

CNI/EZLN: The Time Has Come

This communique was originally published by [Enlace Zapatista](#).



To To the People of Mexico,
To the Peoples of the World,
To the Media,
To the National and International Sixth,

We send our urgent word to the world from the Constitutive Assembly for the Indigenous Governing Council, where we met as peoples, communities, nations, and tribes of the National Indigenous Congress: Apache, Amuzgo, Chatino, Chichimeca, Chinanteco, Chol, Chontal of Oaxaca, Chontal of Tabasco, Coca, Cuicateco, Mestizo, Hñähñü, Ñathö, Ñuhhü, Ikoots, Kumiai, Lakota, Mam, Matlazinca, Maya, Mayo, Mazahua, Mazateco, Me`phaa, Mixe, Mixe-Popoluca, Mixteco, Mochó, Nahua or Mexicano, Nayeri, Popoluca, Purépecha, Q'anjob'al, Rarámuri, Tének, Tepehua, Tlahuica, Tohono Odham, Tojolabal, Totonaco, Triqui, Tseltal, Tsotsil, Wixárika, Xi'iu, Yaqui, Binniza, Zoque, Akimel O'otham, and Comkaac.

THE WAR THAT WE LIVE AND CONFRONT

We find ourselves in a very serious moment of violence, fear, mourning, and rage due to the intensification of the capitalist war against everyone, everywhere throughout the national

territory. We see the murder of women for being women, of children for being children, of whole peoples for being peoples.

The political class has dedicated itself to turning the State into a corporation that sells off the land of the originary peoples, campesinos, and city dwellers, that sells people as if they were just another commodity to kill and bury like raw material for the drug cartels, that sells people to capitalist businesses that exploit them until they are sick or dead, or that sells them off in parts to the illegal organ market.

Then there is the pain of the families of the disappeared and their decision to find their loved ones despite the fact that the government is determined for them not to, because there they will also find the rot that rules this country.

This is the destiny that those above have built for us, bent on the destruction of the social fabric—what allows us to recognize ourselves as peoples, nations, tribes, barrios, neighborhoods, and families—in order to keep us isolated and alone in our desolation as they consolidate the appropriation of entire territories in the mountains, valleys, coasts, and cities.

This is the destruction that we have not only denounced but confronted for the past 20 years and which in a large part of the country is evolving into open war carried out by criminal corporations which act in shameless complicity with all branches of the bad government and with all of the political parties and institutions. Together they constitute the power of above and provoke revulsion in millions of Mexicans in the countryside and the city.

In the midst of this revulsion they continue to tell us to vote for them, to believe in the power from above, to let them continue to design and impose our destiny.

On that path we see only an expanding war, a horizon of death and destruction for our lands, our families, and our lives, and the absolute certainty that this will only get worse—much worse—for everyone.

OUR WAGER

We reiterate that only through resistance and rebellion have we found possible paths by which we can continue to live and through which we find not only a way to survive the war of money against humanity and against our Mother Earth, but also the path to our rebirth along with that of every seed we sow and every dream and every hope that now materializes across large regions in autonomous forms of security, communication, and self-government for the protection and defense of our territories. In this regard there is no other path than the one walked below. Above we have no path; that path is theirs and we are mere

obstacles.

These sole alternative paths, born in the struggle of our peoples, are found in the indigenous geographies throughout all of our Mexico and which together make up the National Indigenous Congress. We have decided not to wait for the inevitable disaster brought by the capitalist hitmen that govern us, but to go on the offensive and convert our hope into an Indigenous Governing Council for Mexico which stakes its claim on life from below and to the anticapitalist left, which is secular, and which responds to the seven principles of Rule by Obeying as our moral pledge.

No demand of our peoples, no determination and exercise of autonomy, no hope made into reality has ever corresponded to the electoral ways and times that the powerful call "democracy". Given that, we intend not only to wrest back from them our destiny which they have stolen and spoiled, but also to dismantle the rotten power that is killing our peoples and our mother earth. For that task, the only cracks we have found that have liberated consciences and territories, giving comfort and hope, are resistance and rebellion.

By agreement of this constitutive assembly of the Indigenous Governing Council [CIG when abbreviated in Spanish], we have decided to name as spokesperson our compañera María de Jesús Patricio Martínez of the Nahuatl people, whose name we will seek to place on the electoral ballot for the Mexican presidency in 2018 and who will be the carrier of the word of the peoples who make up the CIG, which in turn is highly representative of the indigenous geography of our country.

So then, we do not seek to administer power; we want to dismantle it from within the cracks from which we know we are able.

OUR CALL

We trust in the dignity and honesty of those who struggle: teachers, students, campesinos, workers, and day laborers, and we want to deepen the cracks that each of them has forged, dismantling power from above from the smallest level to the largest. We want to make so many cracks that they become our honest and anticapitalist government.

We call on the thousands of Mexicans who have stopped counting their dead and disappeared and who, with grief and suffering, have raised their fists and risked their own lives to charge forward without fear of the size of the enemy, and have seen that there are indeed paths but that they have been hidden by corruption, repression, disrespect, and exploitation.

We call on those who believe in themselves, who believe in the compañero at their side, who

believe in their history and their future: we call on them to not be afraid to do something new, as this is the only path that gives us certainty in the steps we take.

Our call is to organize ourselves in every corner of the country, to gather the necessary elements for the Indigenous Governing Council and our spokeswoman to be registered as an independent candidate for the presidency of this country and, yes, to crash the party of those above which is based on our death and make it our own, based on dignity, organization, and the construction of a new country and a new world.

We convoke all sectors of society to be attentive to the steps decided and defined by the Indigenous Governing Council, through our spokeswoman, to not give in, to not sell out, and to neither stray nor tire from the task of carving the arrow that will carry the offensive of all of the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, organized or not, straight toward the true enemy.

From CIDECI-UNITIERRA, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas

May 28, 2017

For the Full Reconstitution of Our Peoples

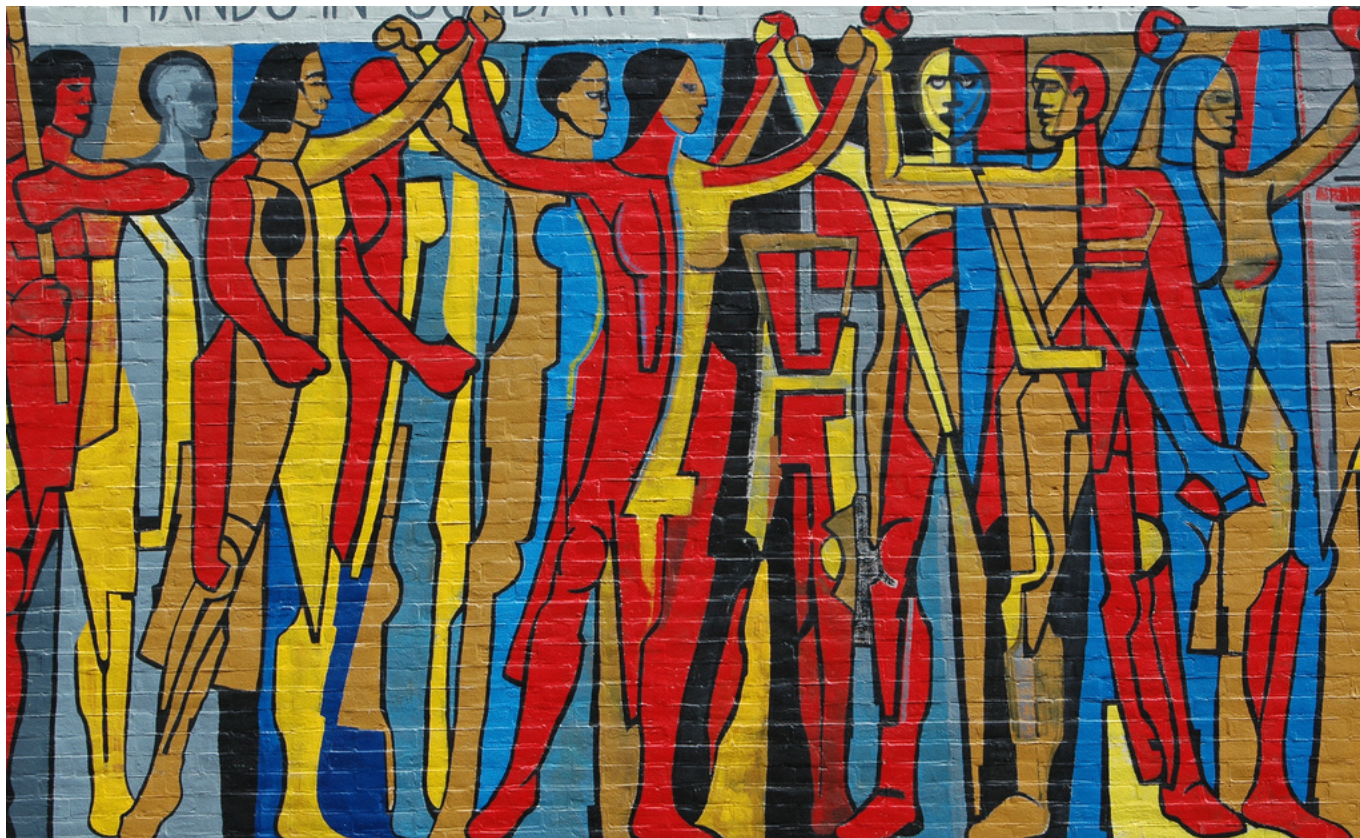
Never Again a Mexico Without Us

National Indigenous Congress

Zapatista Army for National Liberation

James Boggs: Think Dialectically, Not Biologically

This speech was first given by Boggs at a Political Science Seminar in Atlanta University on February 17, 1974



DANIEL MANRIQUE ARIAS & CHICAGO PUBLIC ART GROUP. HANDS IN SOLIDARITY, HANDS IN FREEDOM. 1997

This is the first opportunity I have had to speak to an audience in Atlanta, a city which in the last few years has become the center for many tendencies in intellectual and political thinking by Blacks. Many black groups from all over the country have held conferences here, and in this process you have had an opportunity to evaluate the movement of the black indigenous forces which erupted in the 1960s and within a few years brought this whole country into its present state of social upheaval.

Here in the, South, which gave birth to the movement all over the country, we should be especially able to see the difference between the present movement and past movements. For although there have been many revolts and rebellions in other sections of the United States - revolts and rebellions which have led to some social and economic reforms - the present movement which started out in the South was unique. It was unique because at its inception it raised the human question in its most fundamental form. What is the appropriate relationship between human beings, between one man and another? The movement began as a quest for a higher form of human relationships between people, relations not yet shared and not even believed in by most people, but which those who launched the movement believed could or should be shared by people in the United States.

In raising the question of human relations so fundamentally, this movement touched every person in the United States, North and South, and for a period of time it seemed that the

country - despite the obvious divisions and opposition of many - would be lifted to a new level of human relationships. Instead, today, nearly twenty years after the movement began in the 1950s, we are experiencing the most dehumanized, blackmailing relationships between blacks and whites, and between blacks and blacks. In terms of material conditions, most blacks are much off than they were twenty years ago at the beginning of the black movement. But in terms of relations among ourselves as human beings, we are all worse off. This is the reality which we must be willing to face squarely.

I shall not attempt to review the many struggles and confrontations which created the movement. You know and have experienced these either directly or indirectly. What I want to emphasize instead is that this kind of struggle could only have been unleashed in the South. This is not just because the South was more racist or more impoverished - which it surely was. Rather it is because in the South the tradition of viewing blacks as inferior had been rationalized and given legitimacy by a philosophy. All over the country, the philosophy that one set of human beings is inferior to another on the basis of race was practiced. But in the South this philosophy was not only practiced; it was preached. Therefore the movement which was organized to struggle against racism in the South also had to develop a philosophy as the basis for struggle; the philosophy of the essential dignity of every human being, regardless of race, sex or national origin. That is why the movement began to draw everybody into it - either pro or con - because it put forward a philosophy with which everybody, regardless of race, color or sex, had to grapple.

In our lifetime we have also witnessed how no social upheaval in any one part of this country can be isolated indefinitely from social upheaval in the rest of this country. Therefore what started out in the South as a movement whose aim was chiefly to reform the South quickly spread all over the country. Everybody, oppressed and oppressor, was drawn into the confrontation.

But when everyone is drawn into a conflict which is as deeply rooted in the history of a society as racism is rooted in this society, there is no telling how far the struggle will have to go. You begin to open up contradictions which most people in the society have been evading or tolerating - for various reasons. Some because they benefit from them - as many do; others because they believe these are beyond their power to challenge or negate - as blacks used to think; and still others because they think that to confront these contradictions will create too much antagonism and upheaval.

Once the struggle began to extend out of the South, it became clear that every institution of this country, economic, social, political, cultural, was based upon keeping blacks at the bottom. The whole development of this country had been based upon treating blacks as scavengers, to take the leavings of whatever whites considered beneath them-whether these were jobs or houses, churches or whole neighborhoods. In this process of treating

blacks as scavengers, United States capitalism had been able to develop more rapidly than any other country in the world because it has had the wherewithal to exploit on a double basis. Not only was it able to exploit wage labor in production and the consumer in the market, as every capitalist society does. But when factories and machinery became obsolete for the exploitation of whites, capitalism could always use them for the exploitation of blacks. Used plants, used houses, used churches, used clothing, used anything and everything, could be recycled. After being discarded by whites, they could always be used or re-used, to exploit blacks both in production and consumption. Thus all whites in this country could get to the top faster because blacks were kept at the bottom.

In providing this opportunity for rapid upward mobility to whites, the system of American capitalism has developed very differently from other capitalisms. First of all, this country, from the very beginning, had to import labor, either by force or by promises. Secondly, every ethnic group which came to this country voluntarily came in order to get to the top as quickly as it could.- Therefore these groups closed their eyes to the obvious fact that they were able to rise as rapidly only because the indigenous labor force of the blacks was being excluded from the same opportunities. In this way the system of American racism - or the institutionalized exclusion of blacks from equal opportunity - was inseparably interconnected with American capitalism - or the system of upward mobility for special ethnic and special interest groups at the expense of others. Whites could not see this because they were the beneficiaries of the system.

The eruption of the black movement exposed the historical connection between racism and capitalism in the U.S.. and also made it clear that it is not possible to get rid of racism in this country without getting rid of American capitalism; any more than it was possible to carry on a struggle to reform the South without carrying on a struggle to change this entire nation. How is it possible to get rid of racism without getting rid of the method of thinking which has become ingrained in the American people as a result of the special historical development of this country, namely, that special groups should advance at the expense of others?

There is a very important dialectical principle here which every student of political science needs to understand. A struggle may start out with the aim of resolving one contradiction. But in the course of the struggle, if the contradiction which it sets out to negate is fundamental enough, the main contradiction may change; it may become enlarged or expanded. Struggle is social practice and when you engage in social practice, you gain new insights. -You find out that there was much more involved than you had originally perceived to be the case when you began your struggle. Therefore you are faced with the need to raise your level of understanding, your level of conceptual knowledge. If you do not raise your level of understanding as the struggle expands and develops. then what began as a progressive struggle can turn into its opposite.

When the struggle which began in the South exploded all over the country, the question of racism became no longer just a regional but a national question - a question of transforming this whole nation. It has been a national question ever since; national in the sense that it involves this whole country; and national also in the sense that it embraces all the aspects of this nation. We now face the question of the Second Reconstruction of the United States. What kind of nation should the United States be? What kind, of society should we build in the United States? On what kind of philosophy concerning relations between people should we base ourselves - because no movement can ever develop momentum without a philosophy.

Note that I used the word "we." I mean "we." The strength of the movement that began in the South stemmed from the fact that those who led and participated in it understood that blacks had to change this society - this country. They had many illusions about the possibilities of reforming this society, but at least they did not have the romantic and escapist notions about leaving this country to make the revolution in Africa which nationalists of today have. However, once the movement came North and the tremendous complexity of the struggle that would be necessary to transform this whole society began to dawn on blacks, all kinds of romantic and escapist notions began to develop within the black movement. These romantic and escapist notions are now crippling the minds of many of our black young people.

All kinds of black militants call themselves black revolutionists these days. But few of them have yet been willing to come face to face with the contradiction that, just as it has been on the backs of the black masses that this society has advanced economically at such tremendous speed, so it is only under the revolutionary political leadership of black people that this country will be able to get out of its contradictions. We are hesitant to face up to this truth because it is too challenging. We have the fears which always haunt the revolutionary social forces, the fear of not knowing whether we can win; the fear that if we set our sights too high we may provoke the enemy to counterattack; the lack of confidence in ourselves and in our ability to struggle to create a better society. This is not a fear that is unique to blacks. All revolutionary social forces have this fear as they come face to face with their real conditions of life and the growing realization that they must assume revolutionary responsibility for changing the whole society - so that their lives as well as those of others in this society can be fundamentally changed. Because the fear is so great, it becomes much easier to evade the tremendous challenge and responsibility for disciplined scientific thinking and disciplined political organization which are necessary to lead revolutionary struggles.

Confronted with this political challenge many of those who have been frustrated by the failure of the civil rights movement and the succeeding rebellions to solve all our problems have begun to put forward all kinds of fantastic ideas as to what we should now do. Some

say we should separate and return to Africa. Some say we should separate but remain here and try to build a new black capitalist economy from scratch inside the most advanced and powerful capitalist economy in the world. Some say we should join the Pan-African movement of the African people in Africa and build a military base in Africa from which we will eventually be able to attack the United States.

Others say we should just struggle for survival from day to day, doing whatever has to be done for survival. They have just given up struggling for anything at all and have turned to astrology or drugs or religion – in the old-time belief that some metaphysical force out there in the twilight zone will rescue us from our dilemma. And finally most black militants of the 1960s, even while they are still talking their nationalist rhetoric, have today just become a part of the system. They are doing their best to get to the top in one form or another, regardless of whom they have to step on to get there, just as every other ethnic group has always done in this country.

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM: INCORPORATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

Those who have given a great deal to a particular struggle in the past always find it hard to realize that what began as a struggle for equal justice, equal representation or equal rights, can, precisely because it gains momentum, become just another factor in the development of the system. A system doesn't have any color. It is a way of social functioning which not only has institutions and structure but also has an ideology and the tendency to perpetuate itself. In the United States the capitalist system functions not only by exploitation of different groups but also by incorporation of successive ethnic groups into the system. This is the way that it has historically transformed what might become antagonistic social forces into non-antagonistic social forces. Already we have seen how American labor has been incorporated into the system in the wake of the militant labor struggles of the 1930s. Instead of being a threat to the system as it used to be, labor now helps the system to function. Labor keeps demanding more for itself in the way of more wages, pensions and other benefits and doesn't give a damn if this "more" is extracted out of the superexploitation of people in other parts of the world or passed on to the consumer. In this way the labor organizations which came out of the great social struggles of the 1930s and 1940s are today just mainstays of capitalism itself. They not only act as obstacles to its overthrow; they actively keep the system going.

The black movement is now running a parallel course. Gradually blacks are being incorporated into the structures, the institutions and the ideology of U.S. capitalism. This is happening because, in the wake of the black rebellions of the 1960s, the black movement has made no serious effort to repudiate the bourgeois method of thought on which U.S. capitalism is based which involves each individual or group just getting more for itself. It has made no serious effort to create a movement based on a more advanced method of

thinking and which aims to transform the whole of society for the benefit of the majority of the population.

It would be childish to blame U.S. capitalism for incorporating blacks into the system. In doing this, the system is only doing what it is supposed to do in order to maintain itself. In this respect U.S. capitalism is doing and has done very well. From the time of the Johnson administration tens of thousands of black militants, who might have become revolutionists, have been incorporated into various pacification programs. Scholarships were made available on a mass basis to blacks so that they could go to college and become part of that huge apparatus of social workers and teachers which keeps the system going. Now we have blacks in every sphere of capitalist society-junior executives of corporations, local and national politicians, mayors and judges, sheriffs and policemen. Blacks have acquired the same entourage of officials which every other ethnic group has. In this sense blacks have risen in the sliding scale of upward mobility just as the Kerner Commission proposed. They have not supplanted or replaced whites. But as whites have been elevated upwards, blacks have replaced them on the levels which they vacated. Hence today blacks are taking over the cities in the traditional pattern of other ethnic groups.

In the past, as we pointed out in *The City is The Black Man's Land*, this upward mobility in the politics of the city had stopped at blacks. But after the rebellions U.S. capitalism was ready to make this concession. just as it incorporated labor after the class struggles of the 30s, it has now incorporated blacks in the wake of the racial struggles of the 60s.

Today blacks are inheriting the old cities which are more poverty-stricken and crime-ridden than they have ever been. Technology has made it possible for capitalism not to depend on the city any more as the main base for its production facilities. So industry is abandoning the cities for the rural areas with the same ease that in the 19th century it abandoned the rural areas for the cities. It is in the rural areas that U.S. capitalism is developing the new technical industries, leaving behind the cities to be fought over by petty-bourgeois careerists, whites and blacks. These blacks and whites can't do anything to restore the cities which have become little more than urban reservations. All that is happening is that thousands of careerist blacks are getting plush jobs for themselves and living high on the hog. But the cities continue to deteriorate.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN 'TWO ROADS

In *The American Revolution* I pointed out that there are two sides to every question -but only one side is right. There are many ways that we can look at what is happening in this country today. But in the end we are going to have to recognize that we now have only the choice between two roads for the movement - only two directions of thought and action.

