which I used it. They didn't take it that way. Probably other things that I said gave away that I was a rebel and didn't know it.

The Merchant Marines

After being rejected I joined the Merchant Marines—because I was still patriotic, okay? I didn't want to be "4-F", which is what they called people who were not in the Army. I wanted to be like my peers, so the next best thing was the Merchant Marines. Besides, it paid better.

I entered the Maritime School at the end of 1943. They had a Maritime School run by the Coast Guard and it was military style but, because of the influence of the seamen's unions, they also had elections for what amounted to delegates. Like section leaders—sort of in between elections and selection. They had to do it that way because of the power of the unions and especially the Seafarer's International Union. That was the AF of L seamen's union. The National Maritime Union was a Stalinist-controlled seamen's union. The West Coast union was the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, and on the East Coast it was the International Seamen's Union.

I happened to get on a ship that was an SIU/SUP ship. The SIU, SUP, and NMU objected to the military-style organizational system of the Maritime schools run by the U.S. Coast Guard—

what they saw as an attempt to militarize merchant seamen. So they evidently compromised by electing, not delegates, but section leaders.

The only way you could get a job in those days in the SIU or the NMU was a union hiring hall—no other way. Even the government had to hire through it. As a student in the Maritime School, I was put in the government hiring hall, but once I got on the ship, I had to join the SIU. I guess the NMU had to do that, too, to protect itself, because otherwise the government hiring hall would become a rival to the control over hiring.

The first ship I got on was full of ordinary seamen; the only radical was a cook who worked in the galley. He was a Black guy—a member of the Marine Cooks and Stewards' Union. SIU and SUP had no Black members.

The first time I met these old syndicalists/unionists when I came on board the ship, they sat me down, and they looked at me: No smiles. The first thing they said was, "Get rid of that fuckin' zoot suit!" They just used that term to show their hostility to it, as a put-down. "Look, get rid of that zoot suit. If we see it on you, we'll throw you overboard! We fought hard for this union, and you've gotta follow those rules that we set—and if you don't follow the rules, you're not welcome on this ship."

Then they told me about what they had to do to get a union. "It wasn't easy," they said; "We had to fight and some of us got killed." That's the way they introduced me to the union. It was not a friendly exchange; they weren't conscious radicals. They were Southern—or at least the delegate was. He was a racist Southern worker who was a good union man, strongly in favor of the union. There was a lot of guys like that.

They came to the conclusion that they needed a union. You know, because before the unions they didn't even have decent food. Now, they have decent food. I'll tell you, the food was good on the ship. Of course, I don't mean how it was cooked: That depended on the cooks.

They gave me a contract. Every seaman carried a contract. The contract was simple, not full of legalisms and clauses and semi-contradictory clauses and so on. No one knows what a contract is nowadays. First of all, they rarely see it and they don't bother to read it because it's too complicated! The union report only contains an extract, and that's the most union men see about their contract! That's why they can smuggle all kinds of things in! They don't see it. Their wages are higher, they get a raise, and for everything you see the hours are good, or the same hours, or shorter hours, even. You know? Depending on the union and the circumstances and so on. But the seamen had a contract.

The first trip was very important for my education. We went on a voyage that lasted about three-and-a-half months: We went to Iran, the Persian Gulf. That means going through the Suez Canal and that was in 1943 and it was pretty dangerous then, but it was just past the worst period. But we went in a convoy of 200 ships. Along the coast, we had blimps flying overhead and planes coming and of course all kinds of destroyers; other ships.

Near Gibraltar or the first port that we passed, there were all kinds of ships from other countries: Greece, France, and other countries occupied by the Germans. When we came through, all we could hear was cheers; they would all get out on deck and cheer the American ships because it was mostly Stalinists and social democrats on those ships in those days. They were all patriotic. It was a progressive war: a war for freedom against fascism and I bought the whole thing lock, stock, and barrel.

So I saw that and that confirmed my image of America. Then I went through the Suez Canal and expected the same kind of thing. You could see Arabs in traditional Arab robes on the shore—Bedouins, mostly. We never got a friendly response from them; their favorite expression was "Fuck you, Johnny! Fuck you, Johnny!" Or they'd open their robes and wave their penises at you. They hated Americans.