Will the United States continue to be a society based on the bourgeois system of upward mobility, with each rebellious group becoming incorporated into the system through its careerist or opportunist members, while the mass at the bottom sinks deeper into despair? Or can we build a society in this country based upon social responsibility between individuals and between groups in which everyone tries to make decisions based on the interests of the whole rather than on the special interest of his or her ethnic group?

The black movement started out in the belief that racism was the only contradiction in this society and that if it could only win equal opportunity for blacks to advance in the system, blacks and whites would end up equal. In the course of two decades of struggle, i.e. in the course of social practice, it has become clear that racism is not the sole contradiction and that it is inseparable from the capitalist contradictions which arise from each group advancing at the expense of others and individuals within each group using the group to advance themselves..

The more nationalistic the black movement has become, the easier it has been for U.S. capitalism to incorporate blacks into the system. Not only has it been easy for the system to identify the individuals to be incorporated. But the more nationalistic blacks became, the more they began to fool themselves and allow themselves to be fooled by black opportunist leaders into believing that everything black is beautiful and everything non-black is ugly or worthless or a threat to blacks. More and more blacks began to think and insist that "all we care about are blacks - and the hell with everybody else." Thus step by step they have taken on the dehumanized ideology of U.S. capitalism.

Thus, in the course of only twenty years, both the integrationists, who only wanted to reform the system so that blacks could be included in capitalist exploitation, and the nationalists, who claimed to be against the system, have each gradually been brought into the system and are assuming responsibility for it and the chaos which has been created as a result of the system.

The nationalists ended up by going into the system because they made the mistake of thinking that nationalism in and of itself is a revolutionary ideology, when in fact nationalism is only a stage in the development of a struggle by an oppressed people. , It is the stage when all layers of an oppressed group - the petty-bourgeoisie, workers, peasants, farmers- come to the conclusion that they have shared a common oppression and have a common history.

In the United States nationalism was an inevitable stage in the development of black struggle because throughout the history of this country, blacks have been kept at the bottom of this society as blacks, i.e. on a racial basis. But ever since the black power movement erupted in the late 1960s, the question facing the black movement has been not

the past but the future. The question has become “What are we going to do about the future of this country, this society? What kind of society must we create here in this country for our children and our children’s children?”

In other words, from the time that the nationalist or black power stage erupted in this country, the need has been for blacks to develop a revolutionary ideology for this country. But instead of doing this, black militants began to look towards Africa and towards the past; in other words, to a world that they really couldn’t do anything about. Instead of grappling with the tremendous challenge of transforming the conditions and relations in this country, they began to idealize the past. Instead of examining the changes that would have to be made in this country – which would inevitably benefit not only blacks but everybody else in this country – they began to think of themselves as living in some metaphysical space totally separate and apart from everybody else and what was happening in this country. They began to insist that blacks in this country are Third World people. They refused to face the reality that black GIs were raping and massacring the people of Vietnam just like white GIs. Or that blacks are an integral part of that 5% of the world’s population living in the United States and using up 40% of the world’s energy resources for their big cars and their new appliances, just as whites are doing.

Unwilling to face their actual conditions of life inside this country and the challenge of bringing about fundamental changes in this country, blacks have drifted steadily into bourgeois methods of thinking and bourgeois practices. The result is that today blacks are no different from whites in seeking individual advancement based upon the capitalist principle that every individual can “make it” in the system, if only they are ready to use others to get there, exploiting even those closest to them in the most degrading ways, from the pimp on the street to the politician seeking office. Meanwhile, instead of confronting this growing criminal mentality among black people, black militants have been making excuses for it — thus helping this criminal mentality to become even more widespread among black children and youth.

Today, in the year 1974, blacks all over the country are bragging about how many black mayors have been elected, while practically every black who can get together a few hundred dollars is running for one office or another. In terms of numbers this looks like progress for black people. But in terms of grappling with the fundamental issues that confront this country and everyone inside it, including blacks, (crime, the energy crisis, the corruption at all levels of government) this rush of black politicians only means that more blacks are now caught up in the system of bourgeois politics. Just like white politicians they cannot raise any of the real questions which confront this country and force the American people and those who might elect them to office, i.e. their own constituents, to discuss and clarify their positions on them. If they did this, they might not get elected to office, which is their main aim. So black politicians are now making deals to please the most voters – just as white

politicians have been doing for the last hundred years. Thus the elevation of blacks into the system has weakened the black movement and the overall struggle for real change in this country - even tho on the surface it may seem to have strengthened it. In this sense, even if we took the process to the logical conclusion of electing a black president and vice-president, all it would mean would be trapping more blacks in the position of defending and projecting the practices and ideology of the system.

LEARNING FROM SOCIAL PRACTICE

There is no use wondering what might have happened differently. Now we must try to learn from what has happened. There is a good side to this. Now that blacks have been incorporated into the bourgeois practices of this country, the fundamental issue facing blacks is much clearer than it could possibly have been twenty years ago. It is easier for young people to see now that blacks, like everybody else in this country, now only have the choice between two roads

Either you can join those blacks who are now rushing in to defend and expand a system which is based upon the exploitation of the many for the benefit of a few. Or you can take the socialist direction which has as its aim to create a society based on advancing the many and all Mankind, above the interests of a few.

In making this choice, those who are ready to take responsibility for changing society in the direction of a socialist society can't start by taking a poll of the masses. Nor can they just wait for the masses to rebel and then rush in to become their spokesman, which is what most of the black militants of the 60s did.-,Like all masses the black masses are full of internal contradictions. They can only acquire the strength to fight against the external enemy by first struggling against their own internal contradictions and limitations. No potential revolutionary social force has ever become an actual revolutionary social force except through struggle to overcome its limitations and weaknesses.

Through past struggles blacks have rid themselves of physical fears standing in the way of struggles against oppression. This is the first obstacle which any oppressed group has to overcome - an obstacle which is usually overcome through mass rebellions. Now the great need is for blacks to rid themselves of the fear of theoretical and political struggles against their own limitations. This requires a different kind of courage and boldness. It also requires discipline and patience and a readiness to struggle to acquire an appreciation of the dialectical process by which development takes place.

Our first need now is to look critically at the past of the black movement of the 50s and 60s, not in order to blame black leaders for what they did not do or to dream about what might have been if somebody had done differently - but rather to prepare for the next stage of

struggle.

Black intellectuals especially must be ready to look very critically at how quick they were to accept the idea that there is such a thing as "black thought," i.e. that thought is based on color or biology rather than on the creative use of the mind to analyze historical and social developments and to project new directions for an actual society. By accepting the idea that biology is the basis for thinking, black intellectuals have not only crippled their own minds but also the minds of millions of young people — until today few blacks know how to think historically or to make social judgments based on anything else but color. With every day the thinking among black youth becomes more anti-historical, more metaphysical and more superstitious and therefore more vulnerable to manipulation by unscrupulous demagogues and the mass media. The reality, the very sad reality today is that most of our young people have no basis for making decisions except their own momentary feelings, their own immediate

selfish interest or their desire not to be unpopular with their peers. Every day black youth are becoming more individualistic, more pleasure-seeking, more unable to tell the difference between correct and incorrect ideas and principles.

That is why the responsibility of black intellectuals, and especially those of you who are in the field of political science, is so great. You have the responsibility to acquire, to develop a method of thought that is based upon the historical developments and contradictions of this society in this country. You now have the tremendous advantage of the experiences of the last 20 years - both good and bad - to evaluate. In this sense you are very fortunate.

Not all black intellectuals are going to be ready to accept this responsibility. Many, perhaps most of them, will continue to be prisoners of bourgeois thought, i.e. they will be concerned only with advancing their own careers and the careers of their cronies, just as white intellectuals have been. More and more black politicians are going to win elections in the next few years; therefore it will seem to most of you foolish not to jump on their bandwagons or create a bandwagon of your own. But in thinking and acting this way, you will only become like so many black prime ministers in the West Indies and in the tiny African nations of our time - enjoying their own pomp and circumstance and begging whites to come to your city to spend their tourist dollars, so that you can entertain them with African dances as the native Americans entertain tourists with Indian dances.

My hope, however, is that some of you will be ready to accept the challenge I put to you - to be ready to struggle to think dialectically. That is, we must be ready to recognize that as reality changes, our ideas have to change so that we can project new, more advanced aspirations worth striving for. This is the only way to avoid becoming prisoners of ideas which were once progressive but have become reactionary, i.e. have been turned into their

opposite. The only struggles worth pursuing are those which advance the whole society and enable all human beings to evolve to a new and higher stage of their human potential.

Knowledge must move from perception to conception,; in other words, knowledge and struggle begin by perceiving your own reality. But it must have the aim of developing beyond what you yourself or your own group can perceive, to wider conceptions that are based upon the experiences of the whole history of Mankind. The only way that anyone can take this big step of moving beyond perception to conception is by recognizing and struggling against your own internal contradictions and weaknesses. Of these weaknesses, the most fundamental and most difficult to overcome, as a result of the specific history of United States society, is the tendency not to think at all but simply to react in terms of individual or ethnic self-interest.

Grace Lee Boggs: Introduction to Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century

This essay was originally published in a new printing of *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*.



ROMARE BEARDEN. THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE. 1973

I feel blessed that at ninety-three I am still around to tell a new generation of movement activists the story of why James and I wrote *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century* (RETC) in the early 1970s, and why I welcome its present republication by Monthly Review Press with its original contents and a new title: *Revolution and Evolution in the Twenty-first Century*.

James died in July 1993. We had been partners in struggle for forty years. He and his way of looking at the world are still very much with me. But the world and I have changed a lot in the last fifteen years as I have continued our struggle to change the world. i

RETC (as I will refer to the 1974 publication) is an example of the critical role that continuing reflection on practice and practice based on reflection need to play in the lives of movement activists.

In the late 1960s, in the wake of the urban rebellions and the explosive growth of the Black Panther Party, both before and after Dr. King's assassination, Jimmy and I decided that after our intense involvement in the Black Power movement, we and the American movement needed a period of reflection. This would enable us to figure out where we were and where we needed to go in order to transform the United States into the kind of country that every

American, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, or national origin, would be proud to call our own.

So in June 1968 we got together with our old comrades, Lyman and Freddy Paine, on a little island in Maine to begin the annual conversations that continue to this day. ii

The first outcome of these conversations was our recognition that the ongoing rebellions were not a revolution, as they were being called by many in the black community and by radicals and liberals. Nor were they only a breakdown in law and order or a riot, as they were labeled in the mainstream media. A rebellion, we decided, is an important stage in the development of revolution because it represents the massive uprising and protest of the oppressed. Therefore it not only begets reforms but also throws into question the legitimacy and supposed permanence of existing institutions.

However, a rebellion usually lasts only a few days. After it ends, the rebels are elated. But they then begin to view themselves mainly as victims and expect those in power to assume responsibility for changing the system. By contrast, a revolution requires that a people go beyond struggling against oppressive institutions and beyond victim thinking. A revolution involves making an evolutionary/revolutionary leap towards becoming more socially responsible and more self-critical human beings. In order to transform the world, we must transform ourselves.

Thus, unlike rebellions, which are here today and gone tomorrow, revolutions require a patient and protracted process that transforms and empowers us as individuals as we struggle to change the world around us. Going beyond rejections to projections, revolutions advance our continuing evolution as human beings because we are practicing new, more socially responsible and loving relationships to one another and to the earth.

In the process of arriving at this evolutionary humanist concept of revolution, it became clear to us that Marx's revolutionary scenario (which so many generations of radicals, including ourselves, had embraced) represented the end of an historical epoch, not the beginning of a new one. Writing over one hundred years ago, in the springtime of the industrial revolution and an epoch of scarcity, Marx viewed the rapid development of the productive forces and the more just and equal distribution of material abundance as the main purpose of revolution. In a period when industrial workers were growing in numbers, it was natural for him to view the working class, which was being disciplined, organized, and socialized by the process of capitalist production, as the social force that would make this revolution.

Since then, however, under the impact of the technological revolution, especially in the United States, the working class has been shrinking rather than growing. At the same time

the material abundance produced by rapid economic development has turned the American people, including workers, into mindless and irresponsible consumers, unable to distinguish between our needs and our wants. Moreover, we, the American people, have been profoundly damaged by a culture that for over two hundred years has systematically pursued economic development at the expense of communities, and of millions of people at home and abroad. Our challenge is to continue the evolution of human race by grappling with the contradiction between our technological and economic overdevelopment and our human and political underdevelopment. iii

Armed with this new, evolutionary humanist concept of revolution, we presented the *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party* at the National Black Economic Development Conference meeting in Detroit in 1969, urging Black Power activists to recognize that blacks have been in the forefront of revolutionary struggles in the United States down through the years because their struggles have not been for economic development but for more human relationships between people.

The next year we gave a series of lectures "On Revolution" at the University Center for Adult Education in Detroit. We began by pointing out that, although Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been able to seize state power in 1917, they were unable, in power, to involve the workers and peasants in governing the Soviet Union because their "revolution" had been an insurrection or event rather than a protracted process involving empowerment and transformation. Fortunately, however, the leaders of subsequent revolutions in China, Vietnam and Guinea Bissau learned from the Russian experience, and struggled valiantly to make transformation, serving the people and self-criticism an integral part of the struggle for power, in the process enriching the concept of revolution.

Thus the historical development of revolutions during the twentieth century has been a dialectical process in the course of which revolutionary leaders have been constantly challenged by the contradictions created by earlier revolutions to keep deepening the theory and practice of revolution.

Our challenge as American revolutionaries is to carry on this legacy, always bearing in mind that, unlike Russia in the early twentieth century and China, Vietnam and Guinea-Bissau in later decades, our country has already undergone a century of rapid industrialization and is in the midst of a technological revolution whose political and cultural implications are as far-reaching as those of the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture eleven thousand years ago and from agriculture to industry three hundred years ago. Our challenge, as we say at the end of the chapter on "Dialectics and Revolution" in RETC, is to recognize that the crises facing our economically overdeveloped society can only be resolved by a tremendous transformation of ourselves and our relationships to each other and to the rest of the world.

Only a few dozen people participated in the "On Revolution" series. But the process was so inspiring that we decided to use the materials as the basis for forming revolutionary study groups. So in Detroit and a few other cities we began to bring together black activists with whom we had worked during the 1960s. At the same time we arranged with Monthly Review Press to publish the series as *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*. iv

By the time RETC came off the press in 1974 we had formed revolutionary study groups of black activists in Detroit, Philadelphia, New York City and Muskegon, Michigan, some of whom went on to form local organizations. These groups were small because most blacks were taking advantage of the mushrooming opportunities for upward mobility that had been created by the rebellions. v Thousands of people bought copies of the *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party* and carried them around conspicuously in their dashiki pockets. But only a handful were willing to commit the time and energy necessary to begin thinking about revolution in a more evolutionary way. vi

In the early 1970s these study groups did not include whites because our focus was on developing black leadership for the American revolution. However, after blacks joined the coalition that elected Jimmy Carter president in 1976, we decided that, like labor and women, blacks had become a self-interest group. Therefore the period in which an American revolution might have been made under black revolutionary leadership had come to an end. The time had come to develop members of the many ethnic groups who make up our country so that together we could give leadership in the protracted and many-sided struggles needed to revolutionize the United States. vii

By the 1980s, through a carefully thought-out program for what we called national expansion, new, mostly white, locals had been founded in Milwaukee, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Syracuse, Boston and the Bay Area, and had joined with the mostly black locals in Detroit, Philadelphia, New York, Muskegon, Newark, New Jersey, and Lexington, Kentucky, to form the National Organization for an American Revolution (NOAR). Each new local created its own founding document from a study of the city for which it was assuming responsibility.

Except for Detroit and Philadelphia, most locals consisted of only a half-dozen or even fewer members. But our output was prodigious, mainly because of the sense of empowerment that had come from the study of RETC. Each member felt called upon to go beyond protest and rebelling, and embrace and inspire in others the conviction that we have the power within us to create ourselves and the world anew.

To demystify leadership, we decentralized responsibility for writing and publishing pamphlets that explored the new concepts and institutions needed for our rapidly changing reality.

Thus Philadelphia assumed responsibility for publishing five printings of the *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*. Detroit's Kenny Snodgrass, barely out of his teens, wrote the introduction to *The Awesome Responsibilities of Revolutionary Leadership*. The tiny Muskegon local wrote and published two pamphlets, one entitled *A New Outlook on Health* and the other, *Women and the New World*. The New York local wrote and published *Beyond Welfare*. Syracuse produced *Going Fishing*, a statement on the local environment. Seattle published *A Crisis of Values and A Way of Faith, A Time for Courage*, based on a talk on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by Rosemary and Vincent Harding. Detroit produced *Crime Among Our People* (five printings). *Education to Govern* (three printings). *But What About the Workers? What Value Shall We Place on Ourselves? Women and the Movement to Build a New America. Towards a New Concept of Citizenship. Manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party* (English and Spanish). *Look! A Nation is Coming! Native Americans and the Second American Revolution*.

In our internal development programs we studied American history and gained an appreciation and love for our country as a work in progress, constantly challenged by those excluded from its promise and by the contradictions of capitalism to keep deepening the concept of citizenship and what it means to be an American. While most radicals rejected this approach as "American exceptionalism," we welcomed the uniqueness of our history as the key to the American revolution. viii

We explored what it means to think dialectically and to go beyond the scientific rationalism of Descartes. In propaganda workshops we analyzed the significance of the spoken and written word, and practiced writing preambles for community organizations, using the Preamble to the U. S. Constitution as a model.

We tried to create an alternative to charismatic leadership and a balance between activism and reflection. At annual conventions every member participated equally in evaluating the previous year's work and in deciding the direction and structures for the next year. Our continuing conversations in Maine and in Detroit provided opportunities for the reflection necessary to give deeper meaning to our activism. ix

We were proud of our self-reliance. With no paid staff we had no need for grants or outside funding. Instead each local sustained itself by membership dues and literature sales.

Meanwhile, profound changes were taking place in the United States and the world because of new developments in transportation and communications. The fragmentation of the production process into a host of component operations was making it easy for corporations to abandon U.S. plants and cities and move to other parts of the country or the world where they could make greater profits with cheaper labor and fewer social or environmental regulations. Corporations were abandoning cities, and blackmailing city governments by

demanding tax abatements and other concessions, making it increasingly difficult for municipalities to supply normal services.

To understand these developments and the changes they required in our thinking and our practice, in 1982 we published the *Manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party* in which we warned that capitalism had entered a new stage, the stage of multinational capitalism, which was even more destructive than finance and monopoly capitalism because it threatened our communities and our cities: Up to now, most Americans have been able to evade facing the destructiveness of capitalist expansion because it was primarily other peoples, other cultures which were being destroyed.... But now the chickens have come home to roost. While we were collaborating with capitalism by accepting its dehumanizing values, capitalism itself was moving to a new stage, the stage of multinational capitalism.... Multinational corporations have no loyalty to the United States or to any American community. They have no commitment to the reforms that Americans have won through hard struggle.... Whole cities have been turned into wastelands by corporate takeovers and runaway corporations....

That is why as a people and as a nation, we must now make a second American revolution to rid ourselves of the capitalist values and institutions which have brought us to this state of powerlessness - or suffer the same mutilation, the same destruction of our families and our communities, the same loss of national independence as over the years we have visited upon other peoples and cultures.

To move towards this goal we need a new vision of a self-governing America based on local self-government, strong families and communities, and decentralized economies. Therefore revolutionary leadership will:

project and assist in the organization of all types of community committees: Committees for Crime Prevention that will establish and enforce elementary standards of conduct, such as mutual compacts not to buy 'hot goods,' Committees to Take Over Abandoned Houses for the use of community residents who will maintain them in accordance with standards set by the community; Committees of Family Circles to strengthen and support parents in the raising of children; Committees to Take Over Neighborhood Schools that are failing to educate our children or to take over closed down schools so as to provide continuing education for our children; Committees to Resist Utility Cutoffs by companies which, under the guise of public service, are in reality private corporations seeking higher profits to pay higher dividends to their stockholders; Committees to Take over Closed Plants for the production of necessary goods and services and for the training and employment of young people in the community; Anti-Violence Committees to counter-act the growing resort to violence in our daily relationships; Committees to Ban All Nuclear Weapons that will rally Americans against the nuclear arms race as the anti-war movement rallied Americans

against the Vietnam war in the early 1970s.

These grassroots organizations can become a force to confront the capitalist enemy only if those involved in their creation are also encouraged and assisted by the American revolutionary party to struggle against the capitalist values which have made us enemies to one another. For example, in order to isolate the criminals in our communities, we must also confront the individualism and self-centredness which permits us to look the other way when a neighbor's house is being robbed.

The publication of the *Manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party* energized the organization. Talking about our country and our communities, working together to develop ideas and programs for building communities, listening to the stories of everyone's lives and hopes, comrades discovered a new patriotism, a deeper rootedness and sense of place both in their communities and in the nation.

This enlarged sense of ourselves was unmistakable at the second NOAR convention in 1982. It came across especially in the poem "We Are the Children of Martin and Malcolm," written by Polish American John Gruchala, African American Ilaseo Lewis, and myself for the June 1982 Great Peace March in New York, and read by John and Ilaseo at the convention:

*We are the children of Martin and Malcolm Black, brown, red and white
And so we cannot be silent
As our youth stand on street corners and the promises of the 20th century pass them by.*

*We are the children of Martin and Malcolm
Our ancestors.
Proud and Brave
Defied the storms and power of masters and madmen.*

We are the children of Martin and Malcolm.