We stopped in the port city in Port Said to take on cargo. We went into the village town and it was very small, no roads: just dirt paths in between buildings. When it was light, everybody was friendly. We had no problem. The merchants were all friendly; they had no reason not to be friendly, but as soon as it got dark, they started throwing stones! Stones were being thrown at us! We couldn't see anybody—we could never see where it was coming from. People were just throwing stones.

Going through the canal and stopping at Port Said told me something new that I'd never known. I'd always thought everybody loved America. I mean that's the way we were trained!

So that was part of my education. I went on a ship just like any other person, worker, would be on a ship during the war and I learned something about the world that I didn't know. I didn't really think about it consciously, but unconsciously, certainly it was part of me. I knew it. I couldn't forget those experiences: some people showing their respect and love for America and other people showing me the other side of America, showing their hatred.

I was exposed to some of the ideas of Trotsky on my second trip. We were on a ship bound to the West Indies and we stopped in a number of ports. I think on that trip we stopped in Cuba—this was back in late 1944, or early '45.

On the ship I happened to read a book by the very famous Trotskyist author James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan*. It's about an Irish kid in Chicago in the 20s or 30s. It made a tremendous

impact on me because I had lived in an Irish neighborhood and I knew these kids! I knew how they acted; I knew how they thought and so on. These kids were all anti-Semitic. That was before I met the Trotskyists. He was a Trotskyist, although the book doesn't talk about his politics, but his frame of mind and how he saw the world. That's how he told the world that he saw, that he knew, that he understood, that he lived through—which is what a good writer does.

On this ship, I was in an argument about religion and for the first time, there would be occasions where people would be sympathetic to my point of view. I usually was alone in arguing with everybody in the gang that was there. There was one guy listening to the argument and nodding every time I said anything that was of importance—a good argument. Nodding with approval.

We became friends. When a guy thinks that you make a nice argument and agrees with you, he's an actual friend. So we became very close and we began to talk, and he steered me into a discussion about socialism. He was a very good educator.

This is Eddie Emery, or Robinson. Robinson was his Socialist Workers Party name. He told me about the Russian Revolution and Lenin, Trotsky, and so on—what they did and so on and so forth; all very new to me. It was an interesting story, the way he told it. So full of promise and wonder at the possibility! Then he told me about the Stalinist degeneration, and I was almost heartbroken when I heard this story. The conclusion was that Trotsky was in opposition, he was exiled, and he was assassinated, and that whole beautiful dream came to an end.

I said to him, "You mean it's all over, and there's nothing left?" And then he says to me, with a little satisfied smile on his face, he says, "Oh, yes, there is something left." Then he told me about Trotskyists, the Socialist Workers Party, what it stood for, and gave me all kinds of little pamphlets to read. The first pamphlet I read was "Wall Street's War, Not Ours" by Art Preis—he was a journalist and an autoworker; participated in the historic Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, Ohio—one of the three 1934 industrial strikes [in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco] that set off the great labor upsurge of the 1930s. He wrote *Labor's Giant Step: The First Twenty Years of the CIO: 1936-55*.

Everything about the pamphlet appealed to me. It made such an impact on me that I wrote a letter to Sylvia that I mailed in Caracas, Venezuela. I said something along the lines of: "I found it! I found what I've been looking for, the thing that makes sense of my life." She told me afterwards when I came home that she thought I had joined the Jehovah's Witnesses!

Sylvia and socialism

I explained socialism to her and she was open to it. More open, in a way, than I was because she came from a Kentucky mining background. Her father worked with horses when she was very young, and by the time she was a teenager, he got a job as a chemist in a steel plant in Middletown, Ohio. He was a scab during the strike and Sylvia's stepmother, his second wife, was a union person—it took her some time to get over his scabbing. Sylvia came to live with him when she was around 13 or 14. Before that she lived with her grandmother in Kentucky. All her mother's relatives were coal people and were union people.

Sylvia's step-grandmother was a real militant trade unionist. But Sylvia never said anything to me about unions or anything like that. In other words, she wasn't that union conscious although that was her background. She was not committed intellectually towards the idea of advancing trade unionism, workers' rights and so on and so forth, just as I wasn't before my experiences as a seaman.