*So when money-eyed men remove the earth beneath our feet and bulldoze communities,
And Pentagon generals assemble weapons to blister our souls and incinerate our planet, We
cannot be silent.*

*We are the children of Martin and Malcolm.
Our birthright is to be creators of history,
Our glory is to struggle,
You shall know our names as you know theirs, Sojourner and Douglass, John Brown and
Garrison.*

*We are the children of Martin and Malcolm, Black, brown, red and white,
Our Right, our Duty
To shake the world with a new dream.*

It was a very moving convention. We felt that together, African American, European American, Asian American, female and male, gay and straight, we were beginning to create a more perfect union and carrying on the American revolutionary tradition of Sojourner and Douglass, John Brown and Garrison, Martin and Malcolm.

Inspired by the ideas in the *Manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party*, members of the Detroit local began organizing in the community. Some members organized the Michigan Committee to Organize the Unemployed (MCOU) and began a struggle to obtain continuing health insurance for laid-off workers. Others organized Committees to Resist Utility Cutoffs. After MCOU failed to rally laid-off workers, comrades began helping residents in the Marlborough neighborhood, where MCOU had been holding street corner meetings, to close down crack houses.

After Reagan and Bush won the 1980 election, we called on all Americans to "Love America enough to change it." "Our Communities and our Country are now up to us!" During Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984 we distributed leaflets challenging both white and black Americans to seize the opportunity to create a new movement. "We can't leave it all to Jesse!"

In 1984 we also joined the "cheese line," which during the Reagan years provided millions of Americans with basic commodities. On the "cheese line" in Detroit we discovered that the elderly and disabled were being trampled on by the young and able-bodied. So we organized them into a group calling itself Detroiters for Dignity and waged a successful campaign for an extra distribution day for elders. Detroiters for Dignity brought an elders' conscience to the struggle in our city. We wrote letters to the editor, organized and attended community meetings, hosted meetings against the military involvement in Central America, and in 1985 drove to Big Mountain in Arizona to support the resistance of the Dineh (Navajo) people to their forced relocation.

Then, suddenly, despite or perhaps because of all this external activity, NOAR began falling apart. Differences that had been viewed as enriching became sources of tensions. Members began resigning, citing personal concerns (family, jobs) that demanded their time and energy. But political questions, even if unspoken, were also at issue. For one thing, members had committed themselves to build an organization with people who shared their views. Going out into the community to try to build a movement from scratch required a different kind of commitment and preparation. Also, despite our efforts to decentralize and demystify leadership, we had not deconstructed Marxist-Leninist concepts of democratic

centralism and the vanguard party. Organizations in the black community especially need to accept this challenge because it is too easy for them to adopt the topdown and male leadership patterns of the black church.

Another troubling undercurrent was the decision the organization had made to go beyond projecting black leadership of the American revolution. Theoretically it was clear that the black movement as a movement was dead, but for black comrades the concept of black leadership for the American revolution had been a very heady one and giving it up felt a lot like betrayal.

We never formally dissolved NOAR. Between 1985 and 1987 it just faded away as members resigned or became so much involved in community activities that they had no time for our meetings. Our total membership was never more than seventy-five to a hundred. But between 1970, when we first began organizing on the basis of the ideas in the *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*, and 1985, when NOAR ran out of steam, these few comrades were incredibly creative.

The audacity of Jimmy's challenge to blacks to stop thinking like a minority and assume leadership for an American revolution had lifted black comrades beyond victim or minority thinking (Jimmy called it "thinking like an underling") and empowered them to use their anger in a positive way, uncovering talents and energies that otherwise might have been wasted.

Our emphasis on the contradiction between economic and technological overdevelopment and political and human underdevelopment enabled us to explore a wide range of social, political, cultural, and artistic questions and to tackle questions of crime and welfare with proposals and positive programs for building social responsibility, community and citizenship. As a result, we attracted people with imagination and artistic sensibilities from all walks of life. Between 1974 and 1984 few joined us as members, but thousands read our literature and hundreds attended our meetings.

Overall anyone who was a NOAR comrade or was exposed to its ideas felt that our humanity had been enlarged by the challenge to go beyond rebellion to revolution, beyond victim thinking, and beyond our personal grievances and identity struggles to assuming responsibility for a new concept of citizenship and of a self-governing America. Almost everyone has continued some form of activism.

In retrospect, I think that the main reason for NOAR's demise is that it had outlived its usefulness and the time had come to let it go out of existence. That is one of the many important lessons I learned from the experience. Even though we went through various stages with different names, we had essentially come out of the rebellions of the late 1960s.

Our goal had been to do what the Black Panther Party had been unable to do: develop evolutionary/revolutionary ideas and a new kind of leadership for the exploding black movement. When that movement came to an end, we kept trying to adapt ourselves to the changing situation. It is no accident that our internal development programs and our publications, which boldly explored visionary solutions for our rapidly changing reality, were our major achievements. x By contrast, our organization had been founded to correct the shortcomings of a movement that was already on the decline. A new kind of leadership would have to come out of a new movement whose hopes and dreams were still undefined.

In Detroit we did not have to wait long for the opportunity to begin creating a new movement. It came in 1988 when Coleman Young, Detroit's first black mayor, began grasping at straws in his efforts to stop the violence that was escalating among black youth in the wake of de-industrialization.

Coleman Young was a tough and charismatic politician who had been a Tuskegee airman during World War II and a leader of the National Negro Labor Council and a state senator in the post-war years. He was elected Mayor in 1973 not only because the black community wanted a black mayor but because the massive rebellion in July 1967 had warned the power structure that a white mayor could no longer maintain law and order.

As the city's new CEO, Young acted quickly to eliminate the most egregious examples of racism in the police and fire departments and at city hall. But he was helpless against the relentless de-industrializing of the city and the widespread violence resulting from the drug economy that jobless blacks had created in the inner city. By the mid-1980s the school system was in deep trouble because Detroit teenagers were asking themselves "Why stay in school hoping that some day you'll get a good job when you can make a lot of money rollin' right now?" In the summer of 1986 47 young Detroiters were killed and 365 wounded, among them sixteen-year-old Derick Barfield and fourteen-year-old Roger Barfield. Their mother, Clementine Barfield, responded by founding Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD) which received widespread local and national attention. I edited the SOSAD newsletter and Jimmy contributed a column: "What can we be that our children can see?"

For three years from 1989 to 1992, through the heat of summer and the sleet of winter, we participated in the weekly anti-crackhouse marches of WE PROS (We the People Reclaim Our Streets), chanting "Up with hope, Down with dope!" "Drug Dealers, Drug Dealers, you better run and hide, 'cause people are uniting on the other side!" In a few neighborhoods, especially Dorothy Garner's near the Linwood exit of the Lodge Freeway, we were successful in reducing crime and violence. But our marches did not attract young people, and we recognized that any program to rebuild and respirit Detroit had to be built around a

youth core.

Meanwhile, Young had been trying in vain to keep or bring manufacturing plants in the city. xi Near the end of his fourth term, in 1988, he decided that casino gambling was the solution. Gaming, he said, was an industry that would create fifty thousand jobs. To defeat Young's proposal, we joined Detroiters Uniting, a coalition of community groups, blue collar, white collar and cultural workers, clergy, political leaders and professionals, led by two preachers, United Methodist pastor William Quick and Baptist pastor Eddie Cobbin, one white and one black. I was the vice-president. Our concern," we said, "is with how our city has been disintegrating socially, economically, politically, morally and ethically.... We are convinced that we cannot depend upon one industry or one large corporation to provide us with jobs. It is now up to us - the citizens of Detroit - to put our hearts, our imaginations, our minds, and our hands together to create a vision and project concrete programs for developing the kinds of local enterprises that will provide meaningful jobs and income for all citizens."

During the struggle Young denounced us as "naysayers." "What is your alternative?" he demanded. Responding to Young's challenge, Jimmy made a speech in which he projected an alternative to casino gambling: the vision of a new kind of city whose foundation would be people living in communities and citizens who take responsibility for decisions about their city instead of leaving these to politicians or to the marketplace, and who also create small enterprises that emphasize the preservation of skills and produce goods and services for the local community. xii

To introduce this vision, in November 1991 we organized a Peoples Festival of community organizations, describing it as "A multigenerational, multicultural celebration of Detroiters, putting our hearts, minds, hands and imagination together to redefine and recreate a city of Community, Compassion, Cooperation, Participation and Enterprise in harmony with the Earth."

A few months later, harking back to Mississippi Freedom Summer and drawing on our connections in the city and with nationally emerging environmental groups, we founded Detroit Summer, with a long list of endorsers, as a "Multicultural, Intergenerational Youth Program/Movement to Rebuild, Redefine and Respirit Detroit from the ground up." Detroit Summer youth volunteers began working on community gardens with African American southern-born elders (they called themselves Gardening Angels) who were already appropriating vacant lots to plant these gardens, not only to produce healthier food for themselves and their neighbors, but to instill respect for nature and a sense of process in city youth. Detroit Summer youth also rehabbed houses, painted public murals in the community, cleaned up neighborhood parks, and engaged in both intergenerational and youth-only dialogues.

There was something magical about Detroit Summer as there had been about Mississippi Freedom Summer. In a city that had once been the national and international example of the miracles of the industrial epoch but had now become a sea of vacant lots and abandoned houses, people were moved by the sight of young people and elders reconnecting with one another and with the earth. Their community gardens created a new image of vacant lots, not as blight but as a treasure-house of health-giving food. Their murals established a positive youth presence in the community. Students from universities all over the country who participated in or heard of Detroit Summer began to see their own futures, the future of cities and the environmental movement in a new light.

The result since 1992 has been an escalating urban agricultural movement in Detroit: neighborhood gardens, youth gardens, church gardens, school gardens, hospital gardens, senior independence gardens, teaching gardens, wellness gardens, Hope Takes Root gardens, Kwanzaa gardens.

A few blocks from the Boggs Center, Capuchin monks have created Earthworks, a program which uses gardening to educate Detroit school children in the science, nutrition and biodiversity of organic agriculture and also provides fresh produce for WIC and the Capuchin Soup Kitchen's daily meals.

At the Catherine Ferguson Academy, a public high school for pregnant teens and teenage mothers, students raise vegetables and fruit trees. They also built a barn to house a horse, donkey, and small animals that provide eggs, meat, milk and cheese for the school community. xiii

Architectural students at University of Detroit Mercy produced a documentary called Adamah ("of the earth" in Hebrew), envisioning how a two and one-half acre square mile area not far from downtown Detroit could be developed into a self-reliant community with a vegetable farm to produce food, a tree farm and sawmill to produce lumber, schools that include community-building as part of the curriculum, and co-housing as well as individual housing. xiv

The National Black Farmers Union, whose mantra is "We can't free ourselves until we feed ourselves," brought its annual convention to Detroit.

Inspired by Jimmy's speech, Jackie Victor and Ann Perrault worked in a bakery to learn the trade and then opened their own organic bakery in midtown Detroit as an example of the kind of small business that our cities need instead of big box and chain stores. xv

Every August the Detroit Agricultural Network conducts a tour of community gardens. In 2007 six big buses were not enough for the hundreds of people of all ethnic groups attracted

by Detroit's mushrooming urban agricultural movement. After the tour, a retired city planner told me that it gave her a sense of how important community gardens are to a city. "They reduce neighborhood blight, build self-esteem among young people, provide them with structured activities from which they can see results, build leadership skills, provide healthy food and a community base for economic development. I see it as the 'Quiet Revolution.' It is a revolution for self-determination taking place quietly in Detroit." xvi

This quiet revolution has been preparing Detroiters to meet today's growing crises of global warming and spiraling food prices. Instead of paying prices we can't afford for produce grown on factory farms and imported from Florida and California in gas-guzzling, carbon monoxide-releasing trucks, we can grow our own food and not only achieve food security but grow our souls because we are creating a new balance between necessity and freedom. xvii

This revolution was also deepening our sense of the connections between our own locally based work and the new urban agriculture movement weaving a new future both in our own country and around the earth. From our growing conviction that something new was emerging, we began to look again at larger philosophical questions.

During the 1960s Jimmy and I had paid little attention to the speeches and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Like other members of the Detroit black community, made up largely of former Alabamians, we rejoiced at the victories the civil rights movement was winning in the south. xviii But as activists struggling for black power in Detroit, we identified much more with Malcolm X than with Martin. In fact, we tended to view King's call for nonviolence and for the beloved community as somewhat naïve and sentimental.

Jimmy and I were also not involved in the fifteen-year campaign that Detroit Congressman John Conyers Jr. launched in 1968 to declare King's birthday on January 15 a national holiday. I recall holding back because I was concerned that a King holiday would obscure the role of grassroots activists and reinforce the tendency to rely on charismatic leaders.

Meanwhile I was troubled by the way that black militants kept quoting Malcolm's "by all means necessary," ignoring the profound changes that Malcolm was undergoing in the year following his split with the Nation of Islam. After his pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm was seriously rethinking black nationalism, and in December 1964 he had gone to Selma, Alabama, to explore working with Martin Luther King Jr. xix

As violence in Detroit and other cities escalated in the wake of the urban rebellions, I began to wonder whether events might have taken a different course if we had found a way to

blend Malcolm's militancy with King's nonviolence and vision of the beloved community.

During this period my interest in King was also piqued by the little pamphlet *A Way of Faith, A Time for Courage* published in 1984 by the Seattle NOAR local. In this pamphlet our old friends, Vincent and Rosemary Harding, who had worked closely with MLK in the 1960s, explain that "Martin wasn't assassinated for simply wanting black and white children to hold hands, but because he said that there must be fundamental changes in this country and that black people must take the lead in bringing them.... Put simply, these problems are Racism, Materialism, Militarism, and Anti-Communism." xx

Meanwhile, in 1982, Reagan signed into law the decision to observe King's birthday as a national holiday, and scholars were beginning to re-evaluate his work and life. xxi In 1992, at the opening ceremony of Detroit Summer, I had noted the similarity between our vision and King's projections for direct youth action "in our dying cities." In the spring of 1998, when I was asked what I thought about the Black Radical Congress, I replied that in order to create a new movement, we must first understand the old. For radicals in this period this means grappling with the significance of the Black Panther Party, Malcolm X and King. xxii

As a result of all these developments, I began studying King's life and work from the perspective of RETC and our work in Detroit. To my delight I discovered that Hegel had been King's favorite philosopher. This reminded me of the influence that Hegel has had on my own life ever since I read his *Phenomenology* in my early twenties and learned that the process of constantly overcoming contradictions, or what Hegel called the "suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative," is the key to the continuing evolution of humanity. xxiii

I also discovered that in the last three years of his life King had viewed the American preoccupation with rapid economic advancement as the source of our deepening crises both at home and in our relationships with the rest of the world.

As King's life and ideas became more meaningful to me, I began speaking about him at MLK holiday celebrations and on other occasions. For example, at the University of Michigan 2003 MLK Symposium, my speech was entitled "We must be the change." At Union Theological Seminary in September 2006, I spoke on "Catching Up with Martin." At Eastern Michigan University in January 2007, I emphasized the need to "Recapture MLK's Radical Revolutionary Spirit/Create Cities and Communities Of Hope." At the Brecht Forum in May 2007, my speech was entitled "Let's talk about Malcolm and Martin." xxiv

The more I talked about King, the more I felt the need for each of us to grow our own souls in order to overcome the new and more challenging contradictions of constantly changing realities.

The 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott, I realized, was the first struggle by an oppressed people in western society based on the concept of two-sided transformation, both of ourselves and of our institutions. Inspired by the twenty-six-year-old King, a people who had been treated as less than human had struggled for more than a year against their dehumanization, not as angry protesters or as workers in the plant, but as members of the Montgomery community, new men and women representing a more human society in evolution. Using methods including creating their own system of transportation that transformed themselves and increased the good rather than the evil in the world, exercising their spiritual power and always bearing in mind that their goal was not only desegregating buses but building the beloved community, they had inspired the human identity, anti-war and ecological movements that during the last decade of the twentieth century were giving birth to a new civil society in the United States.

The more I studied King's life and ideas, especially in the last three years before his assassination, the more I recognized the similarity between our struggles in Detroit after the 1967 rebellion and King's after the 1965 Watts uprising.

On August 6, 1965, nearly a decade after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King was among the black and white leaders who joined President Johnson in celebrating the signing of the Voting Rights Act, the result of the march from Selma to Montgomery.

Less than a week later, on August 11, black youth in Watts, California, protesting the police killing of a speeding driver, exploded in an uprising in which thirty-five people died and thousands were arrested. When King flew to Watts on August 15, he discovered to his surprise that few black youth in Watts had even heard of him or his strategy of non-violence and that, despite the loss of lives, they were claiming victory because their violence had forced the authorities to acknowledge their existence.

The Watts uprising forced King to recognize how little attention he himself had paid to black youth in the cities. So in early 1966 he rented an apartment in the Chicago ghetto and was able to get a sense of how the anger that exploded in Watts was rooted in the powerlessness and uselessness that is the daily experience of black youth made expendable by technology. He also discovered the futility of trying to involve these dispossessed young people in the kinds of nonviolent mass marches that had worked in the South. And they gave him a lot to think about when they demanded to know why they should be nonviolent in Chicago when the U.S. government was employing such massive violence against poor peasants in Vietnam.

Thus, King's "A Time to Break Silence" speech against the war in Vietnam was the result of his wrestling not only with the Vietnam War but with the questions raised by these young people in what he called "our dying cities."

"The war in Vietnam," he recognized, "is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit. We are on the wrong side of a world revolution because we refuse to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

"We have come to value things more than people. Our technological development has outrun our spiritual development. We have lost our sense of community, of interconnection and participation."

In order to regain our humanity, he said, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values against the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism. Projecting a new vision of global citizenship, he called on every nation to "develop an over-riding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies." xxv

By drawing on the transformational ideas of Hegel, Gandhi and Jesus Christ, all of which had become more meaningful to him since the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King began to connect the despair and violence in the urban ghettos with the alienation which young people experience in today's world.

This generation is engaged in a cold war with the earlier generation. It is not the familiar and normal hostility of the young groping for independence. It has a new quality of bitter antagonism and confused anger which suggests basic values are being contested.

The source of this alienation is that our society has made material growth and technological advance an end in itself, robbing people of participation, so human beings become smaller while their works become bigger. xxvi

The way to overcome this alienation, King said, is by changing our priorities. Instead of pursuing economic productivity, we need to expand our uniquely human powers, especially our capacity for agape, which is the love that is ready to go to any length to restore community.

This love, King insisted, is not some sentimental weakness but somehow the key to ultimate reality. xxvii

In practice, taking this statement seriously requires a radical change or paradigm shift in our approach to organizing and to citizenship, which is the practice of politics. Instead of pursuing rapid economic development and hoping that it will eventually create community, we can only create community if we do the opposite, i.e., begin with the needs of the community and with creating loving relationships with one another and with the earth.

It also requires a paradigm shift in how we address the three main questions of philosophy: What does it mean to be a human being? How do we know? How shall we live? It means rejecting the scientific rationalism (based on the Cartesian body-mind dichotomy), which recognizes as real only that which can be measured and therefore excludes the knowledge which comes from the heart or from the relationships between people. It means that we must be willing to see with our hearts and not only with our eyes. xxviii

King believed that we could achieve the beloved community because he saw with his heart and not only with his eyes. We can learn the practical meaning of love, he said, "from the young people who joined the civil rights movement, putting on overalls to work in the isolated rural South because they felt the need for more direct ways of learning that would strengthen both society and themselves."

What we need now in our dying cities, he said, are ways to provide young people with similar opportunities to engage in self-transforming and structure-transforming direct action. xxix

King was assassinated before he could begin to develop strategies to implement this revolutionary/evolutionary perspective for our young people, our cities, and our country. After his death his closest associates were too busy taking advantage of the new opportunities for advancement within the system to keep his vision and his praxis alive.

Meanwhile, as we continued our struggle to rebuild, redefine and respirit Detroit from the ground up, I was keeping up with the new thinking taking place on a scale unparalleled since the Enlightenment which preceded the French revolution more than two hundred years ago. xxx

I was also very conscious of the new revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces that had been emerging since King's assassination.

In the wake of the civil rights, black power and anti-war movements of the 1960s, women, Chicanos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, gays, lesbians, and the disabled were creating their own movements for recognition and social change. The vitality and creativity of these movements reminds us that our country has not been and never will be just black and white.

Out of their experiences of sexism in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements, women were carrying on a many-sided philosophical and practical struggle against all forms of patriarchy. Activist intellectuals like Starhawk were exposing the sixteenth and

seventeenth century witch hunts as the means by which the British power structure expropriated the land of the villagers and replaced the immanent knowledge of women with the scientific rationalism of the intellectual elite. Indian physicist and activist Vandana Shiva and German sociologist Maria Mies were explaining how the labor of western societies “colonizes” women, nature and the Third World. By a deeper appreciation of the work of women, peasants and artists, they suggested, we can get an idea of what work will be like in a new non-capitalist society: difficult and time-consuming but rewarding and joyful because it nurtures life. xxxi

Also, having discovered that the personal is political, women activists were abandoning the charismatic male, vertical, and vanguard party leadership patterns of the 1960s and creating more participatory, more empowering, more horizontal kinds of leadership. Instead of modeling their organizing on the lives of men outside the home, e.g. in the plant or in the political arena, they were beginning to model it on the love, caring, healing and patience which are an organic part of the everyday lives of women. These, along with an appreciation of diversity and of strengths and weaknesses, go into the raising of a family. xxxii

Transnational corporations were growing by leaps and bounds. By the 1980s factory jobs were declining as more and more capital was exported overseas to countries where more profit could be made with cheaper labor. National and local legislation establishing minimum social and environmental standards were being overruled by organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO). Global corporations were reducing the power of nation-states, turning people all over the world into consumers, and changing the relationships between people and with the earth into commodity relationships.