After her parents were divorced, her mother moved to Brooklyn. They happened to move a block away from me. I was 14 and standing on the street corner. I see her pass by and I tell you: I saw her and I fell in love with her! She was striking and she was very plain. She had shorts on, I think, and it was summer-

time, and she was walking with long strides. She was a short woman: About 5 foot 1 inch, or 5 foot. But she was tomboyish when she was young and a very beautiful woman in my estimation.

She was 18 by the time I met her again. I was 19. We went to Maryland to get married, because you didn't have to take a blood test and wait 48 hours. To my embarrassment; they said I needed my mother's permission—the law there said men had to be 21 and women 18. When I came back, I wore a uniform because I wanted to show I was taking part in the war. It was just khaki pants, khaki shirt, and an officer's cap with gold braid on it like I was an officer, which is what the mates on the ship and the engineers on the ship wore during the war if they wanted to show that they were taking part in the war effort. You didn't have to wear a uniform, but they bought these khaki uniforms and we'd wear them, young people would.

Sylvia never talked about her union background, but she became convinced about socialism, and she was easy to convince—well, it's partly because of our relationship and partly because that's the mindset.

Meeting other politicized seamen

I didn't join immediately, but while we were still sailing, I was introduced by Eddie to some other seamen.

So here I am and I'm getting a lesson in democracy, workers' democracy. There was a supporter of Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow. That's one of the leaders of a split that occurred in [the SWP] in 1946. One was a Chinese guy who was educated; came out of school and just was working because he needed a job, but he was an intellectual. He was not a worker, but he was working on the ship along with me. Also Bernie Goodman, who was just a real classic bighearted worker. A real good guy, real good worker, good proletarian revolutionary and Marxist.

I felt like I learned from them. I felt like I was at home with them; I enjoyed their discussions, though I didn't have much to say because a lot of it was over my head.

But that's the way it is when you enter a new field and there are others that were there before you. I felt like I was part of something that was better than me.

I was a seaman for only three years: 1943 to '45. I came back two days after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, after my trip to Venezuela.

Part III: My First Job

Making ends meet after the Merchant Marines

I got this job in a mattress factory after I came out of the Army. I quit that job after a few months. Then I got a job as an office boy. They had me delivering messages and then when they saw that I had no promise for working in an office, they put me in the shop downstairs where they'd fold reams of paper into packages. It was done by hand in those days.

I had to take the subway and it was about an hour to get to work. I counted the hours I had to put in to work, plus an hour for lunch, and an hour commuting each way—it's eleven hours a day! I had to sleep eight hours; that's nineteen hours a day! So I got five hours a day to myself. I said, "There's something wrong with this. This is no good. I don't want to live like this. Nobody should have to live like this!" I mean, coming off from being a kid and playing in your spare time when you're not in school or not sleeping, it's a different thing to become a grown-up and have to make a living.

So as a science fiction fan, I realized that the problem was there were too many days in the week. Instead of seven days with two days off, we should have five days with two days off. I had a scheme for working the calendar so you only worked five or six hours a day. So, in effect, you think about money and hours of work—which is a very important question to working people and for socialism.

The system is wrong. It's not fair. So I was oriented in that direction. It may have been what I'd learned by accident from socialists or people who were influenced by socialism that I came into contact with—and there were a lot of people influenced by socialism in the Depression.

To be continued.

Continued from page 53

tage available to guide the working class in coming revolutionary struggles. In leading a defense against the Barnes programmatic degeneration, Nat, in my opinion, proved himself to be the most significant worker intellectual of his era. It was not the people who had written big theoretical works on economics and Marxist theory that led this fight. It was this worker activist who took on and wrote the theoretical documents and the political analysis that became the basis of the fight, not just in the United States, but throughout the whole Fourth International against the Barnes attack on the revolutionary program.

So when we celebrate Nat's life, we are also celebrating how this worker activist magnificently rose to the challenge of a sweeping petty-bourgeois attack on the program of revolutionary socialism and led the fight against it. That is Nat Weinstein's giant political legacy and it will live on to the benefit of future class struggles for a more humane and truly democratic socialist society.

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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.

'Hands Up! Don't Ship!'

Minneapolis United Postal Service (UPS) workers protest shipments to Missouri police

By Flintheart Glomgold and Launchpad McQuack

A dozen part-time UPS workers in Minneapolis took protest action on the job August 22, after discovering ties between Missouri law enforcement and a company, Law Enforcement Targets, whose shipments we handle each day.