In response to this commodification and dehumanization, tens of thousands of individuals and groups, representing very diverse sections of society, including steelworkers and anarchists, mobilized to close down the WTO meeting in Seattle in November 1999. During the “Battle of Seattle” Starhawk and other activists created affinity groups to decide their own tactics democratically. At subsequent mobilizations, e.g. against Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA) in Quebec and Miami, these affinity groups also set up their own communal kitchens, street medic teams, and media centers. Out of these experiences local activists began to see the possibilities for new forms of year-round, more democratic kinds of organizing in their communities.

Following mass mobilizations against corporate globalization in Seattle, Quebec, and Miami, thousands of individuals and groups from around the world gathered at annual World Social Forums and National Social Forums to declare that “Another World is Possible.”

In response to corporate globalization, people in communities all over the world began to create new ways of living at the local level to reconnect themselves with the earth and with

one another. xxxiii

The best known of these are the Zapatistas, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas who took over Mexican cities on January 1, 1994, the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) legalized the power of transnational corporations over local economies and government. The goal of the Zapatistas is to create a participatory economy and a participatory democracy from the ground up by a patient process of democratic discussions and nonviolence. Since 1994 Chiapas has become the Mecca and model for revolutionaries all over the world. xxxiv

In the last four years, as a member of the Beloved Communities Initiative, I have been impressed with the diversity of the groups which are in the process of creating new kinds of communities in the United States. xxxv

These include Detroit-City of Hope; the Beloved Community Center and Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Greensboro, North Carolina; an annual fall gathering in New Mexico where Tewawa women share the wisdom of indigenous cultures with people of many different backgrounds; Growing Power in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a two and one-half acre farm with five greenhouses which is not only growing food for two thousand families but new multiethnic community relations; Access, a Center for Independent Living in Chicago, where the prideful struggle of individuals with disabilities is deepening our understanding of what it means to be a human being; Cookman United Methodist Church in North Philadelphia, where neighborhood residents are creating a loving, caring environment for young people to complete their schooling and also develop leadership skills; Great Leap in Los Angeles, where individuals from different faith backgrounds are expanding their individual identities through spiritual and physical rituals and exercises.

Since 1968 a counterrevolutionary movement has also been developing in the United States. It began with the election of Richard Nixon as president in reaction to the turmoil of the 1960s, e.g. the urban uprisings, the assassinations of MLK and Robert Kennedy, the police riot at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. In the 1980s, as the export of jobs created unemployment and insecurity among factory workers and with families also in disarray, a growing number of Americans began to blame the anti-Vietnam war movements and blacks, feminists, gays, liberals and radicals for turning the American Dream into a nightmare. xxxvi

Around the same time a group of conservatives in the power structure with close ties to the arms and energy industries, including Dick Cheney, who was President Gerald Ford's chief of staff in the 1970s, and Donald Rumsfeld, who was Ford's secretary of defense, began developing a long-range program to restore U.S. hegemony. Their aim was to increase an already enormous military budget at the expense of domestic social programs, topple

regimes resistant to U.S. corporate interests, and replace the UN's role of preserving and extending international order with U.S. military bases. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these neoconservatives felt that the main obstacle to unilateral U.S. actions had been removed, and in 1997 they founded the Project for the New American Century. xxxvii

The attacks of September 11, 2001, gave them the opportunity to launch the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

How do we overcome this shameful and shameless counterrevolution which has cost the lives of so many American servicemen and women in Iraq and Afghanistan, killed more than a million Iraqis, made refugees of other millions, used security as an excuse to destroy rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and violated international law and dishonored our country by torturing detainees at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo? Because it is a movement, it cannot be defeated in the ordinary course of electoral politics. For the same reason, it cannot be eliminated by a seizure of power or insurrection like the Russian revolution in 1917. xxxviii It can only be overcome by a new kind of evolutionary humanist revolution.

In a speech entitled "The Next American Revolution," which I gave on March 16, 2008, at the closing plenary of the Left Forum in New York City, I explained how this revolution would differ from all previous revolutions. xxxix

I began by quoting from the chapter on "Dialectics and Revolution" in RETC, where, nearly 30 years before 9/11, Jimmy wrote:

"The revolution to be made in the United States will be the first revolution in history to require the masses to make material sacrifices rather than to acquire more material things. We must give up many of the things which this country has enjoyed at the expense of damning over one-third of the world into a state of underdevelopment, ignorance, disease and early death. Until the revolutionary forces come to power here, this country will not be safe for the world and revolutionary warfare on an international scale against the United States will remain the wave of the present - unless all of humanity goes up in one big puff."

It is obviously going to take a tremendous transformation to prepare the people of the United States for these new social goals. But potential revolutionaries can only become true revolutionaries if they take the side of those who believe that humanity can be transformed.

Thus the American revolution at this stage in our history, and in the evolution of technology and of the human race, is not about jobs or universal health insurance or fighting inequality or making it possible for more people to realize the American Dream of upward mobility. It is about creating a new American Dream whose goal is a higher humanity instead of the

higher standard of living that is dependent upon empire. It is about acknowledging that we Americans have enjoyed upward mobility and middle class comforts and conveniences at the expense of other peoples all over the world. It is about living the kind of lives that will end the galloping inequality both inside this country and between the global North and South, and also slow down global warming. About practicing a new, more active, global and participatory concept of citizenship. About becoming the change we want to see in the world.

This means that it is not enough to organize mobilizations that call on Congress and the President to end the war in Iraq. We must also challenge the American people to examine why 9/11 happened and why so many people around the world who, although they do not support the terrorists, understand that terrorism feeds on the anger that millions feel about U.S. support of the Israel occupation of Palestine and Middle East dictatorships, and the way that we treat whole countries, the peoples of the world, and nature only as resources enabling us to maintain our middle class way of life.

We have to help the American people find the moral strength to recognize that, although no amount of money can compensate for the countless deaths and indescribable suffering that our criminal invasion and occupation have caused the Iraqi people, we have a responsibility to make the material sacrifices that will enable them to begin rebuilding their infrastructure. We have to help the American people grow our souls enough to recognize that, since we have been consuming 25 percent of the planet's resources even though we are only 4 percent of the world's population, we are the ones who must take the first big steps to reduce greenhouse emissions. We are the ones who must begin to live more simply so that others can simply live.

Thus, the next American revolution is about challenging the American people and ourselves to "form a more perfect union" by carrying on the revolutionary legacy of William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Audre Lorde, and Malcolm and Martin. It is about claiming this legacy openly and proudly, reminding ourselves and every American that our country was born in revolution. Therefore we are the real Americans while the un-Americans are the neocons, the homophobes, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the anti-immigrant crusaders who, like yesterday's slaveowners, General Custers, imperialists, and White Citizens Councils, are subverting what is best in the American tradition.

The courage, commitment, conviction and visionary strategies required for this kind of revolution are very different from those required to storm the Kremlin or the White House. We can no longer view the American people as masses or warm bodies to be mobilized in increasingly aggressive and more massive struggles for higher wages, better jobs, or guaranteed health care. Instead we must challenge them and ourselves to engage in

activities at the grassroots level that build a new and better world by improving the physical, psychological, political and spiritual health of ourselves, our families, our communities, our cities, and our planet.

To my surprise and delight the two thousand or more people gathered in the Great Hall of Cooper Union responded to my speech with a standing ovation. It was, I believe, a sign that a new generation of Americans is ready to recognize that the next American revolution is not about reconstituting the welfare state but about making the radical revolution in values that Martin Luther King Jr. advocated. From the calamity of the Vietnam and Iraq wars they have learned that power does not come out of the barrel of a gun or from taking over the White House. Only right makes might. xi

I also believe that, in much the same way and for many of the same reasons that Detroiters have been forced by the devastation of de-industrialization to begin rebuilding, redefining and respirationing our city from the ground up, the American people are being forced by the interconnected crises of the Iraq war, global warming, floods, job insecurity, and a sinking economy to begin making a radical revolution in their way of life.

For example, a lot of Americans are furious these days because gas prices are soaring. But one hundred years from now our posterity may bless this period when high gas prices finally forced Americans to bike or take public transportation to work, to dream of neighborhood stores within walking distance, and to start building cities that are friendlier to children and pedestrians than to cars. xli

Likewise, as food prices skyrocket, hunger riots erupt, and obesity, diabetes, and other health problems caused by our industrialized food production system reach epidemic levels, the urban agricultural movement is the fastest growing movement in the United States. Americans are beginning to recognize that our health and the health of our communities and our planet require that we grow our own food closer to where we live.

This is how necessity and freedom have come together in Detroit, and how I see them coming together in other cities in the days ahead. It was not an abstract idealism but the real and deteriorating conditions of life in a de-industrialized Detroit that moved us to found Detroit Summer in 1992, so that young people could begin taking responsibility for rebuilding, redefining and respirationing our city from the ground up.

2007 was the fortieth anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Break the Silence" speech and also of the July 1967 Detroit rebellion. To commemorate these historic events, the Boggs Center convened two meetings: one in April "To Transform Grief into Hope" and one

in July to involve Detroiters in a conversation on “Where Do We Go from Here?”

At the July meeting people told so many inspiring stories of grassroots activities and projects that Detroiters are creating or want to create that we decided to launch a Detroit-City of Hope campaign to identify, encourage and promote these as a new infrastructure for our city. Among these activities and projects (which recall those in the *Manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party* in 1982 and in “Rebuilding Detroit: An Alternative to Casino Gambling” in 1988) are:

- expanding urban agriculture and small businesses to create a sustainable local economy.
- re-inventing work so that it is not just a job done for a paycheck but to develop people and build community.
- re-inventing education to include children in activities that transform both themselves and their environment.
- creating co-ops to produce local goods for local needs.
- developing peace zones to transform our relationships with one another in our homes and on our streets.
- replacing punitive justice with restorative justice programs to keep nonviolent offenders in our communities and out of prisons that not only mispend billions much needed for roads and schools but turn minor offenders into hardened criminals. xlii Over thirty years ago in RETC we projected a vision of two-sided transformation of ourselves and our institutions as the key to the next American revolution. In the last three years of his life, in response to the Vietnam war *and* youth despair in our dying cities, this is the kind of American revolution that MLK was also projecting in his call for a radical revolution of values. I believe that twenty-first century revolutions will be huge steps forward in the continuing evolution of the human race. But I also believe that, more often than not, these huge steps will be the accumulation and culmination of small steps, like planting community gardens and creating community peace zones. xliii We are all works in progress, always in the process of being and becoming. Periodically there come times like the present when the crisis is so profound and the contradictions so interconnected that if we are willing to see with our hearts and not only with our eyes, we can accelerate the continuing evolution of the human race towards becoming more socially responsible, more self-conscious, more self-critical human beings.

Our country is also a work in progress. This is our time to reject the old American Dream of a higher standard of living based upon empire, and embrace a new American Dream of a higher standard of humanity that preserves the best in our revolutionary legacy. We can become the leaders we are looking for.

Towards that end we need to keep combining practice with reflection and urgency with

patience. That is what I have learned after nearly seven decades of struggle for radical social change.

————— FOOTNOTES —————

i After Jimmy's death, friends and comrades founded the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership to continue our legacy of combining practice with reflection, and local groundedness with visionary strategizing. Some of Jimmy's most memorable speeches (Think Dialectically, Not Biologically; The Next Development in Education; Rebuilding Detroit: An Alternative to Casino Gambling) are posted on the Center's website at <http://www.boggscenter.org>

The naturalness and ease with which Jimmy thought dialectically never ceased to amaze me. It was rooted in his sense of himself as a black American, born and raised in the deep agricultural South, who then became a Chrysler worker for twenty-eight years, and was now wondering about the far-reaching cultural changes that the new informational technology was bringing.

Almost everyone who talked with him for only a few minutes realized that they had come into contact with an "organic intellectual," even if they had never heard of Gramsci. It was obvious that Jimmy's ideas came not out of books but out of continuing reflection on his own life and the lives of working people like himself.

Long before we met, he had decided that he was an American revolutionist who loved this country enough to change it. He was very conscious that the blood and sweat of his ancestors was in this country's soil and had already embarked on the struggle to ensure that his people would be among those deciding its economic and political future. That is why he was able to write paragraphs like the following that end chapter 6 on "Dialectics and Revolution" in RETC:

Technological man/woman developed because human beings had to discover how to keep warm, how to make fire, how to grow food, how to build dams, how to dig wells. Therefore human beings were compelled to manifest their humanity in their technological capacity, to discover the power within them to invent tools and technologies which would extend their material powers. We have concentrated our powers on making things to the point that we have intensified our greed for more things and lost the understanding of why this productivity was originally pursued. The result is that the mind of man/woman is now totally out of balance, totally out of proportion.

That is what production for the sake of production has done to modern man/woman. That is the basic contradiction confronting everyone who has lived and developed inside the United

States. That is the contradiction which neither the U.S. government nor any social force in the United States up to now has been willing to face, because the underlying philosophy of this country, from top to bottom, remains the philosophy that economic development can and will resolve all political and social problems.

ii The four of us, from very different backgrounds, had been members of the Johnson-Forest Tendency led by West Indian Marxist C.L.R. James and Russian-born Marxist Raya Dunayevskaya. One Alabama-born African American, one New England Yankee, one Jewish American and one Chinese American, we reflected the American experience.

To learn more about Lyman and Freddy and these conversations, see *Conversations in Maine: Exploring our Nation's Future*, South End Press, 1978; and my autobiography, *Living for Change*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. 146-157. Lyman died in 1978 and Freddy in 1999. Richard Feldman wrote the introduction to *Conversations in Maine*. Shea Howell has continued to host the conversations in Maine since Freddy's death. Both Rich and Shea reviewed this introduction and made helpful suggestions.

iii Decades before writing *Das Kapital* in the British Museum, a twenty-nine-year-old Karl Marx had anticipated this contradiction when he wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that as a result of the "constant revolutionizing of production... all that is sacred is profaned, all that is solid melts into air, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his conditions of life and his relations with his kind."

iv Harry Braverman, whose classic *Labor and Monopoly Capital* was also published in 1974, represented Monthly Review Press in these arrangements. Monthly Review had already published two books by Jimmy, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook*, in 1963 (brought to the attention of Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy by W.H. "Ping" Ferry); and *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook*, in 1970. In *The American Revolution*, Jimmy had challenged the validity of Marx's nineteenth-century analysis for a technologically-advanced society like the United States in the midtwentieth century, and had also warned that to make a revolution in our country, all Americans, including workers, blacks, and the most oppressed, would have to make political and ethical choices. Soon after its publication, *The American Revolution* was translated and published in five other languages (Japanese, French, Italian, Portuguese and Catalan). *Racism and the Class Struggle*, a compilation of Jimmy's speeches during the 1970s, has been widely read in Black Studies classes. At a twentieth anniversary celebration of *The American Revolution* in 1983, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis linked RETC to Jimmy's earlier books by performing a LOVER-LOVE/REVOL-EVOL skit.

v For example, before the 1967 rebellion, there were only a few black foremen in the auto industry and few, if any, black tellers in Detroit banks or black managers in supermarkets.

In 1965 we tried, unsuccessfully, to get a few blacks elected to the Detroit City Council by organizing a plunking (“four and no more”) campaign. In 1966 Detroit high school students went on strike to demand Black History classes and black principals. After the rebellion, the white power structure was so fearful of a recurrence that it rushed to promote blacks to highly visible positions.

vi Shea Howell used to joke that an elephant could be born in the time it took to complete one of our study groups. *Living for Change*, p. 163.

vii This decision was explained in the new introduction to the fifth printing of the *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*, published in April 1976.

viii Over the years it has been difficult for traditional radicals to develop a vision and praxis for an American revolution because any appreciation of the uniqueness of American history was shunned as “American exceptionalism.” As a result, historical agency was displaced onto subjects in other countries, especially in the Third World. Jimmy began thinking about his first book *The American Revolution* when he saw how radicals in the plant would fumble around for an answer when workers asked “What is socialism and why should the people struggle for it?” *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Workers Notebook*, Monthly Review Press, 1963, p. 43. See the little 1976 pamphlet *Towards a New Concept of Citizenship* by James Boggs.

ix GM worker Jim Hocker, who co-authored *But What About the Workers?* with Jimmy in 1974, stopped by regularly after work for conversations in our kitchen. In 1982 NOAR published these conversations as *These Are the Times that Try Our Souls: Conversations in Detroit*, with an introduction by Rich Feldman who worked at the Ford truck plant.

x These publications can be ordered from the James & Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership at <http://www.boggscenter.org>.

xi In 1980 Coleman Young,

joined with General Motors to announce that the city was demolishing an entire neighborhood, bulldozing 1,500 houses, 144 businesses, sixteen churches, two schools, and a hospital in Poletown so that GM could build a Cadillac plant, with Detroit assuming the costs of land clearance and preparation. The endangered community, an integrated neighborhood of Poles and blacks, carried on a heroic struggle to save their homes and their community, but the UAW supported Young and GM because they promised that the new plant would employ six thousand workers. Ralph Nader sent in a team of five members to work with the Poletown protesters for six months. But in vain. All the homes, businesses, churches, schools, and the hospital were leveled. After the demolition I could not bear to

drive around the site that was not far from our house. It was like a moonscape, so desolate that I could not tell east from west or north from south.

When the new Poletown plant finally opened in 1984, it was so automated that it only employed 2,500 workers, and it has never employed more than 4,000 – this despite the fact that the two older Cadillac plants that the Poletown plant replaced had employed 15,000 people as recently as 1979. *Living for Change*, p. 179.

xii James Boggs: “Rebuilding Detroit: an Alternative to Casino Gambling.”

<http://www.boggscenter.org>. xiii “The Emerald City” by Michele Owens, Oprah Magazine, April 2008.

xiv See “Down a green path: An alternative vision for a section of east Detroit takes shape” by Curt Guyette, Metro Times, October 31, 2001.

xv “On a roll: Avalon International Breads isn’t just about making dough” by Lisa M. Collins, Metro Times, October 4, 2002.

xvi “Detroiters point way for twenty-first century cities” by Grace Lee Boggs, Michigan Citizen, November 25- December 1, 2007. Eight years ago I began writing weekly columns in the Michigan Citizen. The hundreds of columns I have written are posted on the Boggs Center website at <http://www.boggscenter.org>.

xvii “... it is unfair, or at least deeply ironic, that black people in Detroit are being forced to undertake an experiment in utopian post-urbanism that appears to be uncomfortably similar to the sharecropping past their parents and grandparents sought to escape. There is no moral reason why they should do and be better than the rest of us – but there is a practical one. They have to. Detroit is where change is most urgent and therefore most viable. The rest of us will get there later, when necessity drives us too, and by that time Detroit may be the shining example we can look to, the post-industrial green city that was once the steel-gray capital of Fordist manufacturing.” Rebecca Solnit: “Detroit Arcadia: Exploring the post-American landscape.” Harper’s Magazine, July 2007.

xviii In June 1963, Dr. King, arm-in-arm with Detroit black power leaders and labor leader Walter Reuther, led a huge march down Woodward Avenue in Detroit. I was one of the organizers of the march. For the story of how and why it came about, see *Living for Change*, p. 124.

xix In the spring of 1964, together with Max Stanford of Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM); Baltimore Afro-American reporter William Worthy, and Patricia Robinson of Third World Press, Jimmy and I met with Malcolm in a Harlem luncheonette to discuss our

proposal that he come to Detroit to help build the Organization for Black Power. Malcolm's response was that we should go ahead while he served the movement as an "evangelist." However, after Malcolm discovered during his pilgrimage to Mecca that revolutionaries come in all races, he realized that he had to go back to square one to do the hard theoretical work necessary to develop a new body of ideas. As he told Jan Carew in a conversation in London:

I'm a Muslim and a revolutionary, and I'm learning more and more about political theories as the months go by. The only Marxist group in America that offered me a platform was the Socialist Workers Party. I respect them and they respect me. The Communists have nixed me, gone out of the way to attack me, that is, with the exception of the Cuban Communists. If a mixture of nationalism and Marxism makes the Cubans fight the way they do and make the Vietnamese stand up so resolutely to the might of America and its European and other lapdogs, then there must be something to it. But my Organization of African American Unity is based in Harlem and we've got to creep before we walk and walk before we run.... But the chances are that they will get me the way they got Lumumba before he reached the running stage.

— Jan Carew *Ghosts in our Blood: With Malcolm X in Africa, England, and the Caribbean*, p. 36. Lawrence Hill Books 1994.

This kind of introspection, questioning and transformation, which were so characteristic of Malcolm, has been mostly ignored by black nationalists and Black Power militants.

xx Vincent wrote the first draft of MLK's April 4, 1967 historic anti-Vietnam war speech, "Time to Break the Silence." Years later, the ideas in the 1984 pamphlet were expanded and published by him in *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*: Orbis, 1996; revised 2007.

xxi For example, *We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Freedom Movement*, ed. Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman, DaCapo Press, 1993, is a compilation of papers presented by an impressive group of scholars and activists at an October 1986 symposium convened in Washington, D.C. to reflect on King's life and work following the decision to make King's birthday an annual holiday.

xxii See my "Thoughts on the Black Radical Congress," *Michigan Citizen*, May 10-16, 1998. Bob Lucas, to whom my letter is addressed, led the 1966 march into Cicero, Illinois.

xxiii *The Phenomenology of Mind* by G.W.F. Hegel, translated with an Introduction and Notes by J. B. Baillie, p.81. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1931.

xxiv See <http://www.boggscenter.org> for these and other speeches by me.

xxv "A Time to Break Silence," reprinted in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* ed. James M. Washington, p. 231. Harper Collins, 1991.

xxvi *The Trumpet of Conscience*, reprinted in *A Testament of Hope*, *ibid.* p. 641.

xxvii King's concept of love recalls Che Guevara's: "Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love." Exploring King's concept can help us understand why Che's statement has been so puzzling to traditional radicals and why Che lives on in the hearts of young revolutionaries.

For example, in a thought-provoking article, "King, the Constitution and the Courts," theologians and lawyers Barbara A. Holmes and Susan Winfield Holmes challenge us to think more expansively about King's concept of love. King's, agape love is a foundational principle for social change.... For King, love is synonymous with ethics. It is a moral principle that provides context, norms, rules of engagement, and a vision of moral flourishing.... The strength of King's belief in the law, his abiding faith in love as praxis, and the force of his performative acts forged crosscultural alliances and inspired even the courts to interpret the laws in a manner that for a time changed the face of the nation,,,,

King's higher-law values also challenge the theory articulated by W.E.B. DuBois that double consciousness separated the public and private lives of black people.... One cannot claim to be operating with higher-law values unless a constant self-critique is part of the process.... King knew that love crucified, but not broken, was the only model that could redeem the dignity of those who sought freedom and those who conspired to deny it....

When we are confronted by the infrastructures of malignant social systems, love seems frail at best and irrelevant at worst. Yet, the lessons of history teach just the opposite. In defiance of our logic, love has sustained whole communities. With nothing more than love, besieged people confront radical evil, endure losses, bury their dead, and console each other during and after the bereavement.... King believed that the future is love....He also believed that peaceful demonstrations were, in fact, love speaking to the nation....Using love's untapped potential, he awakened a nation to its shortcomings and African Americans to the fullness of their humanity.

The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Boundaries of Law, Politics, and Religion. Edited by Lewis V. Baldwin. Rufus Burrow, Jr., Barbara A. Holmes, and Susan Holmes Winfield, contributors. University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

Jimmy Boggs talked about loving America enough to change it. "I love this country," he used to say, "not only because my ancestors' blood is in the soil but because of what I believe it

can become.” “ Jimmy taught me,” Shea Howell recalls, that revolutions are made out of love for people and for place. Love isn’t just something you feel. It’s something you do every day when you go out and pick up the papers and bottles scattered the night before on the corner, when you stop and talk to a neighbor, when you argue passionately for what you believe with whomever will listen, when you call a friend to see how they’re doing, when you write a letter to the newspaper, when you give a speech and give ‘em hell, when you never stop believing that we can all be more than we are. And he taught me that love isn’t about what we did yesterday; it’s about what we do today and tomorrow and tomorrow.

In *All about Love*, bell hooks refers readers to self-help psychiatrist M. Scott Peck who defines love as ‘the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.’ New Visions, 2000. See Mitchel Cohen: “Revolution Guided by Feelings of Great Love, Learning from Che Guevara,” CounterPunch, January 3 / 4; also Michael Hardt on Love, <http://www.boggsblog.org>.

xxviii See “Seeing Detroit with your heart” by Grace Lee Boggs, Michigan Citizen, June 15-21. 2008.

xxix *The Trumpet of Conscience*, p. 645, see note xxv.

xxx The historian I have found to be most insightful about the rethinking of radical strategies mandated by the movements of the 1960s is Immanuel Wallerstein, author of *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. Academic Press, 1974.

The movements of the 1960s culminated in what Wallerstein calls “the world revolution of 1968. ” Since that world revolution, he says, six premises that were accepted as axiomatic by revolutionaries since the French revolution have become questionable. The two-step strategy (first take state power, then transform society) is no longer self-evidently correct. We can no longer assume that political activity is most effective if channeled through one party. The labor-capital conflict is not the only fundamental conflict in capitalism; there is also gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Democracy is not a bourgeois concept but a profoundly revolutionary, anti-capitalist idea. An increase in productivity is not an essential goal of socialism. We need to consider its ecological and human consequences, including consumerism and the commodification of everything. We also need to reassess our faith in science in favor of a ‘willingness to think in terms of a more complex relationship between determinism and free will, order and chaos.’ *After Liberalism*, The New Press, 1995, chapter 11.

Next, in his little 1998 book, *Utopistics: The Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century*, Wallerstein explains how 1968 dethroned both the Leninists and the Social Democrats, the

two anti-systemic movements that had emerged from and prevailed since the French Revolution. After 1968, people the world over, including Africa and Asia, no longer believed in the ability of state structures to improve the commonweal. This “resulted in a kind of widespread and amorphous antistatism of a kind totally unknown in the long period between 1789 and 1968. It was debilitating and aroused fear as well as uncertainty.” The New Press. 1998, p. 29-32.

The next year, in *The End of the World As We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-First Century*, Wallerstein assured us that uncertainty rather than certainty about the future provides the basis for hope. University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Also see Ilya Prigogine: *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos and the New Laws of Nature*. The Free Press, 1996.

In 2001, I had an interesting discussion with Wallerstein at Binghamton University. When I turned ninety in 2005, he emailed me that he was coming to Detroit for my hundredth birthday.

xxxi Starhawk: “The Burning Times: Notes on a Critical Period in History,” *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*. Beacon 1982. Eco-Feminism by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, Zed 1993. *The Subsistence Alternative* by Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, Zed 2000, includes a section on Detroit Summer. *Working Inside Out* by Margo Adair, who was a member of the Bay Area NOAR local, provides both historical background and practical advice for bringing our hearts and minds together. Sourcebooks 2003.

See also *The Re-Invention of Work, A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time* by Matthew Fox, Harper San Francisco, 1994. Fox has also written “95 Theses” that begin with the statements that “God is both Mother and Father,” and, “At this time in history, God is more Mother than Father because the feminine is most missing and it is important to bring gender balance back.” *YES! Magazine*, Winter 2006.

xxxii I caught a glimpse of this new kind of organizing at the Allied Media Conference (AMC08), which met in Detroit over the weekend of June 20-22, 2008. The theme was “Evolution Beyond Survival.” For three days, seven hundred activists from all over the U.S. and Canada, representing twenty-two youth organizations as well as intergenerational ones, consisting mostly of women and people of color, shared experiences and strategies and laughed, danced and sang together. The evolutionary/revolutionary energy of this gathering, I recognized, came primarily from the way that most of these young people are actively engaged in rebuilding local communities, nurturing each other, patiently transforming themselves and their communities from the ground up. Unlike our gatherings in the 1960s, they are led mostly by women and are not primarily adversarial or focused on power. One of the most moving AMC08 presentations was by the SistaiiSista collective of “working-class young and adult Black and Latina women building together to model a society based on

liberation and love." See <http://www.sistaiisista.org>. See also my column on "Another Amazing Allied Media Conference," *Michigan Citizen*, June 29-July 5, 2008, and my closing remarks at the conference. <http://www.boggscenter.org>.

xxxiii In *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw it Coming*, Viking 2007, environmentalist Paul Hawken estimates that there may be more than a million of these self-healing civic groups in every country around the world, most of them small and barely visible but together creating the largest movement the world has ever known. This movement has no central leadership and is not bound together by any "ism." Its very diverse and widely scattered individuals and groups are connected mainly by the Internet and other information technologies. But they are joined at the heart by their commitment to social justice, to caring for each other and for the earth, and to creating new forms of more democratic governance; and by their indomitable faith in our ability to create the world anew.

In two widely-read books on globalization (*Empire and Multitude*), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri emphasize the historical uniqueness of these groups. These "singularities" do not fuse into some unity like "the people" or "the workers of the world." They are not connected in centralized organizations like the Second or Third Internationals, as in the Marxist-Leninist era. Instead they connect through networks. What they have in common is that they are each imagining and creating new social identities and new political subjects that will take the place of the cogs and consumers to which global capitalism is seeking to reduce us. Therefore they have "the potential to create a new, alternative society." p. 159, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin 2005.

Organizational consultant Margaret Wheatley explains the impact of these small groups in the light of modern science:

In a web the potential impact of local actions bears no relationship to their size. When we choose to act locally, we may be wanting to influence the entire system. But we work where we are, with the system that we know, the one we can get our arms around. From a Newtonian perspective, our efforts often seem too small, and we doubt that our actions will contribute incrementally to large-scale change. Step by step, system by system we aspire to develop enough mass or force to alter the larger system.

But a quantum view explains the success of small efforts quite differently. Acting locally allows us to be inside the movement and flow of the system, participating in all those complex events occurring simultaneously. We are more likely to be sensitive to the dynamics of this system, and thus more effective. However, changes in small places also affect the global system, not through incrementalism, but because every small system participates in an unbroken wholeness. Activities in one part of the whole create effects that

appear in distant places. Because of these unseen connections, there is potential value in working anywhere in the system. We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness. I have learned that in this exquisitely connected world, it's never a question of 'critical mass.' It's always about critical connections.

Leadership and the New Science, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999, pp. 44-5.

xxxiv See Rebecca Solnit: "Revolution of the Snails: Encounters with the Zapatistas," *Z Magazine*, January 16, 2008. This kind of transformational revolution obviously requires enormous patience. In *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, Vijay Prashad tells the story of how Tanzania President Julius Nyerere began with a policy of "transformation" but resorted to "commandism" and bureaucracy because, like other

Third World leaders, he was under pressure to develop the economy and in "too much of a hurry." *The Free Press*, 2007, p.196.

xxxv The Beloved Communities Initiative was inspired by a panel discussion on the significance of the last three years of MLK's life during a Spirituality and Activists Retreat at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in October 2004. Besides myself, the panelists were John Maguire, a friend of MLK's since they roomed together as students in the 1950s, and my old friend Vincent Harding. Vincent and John both helped craft MLK's historic April 4, 1967 speech. See *Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws that changed America* by Nick Kotz, Houghton Mifflin Company 2005. p. 373. Also "These are the times to grow our souls/ Call to the Beloved Community," <http://www.belovedcommunitiesnet.org>.

xxxvi *From Racism to Counter-Revolution*, NOAR statement, January 1981.

xxxvii The collapse of the Soviet Union also provided an opportunity for fresh thinking about the Soviet dictatorship. Instead of viewing this dictatorship as the result of communist ideology or of the personalities of Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin, it can be viewed dialectically as the contradiction that emerges when revolutionaries seize state power without having previously transformed the people. This means that instead of making a priority of the assault on power structures, as Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin had done, revolutionaries need to shift our focus to constructing power from below by empowering the people and creating dual power structures.

Michael Hardt has written a fascinating little book (*Michael Hardt presents Thomas Jefferson the Declaration of Independence*, Verso 2007), in which he establishes a link between Lenin, the much vilified Bolshevik, and Thomas Jefferson, the icon of American

democracy. Both saw selfrule (Lenin's "every cook can govern") as the goal of revolution and human evolution. Both were convinced that the means towards that goal was practice in self-rule. Both believed that "humanity can and must be transformed" through practice in self-rule after the event of rebellion, which lasts only a few days, and the historical process of transformation, requiring many decades and generations. (Lenin's Workers and Peasants Inspection, Jefferson's "wards" or "little republics "). That's why Lenin opposed anarchism and Jefferson was so interested in education.

xxxviii One of the reasons Lenin gave for the Bolsheviks seizing power in the fall of 1917 was the need to forestall another counterrevolutionary attempt by General Kornilov to overthrow the Menshevik government because it was wavering in the war against Germany.

xxxix Published in the Michigan Citizen, March 23-28, 2008. The speech has also been broadcast on the KPFA program, Against the Grain.

xl It was in the Great Hall of Cooper Union that Abraham Lincoln concluded his February 1860 speech with these words that anticipate MLK: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

xli As I write this introduction, it is the Fourth of July weekend, and I have written the following for my next column in the *Michigan Citizen*:

...decades from now, if the human race survives, this year's Fourth of July may be remembered as the one when holiday celebrations went beyond beer and barbecuing to include stories of the steps that we and others are taking and can take to change the way we are living to stop global warming; the year we realized that we are the masters of our fate and the captains of our souls. Instead of viewing ourselves as subjects who can't stop driving SUVs, we began viewing ourselves as citizens with the right and responsibility to care for our planet and our posterity.

Decades from now, as our grandchildren and great grandchildren gather in backyards with friends, families and neighbors to celebrate their Fourth of July, I can imagine them toasting each other as Sons and Daughters of the Second American Revolution. Once upon a time, they'll be boasting, it was our grandparents and great-grandparents who began biking or taking the bus to work. It was our grandparents and great-grandparents who urged others to do the same instead of just griping. It was our grandparents and great-grandparents who brought about a historic decline in the number of floods, hurricanes, droughts and wildfires by changing their own gas-guzzling way of life. It was our grandparents and great-grandparents who organized the demonstrations which persuaded city governments to create one or two carfree days every month and provide completely free public transportation to discourage people from driving cars.

I have little patience with the prophets of Doom and Gloom. I know as well as they do that our whole climate is changing, that water shortages, crop failures, increasing damages from extreme weather events, etc. threaten a breakdown in infrastructures and democratic processes.

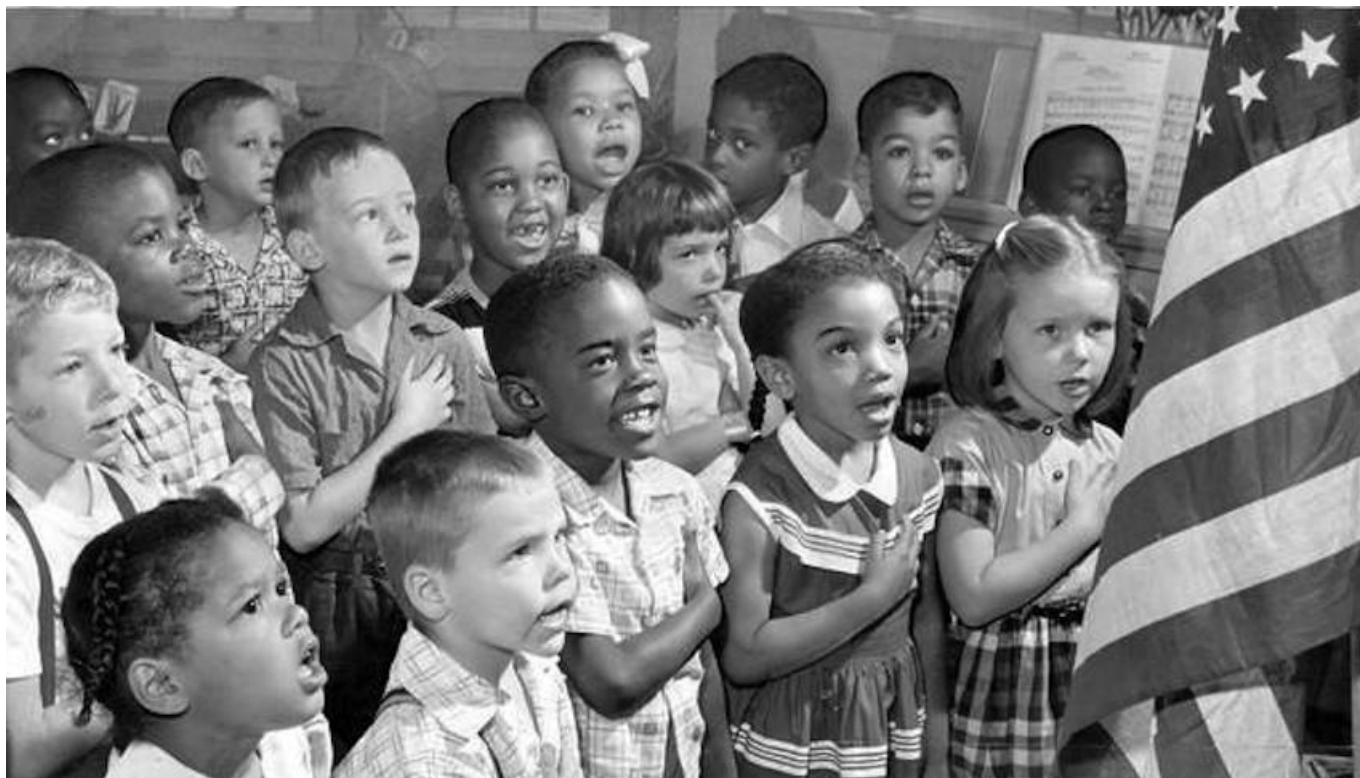
But doomsayers breed and deepen despair. They apparently believe that the only way to avoid total collapse is by changing the whole system with one stroke – as if human beings were like a school of fish who all change direction at the same time or as if changing the whole system was as simple as rubbing out some misspelled words on a blackboard.

— “Independence day, 2008,” Michigan Citizen, July 13-19, 2008. xlii
<http://www.detroit-city-of-hope.org>.

xliii See “Revolution as a New Beginning,” interview with Grace Lee Boggs, *Upping the Anti*,” no. 1 & 2, Project of the Autonomy & Solidarity Network, at http://auto_sol.tao.ca.

Grace Lee Boggs – Education: The Great Obsession

This essay was originally published in the September 1970 issue of [Monthly Review](#).



Education today is a great obsession. It is also a great necessity. We, all of us, black and white, yellow and brown, young and old, men and women, workers and intellectuals, have a great deal to learn about ourselves and about the rapidly changing world in which we live. We, all of us, are far from having either the wisdom or the skills that are now more than ever required to govern ourselves and to administer things.

In the present struggle for a new system of education to fulfill this pressing need, the black community constitutes the decisive social force because it is the black community that the present educational system has most decisively failed.

Shortly after the 1969 school term opened, James Allen, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, proclaimed a crash program for the 1970s that showed that he was not equipped to get this country out of its mounting educational crisis. Ten years from now, Allen solemnly promised (or threatened), no child will leave school without being able to read well enough to meet the demands of job and society. The United States has had free public education for over a century. For nearly half a century practically every youngster has been required by federal law to attend school until the age of sixteen. Enough teachers and school facilities exist to support this compulsion. Yet the only goal the U.S. Commissioner of Education has been able to set is the kind already surpassed by literacy drives in new nations where, prior to independence, the great majority of the people never even had schools to go to. For the world and country in which we live, Allen would have been more

relevant if he had promised that by the end of the 1970s every school child would be fluent in a second language like Chinese, Russian, or Spanish.

Like other administration programs, Allen's is, of course, a pacification program, aimed at cooling the complaints of personnel managers who are obsessed by the apparent inability of job applicants to fill out employment forms; high school and college instructors who tear out their hair over student errors in spelling and punctuation; and the great majority of Americans, including many vocal black parents, who are still naive enough to believe that if black children could only read they could get better jobs and stop roaming the streets.

Allen's ten-year program will not bring tangible benefits to these complainants. The people who stand to gain most from it are the professional educators who are already lining up for the million-dollar grants that will enable reading experts and testers to test black children, find them wanting, and therefore justify more million-dollar grants to these reading experts to repeat the same remedial reading and compensatory programs that have consistently proved useless.

Since these professional educators are the chief beneficiaries, they are naturally the chief propagators of certain myths about education, which are unfortunately shared by most Americans. Chief among these are the myths (1) that the fundamental purpose of education in an age of abundance is to increase *earning* power; (2) that the achievement level of children can be defined and measured by their response to words on a printed page; (3) that schools are the best and only place for people to get an education, and therefore that the more young people are compelled to attend school and the more extended the period that they are compelled to attend, the more educated they will become.

The rebellions in secondary schools and colleges during the past few years are a sign that young people, black and white, have already begun to reject these myths. Seventy-five percent of secondary schools have already experienced these rebellions to one degree or another. During the next ten years the struggle to destroy these myths root and branch will continue to escalate. In the black community the struggle will probably take place under the general umbrella of the struggle for community control of schools. In the white community it will probably be around issues of student rights to freedom of dress, speech, assembly, and press. But whatever the focus, any educators, black or white, professional or paraprofessional, who continue to try to run the schools by these myths, will find themselves increasingly resorting to force and violence and/or drugs like Ritalin to keep youth quiet in school and/or to keep so-called troublemakers and trouble out.

How It Developed

The above myths represent the attempt of the public school system to adjust to the changing needs of the American capitalist system over the past fifty years. Because the present school system is so huge and so resistant to change, we tend to think that it has existed forever. Actually it is only about two generations old. In nineteenth-century America (and in Western Europe until the end of the Second World War), the school system was organized to prepare the children of the well-born and well-to-do to govern over the less well-born and not so well-to-do. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, only 6 percent of U.S. youth graduated from high school.

Early in the twentieth century the mass public school system was developed to assimilate an essentially immigrant working population into the economic, social, and political structure of the American Way of Life. According to this Way, known as American Democracy, those closest to the Founding Fathers in background and culture rule over those who have the furthest to go in achieving this ultimate goal and who meanwhile need to be inculcated with a Founding-Father complex.