Some of us removed the company's packages from trucks that would deliver them to law enforcement. Others, in solidarity, refused to ferry these packages to their intended trailers.

Others posed with a sign reading "#handsupdontship." The phrase "Hands up! Don't shoot" has come to symbolize protest over the police shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed, Black 18-year-old in Ferguson, Missouri.

We decided we could not be silent while our work was contributing to the militarized violence that police are directing at Ferguson residents in the aftermath of Brown's death.

"Urban street violence"

Law Enforcement Targets is based in Blaine, Minnesota. The company produces cardboard, steel, and plastic shooting-range targets. Some feature photos of people for police to practice shooting at.

It holds hundreds of contracts with police departments, federal agencies, and military branches across the country. At least ten of these contracts are with federal agencies in Missouri, and far more are with county and local police departments and other agencies in the state.

After public controversy last year, Law Enforcement Targets withdrew a line of targets called "No More Hesitation," which featured young children and pregnant women with guns.

It still offers an "Urban Street Violence" line that's predictably messed-up, and a "Missouri" line designed with the Kansas City police. These targets are designed to train cops to shoot first and ask questions later, to view everyone as a threat.

All this is shipped through the UPS sorting facility in Minneapolis, which ships several-hundred-thousand packages each day. Several hundred low-wage, part-time employees do all the sorting work, which includes unloading incoming trucks, sorting packages based on their destinations, and placing them in their intended trailers.

"If you've got the cash, UPS will ship it," said one worker who was involved in organizing the action on his section, "even if it's part of this f***ed-up system that winds up with a kid getting executed by cops and then this military invasion of the town where it happened.

"Give them the check and they couldn't care less. Well, we care."

A first step

Although people in various jobs and work areas took part, the action was symbolic. No packages wound up being halted. We wanted to make a convincing point to other workers while not exposing ourselves to an excessive risk of disciplinary action.

Management hasn't responded, and may not even have understood that this was done in a concerted way. This is a large facility, and it's possible supervisors on opposite ends of the building thought this was just one or two workers on their sections.

But we hope this action is just the first step. We shouldn't have to go into work and support the murder of any more Black youth, just because UPS makes a buck off of it. We believe it's important to find ways of refusing.

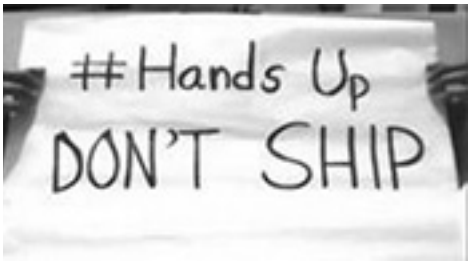
The action has already been replicated by other workers in other parts of the building. As soon as we started talking to people, it became clear many were interested in finding ways to take a stand on the shop floor, on this and other issues.

We encourage workers elsewhere, especially at UPS, to think about how their labor contributes to the situation in Ferguson, and what we can do together to stand against it. And we want to help you make it happen.

Flintheart Glomgold and Launchpad McQuack are the obvious pseudonyms of part-time UPS workers in Minneapolis. We're part of the group ScrewUps*, a rank-and-file newsletter for employees of UPS sorting hubs. To find out more or get involved in similar actions, or if you have an idea of how to take a stand but need help, please contact us at* screwups@riseup.net.

—*Labor Notes,* August 26, 2014

http://labornotes.org/blogs/2014/08/hands-dont-ship-minneapolis-ups-workers-protest-shipments-missouri-police



Teargas used against citizens in Gaza and in Ferguson, Missouri. Read *The Shortest Distance Between Palestine and Ferguson* on page 33.

On the Front Cover: A solidarity march to protest the murder of Michael Brown, by police. Read *From Ferguson to Gaza We Charge Genocide* on page 28. ▶

Thousands march in London to protest the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza by Israel. Read *Solidarity with the People of Gaza* on page 15.

Thousands of supporters march in support of Palestine and blocked an Israeli Ship from unloading its cargo at the Port of Oakland. Read *Bay Area Activists Declare Gaza Solidarity Victory* on page 27.

Hands up, don't shoot! Militarized police threaten a young unarmed Black man. Read *Young Black Men Have No Right to Life* on page 32.