To accomplish this objective the schools were organized:

1. To give the children of workers elementary skills in the three Rs that would enable them to function as workers in an industrial society.
2. To give these children proper reverence for the four As: American History, American Technology, the American Free Enterprise System, and American Democracy.
3. To provide a smoothly functioning sifting-mechanism whereby, as Colin Green has phrased it, the “winners” could automatically be sorted from the “losers”;¹ that is to say, whereby those individuals equipped by family background and personality to finish high school and go on to college could be selected out from among the great majority on their way to the labor market after a few years of elementary school, or at most a year or so of high school.

This automatic separator worked quite well during the first half of this century. It was acceptable to the European immigrants whose children constituted the core of the urban school population and who, in appreciation for the opportunity to come to the Land of Opportunism, felt the responsibility was *theirs* to become integrated or assimilated into the American Way of Life.

Proceeding from this premise, working-class children from Eastern and Southern European stock (the “losers”) dropped out of school quietly around the age of fourteen or fifteen, while the exceptions or “winners,” usually those from WASP or Northern European stock,

finished high school in preparation for college, which would qualify them to become doctors or lawyers or engineers or teachers. The high-school curriculum and staff were set up on the basis of this implicit stratification. With such elite, highly motivated students, high school teachers had only to know a subject well enough and drill it deep enough into the heads of students so that they would feed it back on college entrance exams.

Thus in 1911 only 11 percent of the high-school-age population was in school; in 1920 only 20 percent. Not until 1930 did the number reach the relatively mass proportion of 51 percent.²

During the 1930s, with the shrinking of the unskilled and child labor market, some kinks began to develop in this automatic sorting mechanism. But these were ironed out temporarily when the high schools expanded their skills curriculum to meet the needs of an increasingly technical society, including such subjects as typing and shop, and simultaneously putting greater emphasis on basketball and football in which the children of workers could excel and develop enough sense of belonging not to upset the applecart.

By 1940, 73 percent of high-school-age youngsters, hopeful of gaining higher skills and thus escaping the back-breaking, insecure jobs of their blue-collar parents, were attending high school. Those who dropped out before graduation—which for the last thirty years has averaged approximately one-half of all those entering ninth grade and at least two-thirds of black youth—could, if they were white, still find such useful jobs as delivery or stock boys, or helpers of various kinds in the many small businesses that still existed, thus adding to the family income. Or they could just make themselves useful around the house doing the chores not yet outmoded by labor-saving devices. During the war years, with a maximum of twelve million Americans in the armed services, there were jobs aplenty for their younger brothers and sisters.

It was not until after the Second World War, and particularly in the 1950s and '60s, that the American school system began to find itself in deep trouble. The Andy Hardy world of the 1930s was disappearing. Mechanization of agriculture and wartime work had brought millions of families to the cities from the farms and from the South—including blacks and Appalachian whites who had heretofore been getting their education catch-as-catch-can. With the automation of industry following the Second World War and the Korean War, the swallowing up of small family businesses by big firms, and the widespread use of labor-saving appliances in the average home, the labor of the dropout teenager became surplus and the adolescent became highly visible.

What now should be done with these “losers”? The obvious solution was to keep them in school. Thus, instead of the high schools acting as automatic sifters to sort out the “losers,” they were turned into mass custodial institutions to keep everyone in the classroom and off

the streets. If at the same time some could also be trained for white-collar jobs, that was a fringe benefit. For the great majority in the high schools, skills training played the same supplementary role that it plays in a juvenile detention home.

By 1960, 90 percent of high-school-age youngsters were attending school. From a relatively elite institution for the college-bound, the high school has been transformed within forty years into a mass detention home. The ideal teacher is no longer the college-entrance-exam-oriented pedagogue but the counselor type who can persuade the average youngster to adjust to this detention or the tough authoritarian who can force it down his or her throat. Since “winners” and “losers” are expected to stay in school until graduation, the high school diploma is no longer a sign of academic achievement but of the youngster’s seat-warming endurance over a twelve-year period. The success of the public school system itself is now measured in terms of its efficiency in persuading or compelling youth to extend their schooling indefinitely; if possible, not only through high school but on to junior college, with each higher institution acting as a remedial program for the lower.

Meanwhile, to sell the public on the new custodial role of the schools, the myths of education as the magic weapon to open all doors, particularly the door to higher earnings and unlimited consumption, and of the schools as the only place to get an education, have been propagated. Extended schooling has been made into an American obsession. As a number of observers have noted, faith in education has replaced faith in the church as the salvation of the masses. In the practice of this faith, education has become the nation’s second largest industry, expending upwards of \$50 billion a year. The professional educator has become the new religion’s practicing clergy, constituting the country’s largest occupational grouping. At the same time, in order to distract and placate the detainees and to create an outlet for the goods pouring off American assembly lines, the youth market has been created.

The Internal Contradiction Exposed

The internal contradiction between the traditional separator and the new mass custodial roles assigned to the schools was bound to lead to conflict and disintegration: and this, in fact, is what has been taking place over the past twenty years. The black revolt has only brought out into the open and given focus to the mushrooming tensions between elite and average students, and between students and teachers, which first manifested themselves on a city-wide scale in the New York City strike of predominantly white high school students in 1950. No one knows these tensions better than the school teachers and administrators, white and black. But because they have a vested interest in the system, they have for the most part been willing to settle for higher (i.e., combat) pay and better working conditions, such as smaller classes and more preparation time. Teacher organizations to achieve these

demands have to some extent met the economic or class needs of teachers as workers. But the more teachers have gained as workers the less they have felt inclined to expose the bankruptcy of the educational system and to make fundamental proposals for its reorganization. They have made the fatal mistake of confusing their role as a special kind of worker engaged in the process of developing human beings with the role of production workers engaged in the process of producing inanimate goods.

It has thus been left to the black community to expose the fundamental contradictions within the system.

The Black Revolt

Prior to the Second World War black youth had been concentrated in the South, not only separate and unequal but practically invisible, as well. With the war a whole generation came North to work in the plants. With rising expectations whetted by relatively stable employment, service in the armed forces, and the postwar nationalist movements in other parts of the world, black parents began to send their children to school in such numbers that black youth now constitute the major part of the school population in most of the big cities from which whites have fled. But the more black kids finished high school the more they discovered that extended education was not the magic key to upward mobility and higher earnings that it had been played up to be. On the job market they soon discovered that the same piece of paper that qualified white high-school graduates for white-collar jobs only qualified blacks to be tested (and found wanting) for these same jobs. Their teachers, parents, and preachers tried to placate them by explaining how even more education was now needed to qualify for the increasingly skilled jobs demanded by automation. But all around them black youth could see that the jobs that they were told required two or more years of college when occupied by blacks were actually being done by white high-school dropouts.

Accepting at face value the myths about education, black parents began to turn their attention to the schools, only to discover that instead of being places of learning, the schools had become baby-sitting institutions in which their children had been socially promoted year after year, regardless of achievement levels as determined by the schools' own tests.

When school administrators and teachers were challenged to explain this situation, they tried to explain away their own failure by shifting the blame to black children. Hence the theories of the "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" child, which have been masquerading as sociological theory since the 1950s. In effect, these educators were saying: "There is nothing wrong with the system; only the wrong children have shown up." Through these alibis the professionals not only hoped to divert the attack back to the black

community; they also hoped to hustle more money for themselves in the form of compensatory, remedial, more effective school programs.

But the defense has boomeranged. Forced to defend themselves and their children against the thinly disguised racism of the theory of “cultural deprivation,” black parents and the black community have counterattacked. They have exposed the racism of school personnel and school curriculum, the unceasing destruction by the schools of the self-concept of black children so necessary to learning, and the illegitimacy of a system administered by whites when the majority of students are now black. From early demands for integration, the movement jumped quickly to demands for black history, black teachers, black principals, and then, in 1966, with the rising tide of Black Power, to demands for control of schools by the black community, beginning with the struggle over Harlem I.S. 201 in December of that year.

Struggle for Control

During the next five to fifteen years the black community is going to be engaged in a continuing struggle for control of its schools. Sometimes the struggle will be in the headlines and on the picket lines, as in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in 1968. Sometimes it will be less dramatic. But the black community is now unalterably convinced that white control of black schools is destroying black children and can no longer be tolerated.

During the next five to fifteen years the black community will also be redefining education for *this* day, *this* age, and *this* country. The overwhelming majority of black students who are not succeeding in the present school system (estimated by New York teachers union President Albert Shanker at 85 percent) have in fact rejected a used, outmoded, useless school system.

Over the past ten years literally billions of dollars have been injected into the schools all over the country—even more than has gone into the moon race—in an attempt to make the system work. In New York City alone the school budget was raised 200 percent until it is now more than one billion dollars a year, or one-third of the entire city budget. The New York teacher-pupil ratio was lowered to an average of 1:17; \$70 million of Title I money was poured into the organization of two thousand innovative projects; experts from the twelve colleges in the area were endlessly consulted; money was spent like water; book publishers, project directors, educational consultants were enriched; teachers drew bigger salaries to compensate them for the nightmare of the school day. But the achievement level of black children has continued to fall.

The black community cannot afford to be wasting time fighting for reforms that have

already proved worthless. Every week, every month, every year that we waste means that more black children are being wasted. We must reject the racist myth that by keeping kids in school an extra day, an extra week, an extra month, we are giving them a chance to learn a little something or helping to keep them out of mischief. Not only are they not learning in the schools, but the schools in the black community today are little more than mass penal institutions, breeding the same kind of vice and crime that mass penal institutions breed, making the average child an easy prey for the most hardened elements. Day after day, year after year, the will and incentive to learn, which are essential to the continued progress and future development of any people, are being systematically destroyed in millions of black youth, perhaps the most vigorous and resourceful of those between the ages of ten and twenty.

Redefining Education

The key to the new system of education that is the objective of the black movement for community control of schools is contained in the position paper of the Five-State Organizing Committee that was formed at a conference at Harvard University in January 1968. At this conference the black educators and community representatives agreed that *“the function of education must be redefined to make it responsive and accountable to the community.”*

The schools today are in the black community but not of it. They are not responsive or accountable to it. If anything they are an enemy force, a Trojan Horse, within it. The teaching and administrative staff come from outside the community, bringing with them the missionary attitude that they are bearing culture to backward natives—when in fact, like missionaries, they are living off the natives. The subject matter of the schools, beginning with the information about the policeman and the fireman given to first and second graders, is alien to the lives of the children. And, *most important*, students succeed only to the degree that they set their sights toward upgrading themselves as *individuals out of the community*, so that the schools are in fact an organized instrument for a brain drain out of the community.

American education, like American society, is based upon the philosophy of *individualism*. According to this philosophy, the ambitious individual of average or above-average ability from the lower and middle classes is constantly encouraged to climb up the social ladder out of his social class and community. To achieve this goal, like the black Englishman in colonial Africa, he must conduct himself in ways that meet the approval and social standards of those in power, that is to say, as much *unlike* those in his community and as much *like* those in the Establishment as possible. If he does this consistently to the satisfaction of those in power, who are always observing and grading his behavior, he is rewarded by promotion and advancement into the higher echelons of the system. This is what is known as “making

it on your own." The more opportunistic you are, the better your chance of "making it."

In the school system this means relating to the teacher and not to your classmates. It means accepting what is taught you as the "objective" or "gospel" or "immaculately conceived" truth which stares at you out of the pages of the textbook. (The textbook itself, of course, is by its very weight and format, organized to convey the impression of permanence and the indubitability of Holy Scripture.) You then feed these truths back to the teacher ("the correct answer"), evading controversial questions that require thinking for yourself or taking a position. If you are willing to do this year after year, giving the "correct answers" on exam after exam, for as long as is necessary to satisfy the "guild" standards of the Establishment, you have it "made." You have proved yourself a sheep as distinguished from the goats. Your parents are proud of you. You can buy a big car to show off before the neighbors, and you become eligible to share in the benefits of high-level corruption in its various forms.

The overwhelming majority of black youth see no relationship between this type of education and their daily lives in the community or the problems of today's world that affect them so intimately. They see automation and cybernation wiping out the jobs for which they are supposedly being prepared—while such jobs as are still available to them are the leftovers that whites won't take (including fighting on the front lines in a war). The book-learning so honored by their teachers and parents seems dull and static compared to what they see on television and experience on the streets. In their own short lives they have seen what passes as truth in books being transformed into lies or obsolescence by living history, and what passes as objectivity exposed as racist propaganda. Through television they have discovered that behind the words (which in books looked as if they had been immaculately conceived) are human beings, usually white, usually well-off, and usually pompous intellectuals. The result is that as the teacher stands up front bestowing textbook culture on them, they are usually carrying on a silent argument with the teacher—or else turning off their minds altogether.

Not having the drive to succeed in the world at all costs, which is characteristic of the ambitious opportunist, and much more sensitive to what is going on around them, they reject the perspective of interminable schooling without practice or application, which is now built into the educational system. Besieged on all sides by commercials urging them to consume without limit and conscious at the same time of the limitless productivity of American technology, they have abandoned the Protestant ethic of work and thrift. So they roam the streets, aimlessly and restlessly, everyone a potential victim of organized crime and a potential hustler against their own community.

Only One Side Is Right

There are two sides to every question but only one side is right, and in this case the students who have rejected the present system are the ones who are right, even if, understandably, they are unable as yet to propose concrete alternatives.

1. *The individualist, opportunist orientation of American education* has been ruinous to the American community, most obviously, of course, to the black community. In the classroom over the years it isolates children from one another, stifling their natural curiosity about one another as well as their potential for working together. (This process is what the education courses call “socialization.”) In the end it not only upgrades out of the community those individuals who might be its natural leaders, fragmenting and weakening precisely those communities that are in the greatest need of strengthening. It also creates the “used” community, which is to be successively inherited by those poorer or darker in color, and which is therefore doomed from the outset to increasing deterioration.
2. *Truth* is not something you get from books or jot down when the teacher holds forth. It has always been and is today more than ever something that is constantly being created through conflict in the social arena and continuing research and experimentation in the scientific arena.
3. *Learning*, especially in this age of rapid social and technical change, is not something you can make people do in their heads with the perspective that years from now, eventually, they will be able to use what they have stored up. By the time you are supposed to use it, it has really become “used.” The natural relationship between theory and practice has been turned upside down in the schools, in order to keep kids off the labor market. The natural way to learn is to be interested *first* and *then* to develop the skill to pursue your interest. As John Holt has written in *How Children Learn*, “The sensible way, the best way, is to start with something worth doing, and then, moved by a strong desire to do it, get whatever skills are needed.” A human being, young or old, is not a warehouse of information or skills, and an educational system that treats children like warehouses is not only depriving them of education but also crippling their natural capacity to learn. Particularly in a world of rapidly changing information and skills, learning how to learn is more important than learning specific skills and facts. A human being cannot develop only as a consumer. Depriving children of the opportunity to carry on productive activity is also depriving them of the opportunity to develop the instinct for workmanship, which has made it possible for humanity to advance through the ages. The experience of performance is necessary to learning. Only through doing things and evaluating what they have done can human beings learn the intrinsic relation between cause and effect, thereby developing the capacity to reason. If they are prevented from learning the intrinsic consequences of their own choices of ends and means and made

totally dependent on such extrinsic effects as rewards and punishments, they are being robbed of their right to develop into reasoning human beings.

4. Finally, you cannot deprive young people of the rights of social responsibility, and social consciousness, and the ability to judge social issues during the many years they are supposed to attend school and then expect them suddenly to be able to exercise these essential rights when they become adult.

Our children are not learning because the present system is depriving them of such natural stimuli to learning as exercising their resourcefulness to solve the real problems of their own communities; working together, rather than competitively, with younger children emulating older ones and older children teaching younger ones; experiencing the intrinsic consequences of their own actions; judging issues. It is because the present system *wastes* these natural human incentives to learning that its demands on the taxpayer are constantly escalating. It is because those who have succeeded under the present system have ended up as such dehumanized beings—technicians and mandarins who are ready to provide so-called objective skills and information to those in power—that students are in revolt on secondary and college campuses.

Toward a New System

We should now be in a better position to make more concrete the meaning of the proposal to “redefine the function of education in order to make it responsive and accountable to the community.”

Instead of schools serving to drain selected opportunists out of the community, they must be functionally reorganized to become centers of the community. This involves much, much more than the use of school facilities for community needs—although this should certainly be expanded. In order for the schools to become the center of the community, *the community itself with its needs and problems must become the curriculum of the schools.*³

More specifically, the educational program or curriculum should *not* consist of subjects like English or algebra or geography. Instead the school must be structured into groups of youngsters meeting in workshops and working as teams. These teams are then encouraged to (1) *identify* the needs or problems of the community; (2) to *choose* a certain need or problem as a focus of activity; (3) to *plan a program* for its solution; and (4) to *carry out the steps* involved in the plan.

In the course of carrying out such a curriculum, students naturally and normally, as a part of the actual process, acquire a number of skills. For example, they must be able to do *research* (observe, report, pinpoint—all related to the social and physical geography of the

community); set *goals* or objectives; *plot steps* toward the achievement of these goals; *carry out* these steps; *evaluate* or measure their progress toward their goals.

Through such a curriculum, research becomes a means of building the community rather than what it is at present, a means by which the Establishment prepares counterinsurgency or pacification programs against the community. Through the solution of real community problems, students discover the importance not only of *skills* and *information* but also of the *ideas* and *principles* that must guide them in setting and pursuing goals. In the *struggle* to transform their physical and social environment, they discover that their enemies are not only external but internal, within the community and within their own selves. Thus the weaknesses or needs of the community become assets in the learning process rather than the handicap or drawback that they are presently conceived to be.

With the community and, at times, the entire city as a learning laboratory, students are no longer confined to the classroom. The classroom is an adjunct to the community rather than the reverse. Students have an opportunity to exercise responsibility by identifying problems and by proposing and testing solutions, with the teachers acting as advisers, consultants, and instructors in specific skills. Students from various teenage groups can work in teams on the various projects, with each contributing according to his or her abilities at the various stages, younger students learning from older ones, and those with the capacity for leadership having an opportunity to exercise it.

One of the most important community needs, and one that naturally suggests learning activities, is the need for community information that can be met by student-produced newspapers, magazines, TV news and documentary programs, films, etc.

Education to Govern

No one should confuse this curriculum with a curriculum for vocational education—either in the old sense of preparing young blacks for menial tasks or in the up-to-date form in which Michigan Bell Telephone Company and Chrysler adopt high schools in the black community in order to channel black youth into low-level jobs. The only possible resemblance between these proposals and vocational education is the insistence on the opportunity for productive life-experiences as essential to the learning process. Otherwise what is proposed is the very opposite of vocational education. It is indeed education or preparation for the tasks of governing.

Concrete programs that prepare black youth to govern are the logical next step for rebellious black youth who, having reached the stage of Black Power in the sense of Black Pride, Black Consciousness, and total rejection of the present social system, are not sure

where to go. Young people whose *self-concept* has undergone a fundamental change must be given concrete opportunities to change their *actual* conditions of life. Otherwise, they can only exhaust and demoralize themselves in isolated acts of adventurism or in symbolic acts of defiance or escapism.

The fundamental principles underlying such programs are crucial to elementary as well as secondary school education. These principles are:

1. The more human beings experience in life and work, i.e., the more they have the opportunity to experience the intrinsic consequences of their own activity, the more able they are to learn and the more anxious they are to learn. Conversely, the more human beings, and particularly young people, are deprived of the opportunity to live and work and experience the consequences of their own activities, the more difficult it is for them to learn and the more they are turned off from learning.
2. The most important factor in learning is interest and motivation; and conversely the more you cut off motivation and interest, the harder it is to learn.

This principle is especially relevant to the question of reading. If you try to force children to read, you can turn them off from reading in the same way that generations of children have been turned off from music by compulsory music lessons. Actually reading is much less difficult than speaking, which kids learn pretty much on their own. Once the relation between letters and sounds is learned—a matter of only a few weeks the reading development of children depends almost entirely upon interest and self-motivation. Thus, almost every good reader is actually self-taught.

When young children are regimented in the average elementary school classroom on the false assumption that children of the same chronological age have the same attention span and learn at the same pace and rhythm, what happens is that the great majority stop learning altogether,⁴ *becoming either passive or defiant*. Few parents know that in the average classroom most children are paying attention only about ten minutes out of the three-hundred-minute school day. The rest of the time they are trying to get into trouble or stay out of trouble. The few children in a classroom who can adjust to the rhythms arbitrarily set by the teacher become the “bright ones,” while the others are categorized from very early as the “dumb ones.” The tracking system is not the product of a particular teacher’s biases; it is built into the system of forced learning. Parents particularly must begin to try to envisage a classroom reorganized to provide the opportunity for children to move about freely, choose among activities, learn what they are interested in learning, learn from each other and from their own mistakes.

Obviously the range of choice and area of activity cannot be as broad for younger children as it is for teenagers. But once we get rid of the stereotypes of wild children who must be

forced to learn, we will be able to think in terms of curriculum and structure for elementary schools. For example, classroom space could easily be subdivided into sections, each of which is associated not with specific children but rather with activities: a library and writing space where “reading and writing will be in the air,” a rest and privacy space, an arts and crafts space, a play space. Children would be able to move from one area to another as they choose. The teacher could remain fixed at times—available for consultation—or at others move about from space to space. Children of different ages, within a particular range, could learn from each other.

The Opposition

We must have no illusion that it will be easy to reorganize American education, and particularly education in the black community, along these lines. Vicious as well as subtle opposition will come from all those with a stake in the present system: teachers and administrators who have climbed up the social and economic ladder within the framework of the old system and who now think they have earned the right to make others undergo the same ordeal; the publishing industry, which is making such huge profits off the school system; city agencies like the Board of Health, the Board of Education, the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Sanitation Department; the building industries and the unions; the merchants and finance companies. Concerned only with their own vested interest in living off the black community, they can be expected to raise a hue and cry about “irresponsible youth taking over” and “child labor.”

Some very fundamental questions are posed here, questions that American society will have to face sooner rather than later, because it is obviously impossible to reorganize an educational system completely without reorganizing the social system it serves.

First of all, who are the irresponsible ones? The young people who will be trying to improve their communities? Or the institutions and agencies (supported by their parents’ taxes) who have been presiding over its deterioration? The issue here therefore is not young people but the same issue as that involved in the right of the black community to self-determination. Obviously what these opponents fear is not just youth but the threat to their continuing control, the exposure of their shortcomings, and programs that may end in their replacement.

On the question of “child labor,” it should be emphasized that what we are proposing is not “labor” at all. *Labor* is activity that is done for wages under the control of persons or organizations exploiting this labor for profit. What we are talking about is *work* that the young people choose to do for the purpose of improving the community and under their own direction.

However, the clash is unavoidable. Because labor has been the only means for survival and advancement in this society, and because increasing automation and cybernation have cut down jobs, any kind of productive activity has now become a privilege monopolized by adults and increasingly denied to youth. The whole process is now reaching the absurd proportions of older people doing jobs that could be more safely and easily done by youth, while youth are supposed to stay in school, expending their energies in play, postponing the responsibilities of work and adult life, on the promise that longer schooling will make them capable of better jobs. Meanwhile the skills they are acquiring become obsolete. The whole procedure is based on the false assumption that education is only for the young and that it must be completed before you start to work and live. Actually the time is coming when society will have to recognize that education must be a lifelong process for old and young. In the end a rational society will have to combine work and study for all ages and for people in every type of activity, from manual to intellectual.

Rallying to the support of all these vested interests we can expect the intellectuals, social scientists, and physical scientists, claiming that by such programs society will be drying up the supply of experts, intellectuals, scientists, etc. The charge is absurd. Such programs will increase the supply because they will stimulate the desire for learning in great numbers of youth who in the past were turned off from learning.

The Struggle

In the long and the short run, the opposition of all these vested interests can be overcome only if black parents and black students begin to see that this is the only kind of education that is relevant in this country at this stage, particularly for black people, and that unless we embark on a protracted struggle for this kind of education, our children will continue to be wasted.

That is why the struggle for community control of schools is so important.

The black community will have to struggle for community control of schools. It can struggle most effectively, that is to say, involve and commit the greatest number of people from the community, if it can propose concrete programs for reorganizing education to meet the real and urgent needs of the black community.

The organic, inherent, irreversible weakness of the present educational power structure is its complete inability to develop such programs because it has been organized and is structured only for the purposes of producing an elite and detaining the mass. Hence the strategic importance of fighting them on this front by developing concrete programs for curriculums that the black community can regard as its own and therefore insist that the

schools implement. The time is especially ripe for such proposals because mushrooming decentralization programs are of necessity contradictory and confusing, creating areas in which no one is quite sure who has decision-making power.

The Total Community

In the preceding I have concentrated on the needs of the black community because it is in the vanguard of the struggle for community control of schools and therefore more immediately faced with the question of how to redefine education. But this is not only a black question. During the next five to fifteen years, increasing numbers of white students are also going to turn their backs on the educational system, not only in college but in high school. At the present time the majority of white students still accept the system because their little pieces of paper are still a passport to jobs and college. But even if the white school front remains quiet, every concerned citizen should be asking: "Do we really want our children to end up, like Nixon's Great Silent Majority, ambitious only for their own financial advancement and security, apathetic except when confronted by blacks moving into their neighborhoods or competing for their jobs, afraid not only of blacks but of their own children and indeed of any fundamental social change to meet the needs of changing technology, acquiescing in the decisions of the Mayor Daleys, the Judge Hoffmans, the Spiro Agnews, and eventually the George Wallaces?"

These whites did not come from outer space any more than did the "good silent Germans" of Hitler's day. They are the products of the American educational system, which has been organized to fit the American Way of Life. It was in the public schools that Nixon's Great Silent Majority learned, through a systematized procedure, the values of materialism, individualism, opportunism, and docility in the presence of authority. It was in the schools that they were systematically indoctrinated with the myth that truth is what you read in books or hear from those in power, and with the ideology that this is not only the best of possible worlds but that it operates with the inevitability of natural law, making it futile to criticize or oppose its operations. ("What's the use? It's always been this way and it's always going to be this way.") It was in the schools that the seeds of their present fears and powerlessness to rebel against authority were systematically sown.

All these are the values against which today's youth, black and white, coming of age in a world of unprecedented technological and social revolution, are in revolt. Today's youth is determined to have power over its own conditions of life. But the public school system has failed to prepare today's Great Silent Majority to understand its own youth, let alone the need to transform itself to cope with the rapid changes taking place.

It therefore is the schools that must accept a share of the responsibility for creating the

contradiction that now threatens this country's destruction, the contradiction between being the technologically most advanced and the politically most undeveloped country in the world. They are also one of the weakest links in the system's chain of operations.

Before the present system of education was initiated some two generations ago, education was only for the *elite*, to prepare them to govern over their subjects. Then came *mass education*, to prepare the great majority for labor and to advance a few out of their ranks to join the elite in governing. This system is now falling apart as a result of its own internal contradictions, with the cost being borne at the present time by the black community. That is why it is so urgent that we develop a new system of education that will have as its means and its end the development of the great masses of people to *govern over themselves and to administer over things*.

Notes

1. ↪ Colin Green, "Public Schools: Myth of the Melting Pot," *Saturday Review*, November 15, 1969.
2. ↪ James Coleman, *Adolescents and the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1965).
3. ↪ See Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Delacorte Press), 1969.
4. ↪ Black parents who send their children to Catholic schools on the basis that in that "law 'n' order" environment their kids at least learn their three R's should reflect on what this authoritarian environment may be doing to their children's real, i.e., creative, learning potential.

Institute for Precarious Consciousness: We Are All Very Anxious

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Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It ¹

1: Each phase of capitalism has its own dominant reactive affect. ²

Each phase of capitalism has a particular affect which holds it together. This is not a static situation. The prevalence of a particular dominant affect ³ is sustainable only *until strategies of resistance able to break down this particular affect and /or its social sources are formulated*. Hence, capitalism constantly comes into crisis and recomposes around newly dominant affects.

One aspect of every phase's dominant affect is that it is a public secret, something that everyone knows, but nobody admits, or talks about. As long as the dominant affect is a public secret, it remains effective, and strategies against it will not emerge.

Public secrets are typically personalised. The problem is only visible at an individual, psychological level; the social causes of the problem are concealed. Each phase blames the system's victims for the suffering that the system causes. And it portrays a fundamental part of its functional logic as a contingent and localised problem.

In the modern era (until the post-war settlement), the dominant affect was *misery*. In the nineteenth century, the dominant narrative was that capitalism leads to general enrichment. The public secret of this narrative was the misery of the working class. The exposure of this misery was carried out by revolutionaries. The first wave of modern social movements in the nineteenth century was a machine for fighting misery. Tactics such as strikes, wage struggles, political organisation, mutual aid, co-operatives and strike funds were effective ways to defeat the power of misery by ensuring a certain social minimum. Some of these strategies still work when fighting misery.

When misery stopped working as a control strategy, capitalism switched to *boredom*. In the mid twentieth century, the dominant public narrative was that the standard of living - which widened access to consumption, healthcare and education - was rising. Everyone in the rich countries was happy, and the poor countries were on their way to development. The public secret was that everyone was bored. This was an effect of the Fordist system which was prevalent until the 1980s - a system based on full-time jobs for life, guaranteed welfare, mass consumerism, mass culture, and the co-optation of the labour movement which had been built to fight misery. Job security and welfare provision reduced anxiety and misery, but jobs were boring, made up of simple, repetitive tasks. Mid-century capitalism gave everything needed for survival, but no opportunities for life; it was a system based on force-feeding survival to saturation point.

Of course, not all workers under Fordism actually had stable jobs or security - but this was the core model of work, around which the larger system was arranged. There were really three deals in this phase, with the B-worker deal - boredom for security - being the most exemplary of the Fordism-boredom conjuncture. Today, the B-worker deal has largely been eliminated, leaving a gulf between the A- and C-workers (the consumer society insiders, and the autonomy and insecurity of the most marginal).

2: Contemporary resistance is born of the 1960s wave, in response to the dominant affect of *boredom*.

If each stage of the dominant system has a dominant affect, then each stage of resistance needs strategies to defeat or dissolve this affect. If the first wave of social movements were a machine for fighting misery, the second wave (of the 1960s-70s, or more broadly (and thinly) 1960s-90s) were a machine for fighting boredom. This is the wave of which our own movements were born, which continues to inflect most of our theories and practices.

Most tactics of this era were/are ways to escape the work-consume-die cycle. The Situationists pioneered a whole series of tactics directed against boredom, declaring that "We do not want a world in which the guarantee that we will not die of starvation is bought by accepting the risk of dying of boredom". Autonomia fought boredom by refusing work,

both within work (using sabotage and go-slows) and against it (slacking off and dropping out). These protest forms were associated with a wider social process of countercultural exodus from the dominant forms of boring work and boring social roles.

In the feminist movement, the “housewife malaise” was theorised as systemic in the 1960s. Later, further dissatisfactions were revealed through consciousness raising, and the texts and actions (from “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” to the Redstockings abortion speak-out) which stemmed from it. Similar tendencies can be seen in the Theatre of the Oppressed, critical pedagogy, the main direct-action styles (carnavalesque, militant, and pacifist), and in movements as late as the 1990s, such as the free party movement, Reclaim the Streets, DIY culture, and hacker culture.

The mid-century reorientation from misery to boredom was crucial to the emergence of a new wave of revolt. We are the tail end of this wave. Just as the tactics of the first wave still work when fighting misery, so the tactics of the second wave still work when fighting boredom. The difficulty is that we are less often facing boredom as the main enemy. This is why militant resistance is caught in its current impasse.

3: Capitalism has largely absorbed the struggle against boredom.

There has been a partial recuperation of the struggle against boredom. Capitalism pursued the exodus into spaces beyond work, creating the *social factory* – a field in which the whole society is organised like a workplace. Precarity is used to force people back to work within an expanded field of labour now including the whole of the social factory.

Many instances of this pursuit can be enumerated. Companies have adopted flattened management models inciting employees to not only manage, but invest their souls in, their work. Consumer society now provides a wider range of niche products and constant distraction which is not determined by mass tastes to the same degree as before. New products, such as video-games and social media, involve heightened levels of active individual involvement and desocialised stimulation. Workplace experiences are diversified by means of micro-differentials and performance management, as well as the multiplication of casual and semi-self-employed work situations on the margins of capitalism. Capitalism has encouraged the growth of mediatised secondary identities – the self portrayed through social media, visible consumption, and lifelong learning – which have to be obsessively maintained. Various forms of resistance of the earlier period have been recuperated, or revived in captured form once the original is extinguished: for instance, the corporate nightclub and music festival replace the rave.

4: In contemporary capitalism, the dominant reactive affect is *anxiety*.

Today's public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread from its previous localised locations (such as sexuality) to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination.

One major part of the social underpinning of anxiety is the multi-faceted omnipresent web of *surveillance*. The NSA, CCTV, performance management reviews, the Job Centre, the privileges system in the prisons, the constant examination and classification of the youngest schoolchildren. But this obvious web is only the outer carapace. We need to think about the ways in which a neoliberal idea of success inculcates these surveillance mechanisms inside the subjectivities and life-stories of most of the population.

We need to think about how people's deliberate and ostensibly voluntary self-exposure, through social media, visible consumption and choice of positions within the field of opinions, also assumes a performance in the field of the perpetual gaze of virtual others. We need to think about the ways in which this gaze inflects how we find, measure and know one another, as co-actors in an infinitely watched perpetual performance. Our success in this performance in turn affects everything from our ability to access human warmth to our ability to access means of subsistence, not just in the form of the wage but also in the form of credit. Outsides to the field of mediatised surveillance are increasingly closed off, as public space is bureaucratised and privatised, and a widening range of human activity is criminalised on the grounds of risk, security, nuisance, quality of life, or anti-social behaviour.

In this increasingly securitised and visible field, we are commanded to communicate. The incommunicable is excluded. Since everyone is disposable, the system holds the threat of forcibly delinking anyone at any time, in a context where alternatives are foreclosed in advance, so that forcible delinking entails desocialisation - leading to an absurd non-choice between desocialised inclusion and desocialised exclusion. This threat is manifested in small ways in today's disciplinary practices - from "time-outs" and Internet bans, to firings and benefit sanctions - culminating in the draconian forms of solitary confinement found in prisons. Such regimes are the zero degree of control-by-anxiety: the breakdown of all the coordinates of connectedness in a setting of constant danger, in order to produce a collapse of personality.

The present dominant affect of anxiety is also known as precarity. Precarity is a type of insecurity which treats people as disposable so as to impose control. Precarity differs from misery in that the necessities of life are not simply absent. They are available, but withheld conditionally.

Precarity leads to generalised hopelessness; a constant bodily excitation without release.

Growing proportions of young people are living at home. Substantial portions of the population – over 10% in the UK – are taking antidepressants. The birth rate is declining, as insecurity makes people reluctant to start families. In Japan, millions of young people never leave their homes (the hikikomori), while others literally work themselves to death on an epidemic scale. Surveys reveal half the population of the UK are experiencing income insecurity. Economically, aspects of the system of anxiety include “lean” production, financialisation and resultant debt slavery, rapid communication and financial outflows, and the globalisation of production. Workplaces like call centres are increasingly common, where everyone watches themselves, tries to maintain the required “service orientation,” and is constantly subject to re-testing and potential failure both by quantitative requirements on numbers of calls, and a process which denies most workers a stable job (they have to work six months to even receive a job, as opposed to a learning place). Image management means that the gap between the official rules and what really happens is greater than ever. And the post-911 climate channels this widespread anxiety into global politics.

5: Anxiety is a public secret.

Excessive anxiety and stress are a public secret. When discussed at all, they are understood as individual psychological problems, often blamed on faulty thought patterns or poor adaptation.

Indeed, the dominant public narrative suggests that we need more stress, so as to keep us “safe” (through securitisation) and “competitive” (through performance management). Each moral panic, each new crackdown or new round of repressive laws, adds to the cumulative weight of anxiety and stress arising from general over-regulation. Real, human insecurity is channelled into fuelling securitisation. This is a vicious circle, because securitisation increases the very conditions (disposability, surveillance, intensive regulation) which cause the initial anxiety. In effect, the security of the Homeland is used as a vicarious substitute for security of the Self. Again, this has precedents: the use of national greatness as vicarious compensation for misery, and the use of global war as a channel for frustration arising from boredom.

Anxiety is also channelled downwards. People’s lack of control over their lives leads to an obsessive struggle to reclaim control by micro-managing whatever one can control. Parental management techniques, for example, are advertised as ways to reduce parents’ anxiety by providing a definite script they can follow. On a wider, social level, latent anxieties arising from precarity fuel obsessive projects of social regulation and social control. This latent anxiety is increasingly projected onto minorities.

Anxiety is personalised in a number of ways – from New Right discourses blaming the poor

for poverty, to contemporary therapies which treat anxiety as a neurological imbalance or a dysfunctional thinking style. A hundred varieties of “management” discourse – time management, anger management, parental management, self-branding, gamification – offer anxious subjects an illusion of control in return for ever-greater conformity to the capitalist model of subjectivity. And many more discourses of scapegoating and criminalisation treat precarity as a matter of personal deviance, irresponsibility, or pathological self-exclusion. Many of these discourses seek to maintain the superstructure of Fordism (nationalism, social integration) without its infrastructure (a national economy, welfare, jobs for all). Doctrines of individual responsibility are central to this backlash, reinforcing vulnerability and disposability. Then there’s the self-esteem industry, the massive outpouring of media telling people how to achieve success through positive thinking – as if the sources of anxiety and frustration are simply illusory. These are indicative of the tendency to privatise problems, both those relating to work, and those relating to psychology.

Earlier we argued that people have to be socially isolated in order for a public secret to work. This is true of the current situation, in which authentic communication is increasingly rare. Communication is more pervasive than ever, but increasingly, communication happens only through paths mediated by the system. Hence, in many ways, people are prevented from actually communicating, even while the system demands that everyone be connected and communicable. People both conform to the demand to communicate rather than expressing themselves, and self-censor within mediated spaces. Similarly, affective labour does not alleviate anxiety; it compounds workers’ suffering while simply distracting consumers (researchers have found that requirements on workers to feign happiness actually cause serious health problems).

The volume of communication is irrelevant. The recomposition – reconnection – of liberatory social forces will not happen unless there are channels through which the public secret itself can be spoken. In this sense, people are fundamentally more alone than ever. It is difficult for most people (including many radicals) to acknowledge the reality of what they experience and feel. Something has to be quantified or mediated (broadcast virtually), or, for us, to be already recognised as political, to be validated as real. The public secret does not meet these criteria, and so it remains invisible.

6: Current tactics and theories aren’t working. We need new tactics and theories to combat anxiety.

During periods of mobilisation and effective social change, people feel a sense of empowerment, the ability to express themselves, a sense of authenticity and de-repression or dis-alienation which can act as an effective treatment for depression and psychological problems; a kind of peak experience. It is what sustains political activity.

Such experiences have become far rarer in recent years.

We might here focus on two related developments: pre-emption, and punishment by process. Pre-emptive tactics are those which stop protests before they start, or before they can achieve anything. Kettling, mass arrests, stop-and-search, lockdowns, house raids and pre-emptive arrests are examples of these kinds of tactics. Punishment by process entails keeping people in a situation of fear, pain, or vulnerability through the abuse of procedures designed for other purposes – such as keeping people on pre-charge or pre-trial bail conditions which disrupt their everyday activity, using no-fly and border-stop lists to harass known dissidents, carrying out violent dawn raids, needlessly putting people's photographs in the press, arresting people on suspicion (sometimes in accord with quotas), using pain-compliance holds, or quietly making known that someone is under surveillance. Once fear of state interference is instilled, it is reinforced by the web of visible surveillance that is gridded across public space, and which acts as strategically placed triggers of trauma and anxiety.

Anecdotal evidence has provided many horror stories about the effects of such tactics – people left a nervous wreck after years awaiting a trial on charges for which they were acquitted, committing suicide after months out of touch with their friends and family, or afraid to go out after incidents of abuse. The effects are just as real as if the state was killing or disappearing people, but they are rendered largely invisible. In addition, many radicals are also on the receiving end of precarious employment and punitive benefit regimes. We are failing to escape the generalised production of anxiety.

If the first wave provided a machine for fighting misery, and the second wave a machine for fighting boredom, what we now need is a machine for fighting anxiety – and this is something we do not yet have. If we see from within anxiety, we haven't yet performed the "reversal of perspective" as the Situationists called it – seeing from the standpoint of desire instead of power. Today's main forms of resistance still arise from the struggle against boredom, and, since boredom's replacement by anxiety, have ceased to be effective.

Current militant resistance does not and cannot combat anxiety. It often involves deliberate exposure to high-anxiety situations. Insurrectionists overcome anxiety by turning negative affects into anger, and acting on this anger through a projectile affect of attack. In many ways, this provides an alternative to anxiety. However, it is difficult for people to pass from anxiety to anger, and it is easy for people to be pushed back the other way, due to trauma. We've noticed a certain tendency for insurrectionists to refuse to take seriously the existence of psychological barriers to militant action. Their response tends to be, "Just do it!" But anxiety is a real, material force – not simply a spook. To be sure, its sources are often rooted in spooks, but the question of overcoming the grip of a spook is rarely as simple as consciously rejecting it. There's a whole series of psychological blockages underlying the

spook's illusory power, which is ultimately an effect of reactive affect. Saying "Just do it" is like saying to someone with a broken leg, "Just walk!"

The situation feels hopeless and inescapable, but it isn't. It feels this way because of effects of precarity – constant over-stress, the contraction of time into an eternal present, the vulnerability of each separated (or systemically mediated) individual, the system's dominance of all aspects of social space. Structurally, the system is vulnerable. The reliance on anxiety is a desperate measure, used in the absence of stronger forms of conformity. The system's attempt to keep running by keeping people feeling powerless leaves it open to sudden ruptures, outbreaks of revolt. So how do we get to the point where we stop feeling powerless?

7: A new style of precarity-focused consciousness raising is needed.

In order to formulate new responses to anxiety, we need to return to the drawing board. We need to construct a new set of knowledges and theories from the bottom up. To this end, we need to create a profusion of discussions which produce dense intersections between experiences of the current situation and theories of transformation. We need to start such processes throughout the excluded and oppressed strata – but there is no reason we shouldn't start with ourselves.

In exploring the possibilities for such a practice, the Institute has looked into previous cases of similar practices. From an examination of accounts of feminist consciousness raising in the 1960s/70s, we have summarised the following central features:

- Producing new grounded theory relating to experience. We need to reconnect with our experiences now – rather than theories from past phases. The idea here is that our own perceptions of our situation are blocked or cramped by dominant assumptions, and need to be made explicit. The focus should be on those experiences which relate to the public secret. These experiences need to be recounted and pooled — firstly within groups, and then publicly.
- Recognising the reality, and the systemic nature, of our experiences. The validation of our experiences' reality of experiences is an important part of this. We need to affirm that our pain is really pain, that what we see and feel is real, and that our problems are not only personal. Sometimes this entails bringing up experiences we have discounted or repressed. Sometimes it entails challenging the personalisation of problems.
- Transformation of emotions. People are paralysed by unnameable emotions, and a

general sense of feeling like shit. These emotions need to be transformed into a sense of injustice, a type of anger which is less resentful and more focused, a move towards self-expression, and a reactivation of resistance.

- Creating or expressing voice. The culture of silence surrounding the public secret needs to be overthrown. Existing assumptions need to be denaturalised and challenged, and cops in the head expelled. The exercise of voice moves the reference of truth and reality from the system to the speaker, contributing to the reversal of perspective – seeing the world through one's own perspective and desires, rather than the system's. The weaving together of different experiences and stories is an important way of reclaiming voice. The process is an articulation as well as an expression.
- Constructing a disalienated space. Social separation is reduced by the existence of such a space. The space provides critical distance on one's life, and a kind of emotional safety net to attempt transformations, dissolving fears. This should not simply be a self-help measure, used to sustain existing activities, but instead, a space for reconstructing a radical perspective.
- Analysing and theorising structural sources based on similarities in experience. The point is not simply to recount experiences but to transform and restructure them through their theorisation. Participants change the dominant meaning of their experience by mapping it with different assumptions. This is often done by finding patterns in experiences which are related to liberatory theory, and seeing personal problems and small injustices as symptoms of wider structural problems. It leads to a new perspective, a vocabulary of motives; an anti-anti-political horizon.

The goal is to produce the *click* — the moment at which the structural source of problems suddenly makes sense in relation to experiences. This click is which focuses and transforms anger. Greater understanding may in turn relieve psychological pressures, and make it easier to respond with anger instead of depression or anxiety. It might even be possible to encourage people into such groups by promoting them as a form of self-help — even though they reject the adjustment orientation of therapeutic and self-esteem building processes.

The result is a kind of affinity group, but oriented to perspective and analysis, rather than action. It should be widely recognised, however, that this new awareness needs to turn into some kind of action; otherwise it is just frustratingly introspective.

This strategy will help our practice in a number of ways. Firstly, these groups can provide a pool of potential accomplices. Secondly, they can prime people for future moments of revolt. Thirdly, they create the potential to shift the general field of so-called public opinion in ways which create an easier context for action. Groups would also function as a life-support system and as a space to step back from immersion in the present. They would provide a kind of fluency in radical and dissident concepts which most people lack today.

Anxiety is reinforced by the fact that it is never clear what “the market” wants from us, that the demand for conformity is connected to a vague set of criteria which cannot be established in advance. Even the most conformist people are disposable nowadays, as new technologies of management or production are introduced. One of the functions of small-group discussions and consciousness raising is to construct a perspective from which one can interpret the situation

One major problem will be maintaining regular time commitments in a context of constant time and attentive pressure. The process has a slower pace and a more human scale than is culturally acceptable today. However, the fact that groups offer a respite from daily struggle, and perhaps a quieter style of interacting and listening which relieves attentive pressure, may also be attractive. Participants would need to learn to speak with a self-expressive voice (rather than a neoliberal performance derived from the compulsion to share banal information), and to listen and analyse.

Another problem is the complexity of experiences. Personal experiences are intensely differentiated by the nuanced discriminations built into the semiocapitalist code. This makes the analytical part of the process particularly important.

Above all, the process should establish new propositions about the sources of anxiety. These propositions can form a basis for new forms of struggle, new tactics, and the revival of active force from its current repression: a machine for fighting anxiety.

Footnotes

1. The discussion here is not fully relevant to the global South. The specific condition of the South is that dominant capitalist social forms are layered onto earlier stages of capitalism or pre-capitalist systems, rather than displacing them entirely. Struggles along the axes of misery and boredom are therefore more effective in the South. The South has experienced a particular variety of precarity distinct from earlier periods: the massive forced delinking of huge swathes of the world from global capitalism (especially in Africa), and the correspondingly massive growth of the informal sector, which now eclipses the formal sector almost everywhere. The informal sector provides fertile terrain for autonomous politics, as is clear from cases such as the city of El Alto (a self-organised city of shanty-

towns which is central to social movements in Bolivia), the Zapatista revolt (leading to autonomous indigenous communities in Chiapas), and movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo (an autonomous movement of informal settlement residents in South Africa). However, it is often subject to a kind of collectivised precarity, as the state might (for instance) bulldoze shanty-towns, dispossess street traders, or crack down on illicit activities – and periodically does so. Revealingly, it was the self-immolation of a street trader subject to this kind of state dispossession which triggered the revolt in Sidi Bouzid, which later expanded into the Arab Spring. Massive unrest for similar reasons is also becoming increasingly common in China. It is also common for this sector to be dominated by hierarchical gangs or by the networked wings of authoritarian parties (such as the Muslim Brotherhood).

2. Affect: emotion, bodily disposition, way of relating

3. When using the term *dominant* affect, this is not to say that this is the only reactive affect in operation. The new dominant affect can relate dynamically with other affects: a call-centre worker is bored and miserably paid, but anxiety is what keeps her/him in this condition, preventing the use of old strategies such as unionisation, sabotage and dropping out.

Murray Bookchin: The Communalist Project

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PAUL NASH. WE ARE MAKING A NEW WORLD. 1918

Whether the twenty-first century will be the most radical of times or the most reactionary—or will simply lapse into a gray era of dismal mediocrity—will depend overwhelmingly upon the kind of social movement and program that social radicals create out of the theoretical, organizational, and political wealth that has accumulated during the past two centuries of the revolutionary era. The direction we select, from among several intersecting roads of human development, may well determine the future of our species for centuries to come. As long as this irrational society endangers us with nuclear and biological weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the entire human enterprise may come to a devastating end. Given the exquisitely elaborate technical plans that the military-industrial complex has devised, the self-extermination of the human species must be included in the futuristic scenarios that, at the turn of the millennium, the mass media are projecting—the end of a human future as such.

Lest these remarks seem too apocalyptic, I should emphasize that we also live in an era when human creativity, technology, and imagination have the capability to produce extraordinary material achievements and to endow us with societies that allow for a degree

of freedom that far and away exceeds the most dramatic and emancipatory visions projected by social theorists such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Karl Marx, and Peter Kropotkin.¹ Many thinkers of the postmodern age have obtusely singled out science and technology as the principal threats to human well-being, yet few disciplines have imparted to humanity such a stupendous knowledge of the innermost secrets of matter and life, or provided our species better with the ability to alter every important feature of reality and to improve the well-being of human and nonhuman life-forms.

We are thus in a position either to follow a path toward a grim “end of history,” in which a banal succession of vacuous events replaces genuine progress, or to move on to a path toward the true making of history, in which humanity genuinely progresses toward a rational world. We are in a position to choose between an ignominious finale, possibly including the catastrophic nuclear oblivion of history itself, and history’s rational fulfillment in a free, materially abundant society in an aesthetically crafted environment.

Notwithstanding the technological marvels that competing enterprises of the ruling class (that is, the bourgeoisie) are developing in order to achieve hegemony over one another, little of a subjective nature that exists in the existing society can redeem it. Precisely at a time when we, as a species, are capable of producing the means for amazing objective advances and improvements in the human condition and in the nonhuman natural world—advances that could make for a free and rational society— we stand almost naked morally before the onslaught of social forces that may very well lead to our physical immolation. Prognoses about the future are understandably very fragile and are easily distrusted. Pessimism has become very widespread, as capitalist social relations become more deeply entrenched in the human mind than ever before, and as culture regresses appallingly, almost to a vanishing point. To most people today, the hopeful and very radical certainties of the twenty-year period between the Russian Revolution of 1917-18 and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 seem almost naïve.

Yet our decision to create a better society, and our choice of the way to do it, must come from within ourselves, without the aid of a deity, still less a mystical “force of nature” or a charismatic leader. If we choose the road toward a better future, our choice must be the consequence of our ability—and ours alone—to learn from the material lessons of the past and to appreciate the real prospects of the future. We will need to have recourse, not to ghostly vagaries conjured up from the murky hell of superstition or, absurdly, from the couloirs of the academy, but to the innovative attributes that make up our very humanity and the essential features that account for natural and social development, as opposed to the social pathologies and accidental events that have sidetracked humanity from its self-fulfillment in consciousness and reason. Having brought history to a point where nearly everything is possible, at least of a material nature—and having left behind a past that was permeated ideologically by mystical and religious elements produced by the human

imagination—we are faced with a new challenge, one that has never before confronted humanity. We must consciously create our own world, not according to demonic fantasies, mindless customs, and destructive prejudices, but according to the canons of reason, reflection, and discourse that uniquely belong to our own species.

What factors should be decisive in making our choice? First, of great significance is the immense accumulation of social and political experience that is available to revolutionaries today, a storehouse of knowledge that, properly conceived, could be used to avoid the terrible errors that our predecessors made and to spare humanity the terrible plagues of failed revolutions in the past. Of indispensable importance is the potential for a new theoretical springboard that has been created by the history of ideas, one that provides the means to catapult an emerging radical movement beyond existing social conditions into a future that fosters humanity's emancipation.

But we must also be fully aware of the scope of the problems that we face. We must understand with complete clarity where we stand in the development of the prevailing capitalist order, and we have to grasp emergent social problems and address them in the program of a new movement. Capitalism is unquestionably the most dynamic society ever to appear in history. By definition, to be sure, it always remains a system of commodity exchange in which objects that are made for sale and profit pervade and mediate most human relations. Yet capitalism is also a highly mutable system, continually advancing the brutal maxim that whatever enterprise does not grow at the expense of its rivals must die. Hence "growth" and perpetual change become the very laws of life of capitalist existence. This means that capitalism never remains permanently in only one form; it must always transform the institutions that arise from its basic social relations.

Although capitalism became a dominant society only in the past few centuries, it long existed on the periphery of earlier societies: in a largely commercial form, structured around trade between cities and empires; in a craft form throughout the European Middle Ages; in a hugely industrial form in our own time; and if we are to believe recent seers, in an informational form in the coming period. It has created not only new technologies but also a great variety of economic and social structures, such as the small shop, the factory, the huge mill, and the industrial and commercial complex. Certainly the capitalism of the Industrial Revolution has not completely disappeared, any more than the isolated peasant family and small craftsman of a still earlier period have been consigned to complete oblivion. Much of the past is always incorporated into the present; indeed, as Marx insistently warned, there is no "pure capitalism," and none of the earlier forms of capitalism fade away until radically new social relations are established and become overwhelmingly dominant. But today capitalism, even as it coexists with and utilizes precapitalist institutions for its own ends (see Marx's *Grundrisse* for this dialectic), now reaches into the suburbs and the countryside with its shopping malls and newly styled factories. Indeed, it is by no means

inconceivable that one day it will reach beyond our planet. In any case, it has produced not only new commodities to create and feed new wants but new social and cultural issues, which in turn have given rise to new supporters and antagonists of the existing system. The famous first part of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, in which they celebrate capitalism's wonders, would have to be periodically rewritten to keep pace with the achievements—as well as the horrors—produced by the bourgeoisie's development.

One of the most striking features of capitalism today is that in the Western world the highly simplified two-class structure—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—that Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, predicted would become dominant under “mature” capitalism (and we have yet to determine what “mature,” still less “late” or “moribund” capitalism actually is) has undergone a process of reconfiguration. The conflict between wage labor and capital, while it has by no means disappeared, nonetheless lacks the all-embracing importance that it possessed in the past. Contrary to Marx's expectations, the industrial working class is now dwindling in numbers and is steadily losing its traditional identity as a class—which by no means excludes it from a potentially broader and perhaps more extensive conflict of society as a whole against capitalist social relations. Present-day culture, social relations, cityscapes, modes of production, agriculture, and transportation have remade the traditional proletariat, upon which syndicalists and Marxists were overwhelmingly, indeed almost mystically focused, into a largely petty-bourgeois stratum whose mentality is marked by its own bourgeois utopianism of “consumption for the sake of consumption.” We can foresee a time when the proletarian, whatever the color of his or her collar or place on the assembly line, will be completely replaced by automated and even miniaturized means of production that are operated by a few white-coated manipulators of machines and by computers.

By the same token, the living standards of the traditional proletariat and its material expectations (no small factor in the shaping of social consciousness!) have changed enormously, soaring within only a generation or two from near poverty to a comparatively high degree of material affluence. Among the children and grandchildren of former steel and automobile workers and coal miners, who have no proletarian class identity, a college education has replaced the high school diploma as emblematic of a new class status. In the United States once-opposing class interests have converged to a point that almost 50 percent of American households own stocks and bonds, while a huge number are proprietors of one kind or another, possessing their own homes, gardens, and rural summer retreats.

Given these changes, the stern working man or woman, portrayed in radical posters of the past with a flexed, highly muscular arm holding a bone-crushing hammer, has been replaced by the genteel and well-mannered (so-called) “working middle class.” The traditional cry “Workers of the world, unite!” in its old historical sense becomes ever more meaningless.

The class-consciousness of the proletariat, which Marx tried to awaken in *The Communist Manifesto*, has been hemorrhaging steadily and in many places has virtually disappeared. The more existential class struggle has not been eliminated, to be sure, any more than the bourgeoisie could eliminate gravity from the existing human condition, but unless radicals today become aware of the fact that it has been narrowed down largely to the individual factory or office, they will fail to see that a new, perhaps more expansive form of social consciousness can emerge in the generalized struggles that face us. Indeed, this form of social consciousness can be given a refreshingly new meaning as the concept of the rebirth of the citizen—a concept so important to the Great Revolution of 1789 and its more broadly humanistic sentiment of sociality that it became the form of address among later revolutionaries summoned to the barricades by the heraldic crowing of the red French rooster.

Seen as a whole, the social condition that capitalism has produced today stands very much at odds with the simplistic class prognoses advanced by Marx and by the revolutionary French syndicalists. After the Second World War, capitalism underwent an enormous transformation, creating broad new social issues with extraordinary rapidity, issues that went beyond traditional proletarian demands for improved wages, hours, and working conditions: notably environmental, gender, hierarchical, civic, and democratic issues. Capitalism, in effect, has generalized its threats to humanity, particularly with climatic changes that may alter the very face of the planet, oligarchical institutions of a global scope, and rampant urbanization that radically corrodes the civic life basic to grassroots politics.

Hierarchy, today, is becoming as pronounced an issue as class—as witness the extent to which many social analyses have singled out managers, bureaucrats, scientists, and the like as emerging, ostensibly dominant groups. New and elaborate gradations of status and interests count today to an extent that they did not in the recent past; they blur the conflict between wage labor and capital that was once so central, clearly defined, and militantly waged by traditional socialists. Class categories are now intermingled with hierarchical categories based on race, gender, sexual preference, and certainly national or regional differences. Status differentiations, characteristic of hierarchy, tend to converge with class differentiations, and a more all-inclusive capitalistic world is emerging in which ethnic, national, and gender differences often surpass the importance of class differences in the public eye. This phenomenon is not entirely new: in the First World War countless German socialist workers cast aside their earlier commitment to the red flags of proletarian unity in favor of the national flags of their well-fed and parasitic rulers and went on to plunge bayonets into the bodies of French and Russian socialist workers—as they did, in turn, under the national flags of their own oppressors.

At the same time capitalism has produced a new, perhaps paramount contradiction: the clash between an economy based on unending growth and the desiccation of the natural

environment.² This issue and its vast ramifications can no more be minimized, let alone dismissed, than the need of human beings for food or air. At present the most promising struggles in the West, where socialism was born, seem to be waged less around income and working conditions than around nuclear power, pollution, deforestation, urban blight, education, health care, community life, and the oppression of people in underdeveloped countries—as witness the (albeit sporadic) antiglobalization upsurges, in which blue- and white-collar “workers” march in the same ranks with middle-class humanitarians and are motivated by common social concerns. Proletarian combatants become indistinguishable from middle-class ones. Burly workers, whose hallmark is a combative militancy, now march behind “bread and puppet” theater performers, often with a considerable measure of shared playfulness. Members of the working and middle classes now wear many different social hats, so to speak, challenging capitalism obliquely as well as directly on cultural as well as economic grounds.

Nor can we ignore, in deciding what direction we are to follow, the fact that capitalism, if it is not checked, will in the future—and not necessarily the very distant future—differ appreciably from the system we know today. Capitalist development can be expected to vastly alter the social horizon in the years ahead. Can we suppose that factories, offices, cities, residential areas, industry, commerce, and agriculture, let alone moral values, aesthetics, media, popular desires, and the like will not change immensely before the twenty-first century is out? In the past century, capitalism, above all else, has broadened social issues—indeed, the historical social question of how a humanity, divided by classes and exploitation, will create a society based on equality, the development of authentic harmony, and freedom—to include those whose resolution was barely foreseen by the liberatory social theorists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our age, with its endless array of “bottom lines” and “investment choices,” now threatens to turn society itself into a vast and exploitative marketplace.³

The public with which the progressive socialist had to deal is also changing radically and will continue to do so in the coming decades. To lag in understanding behind the changes that capitalism is introducing and the new or broader contradictions it is producing would be to commit the recurrently disastrous error that led to the defeat of nearly all revolutionary upsurges in the past two centuries. Foremost among the lessons that a new revolutionary movement must learn from the past is that it must win over broad sectors of the middle class to its new populist program. No attempt to replace capitalism with socialism ever had or will have the remotest chance of success without the aid of the discontented petty bourgeoisie, whether it was the intelligentsia and peasantry-in-uniform of the Russian Revolution or the intellectuals, farmers, shopkeepers, clerks, and managers in industry and even in government in the German upheavals of 1918-21. Even during the most promising periods of past revolutionary cycles, the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, the German Social Democrats, and Russian Communists never acquired absolute majorities in

their respective legislative bodies. So-called “proletarian revolutions” were invariably minority revolutions, usually even within the proletariat itself, and those that succeeded (often briefly, before they were subdued or drifted historically out of the revolutionary movement) depended overwhelmingly on the fact that the bourgeoisie lacked active support among its own military forces or was simply socially demoralized.

Given the changes that we are witnessing and those that are still taking form, social radicals can no longer oppose the predatory (as well as immensely creative) capitalist system by using the ideologies and methods that were born in the first Industrial Revolution, when a factory proletariat seemed to be the principal antagonist of a textile plant owner. (Nor can we use ideologies that were spawned by conflicts that an impoverished peasantry used to oppose feudal and semifeudal landowners.) None of the professedly anticapitalist ideologies of the past—Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism, and more generic forms of socialism—retain the same relevance that they had at an earlier stage of capitalist development and in an earlier period of technological advance. Nor can any of them hope to encompass the multitude of new issues, opportunities, problems, and interests that capitalism has repeatedly created over time.

Marxism was the most comprehensive and coherent effort to produce a systematic form of socialism, emphasizing the material as well as the subjective historical preconditions of a new society. This project, in the present era of precapitalist economic decomposition and of intellectual confusion, relativism, and subjectivism, must never surrender to the new barbarians, many of whom find their home in what was once a barrier to ideological regression—the academy. We owe much to Marx’s attempt to provide us with a coherent and stimulating analysis of the commodity and commodity relations, to an activist philosophy, a systematic social theory, an objectively grounded or “scientific” concept of historical development, and a flexible political strategy. Marxist political ideas were eminently relevant to the needs of a terribly disoriented proletariat and to the particular oppressions that the industrial bourgeoisie inflicted upon it in England in the 1840s, somewhat later in France, Italy, and Germany, and very presciently in Russia in the last decade of Marx’s life. Until the rise of the populist movement in Russia (most famously, the *Narodnaya Volya*), Marx expected the emerging proletariat to become the great majority of the population in Europe and North America, and to inevitably engage in revolutionary class war as a result of capitalist exploitation and immiseration. And especially between 1917 and 1939, long after Marx’s death, Europe was indeed beleaguered by a mounting class war that reached the point of outright workers’ insurrections. In 1917, owing to an extraordinary confluence of circumstances—particularly with the outbreak of the First World War, which rendered several quasi-feudal European social systems terribly unstable—Lenin and the Bolsheviks tried to use (but greatly altered) Marx’s writings in order to take power in an economically backward empire, whose size spanned eleven time zones across Europe and Asia.⁴

But for the most part, as we have seen, Marxism's economic insights belonged to an era of emerging factory capitalism in the nineteenth century. Brilliant as a theory of the material preconditions for socialism, it did not address the ecological, civic, and subjective forces or the efficient causes that could impel humanity into a movement for revolutionary social change. On the contrary, for nearly a century Marxism stagnated theoretically. Its theorists were often puzzled by developments that have passed it by and, since the 1960s, have mechanically appended environmentalist and feminist ideas to its formulaic *ouvrierist* outlook.

By the same token, anarchism—which, I believe, represents in its authentic form a highly individualistic outlook that fosters a radically unfettered lifestyle, often as a substitute for mass action—is far better suited to articulate a Proudhonian single-family peasant and craft world than a modern urban and industrial environment. I myself once used this political label, but further thought has obliged me to conclude that, its often-refreshing aphorisms and insights notwithstanding, it is simply not a social theory. Its foremost theorists celebrate its seeming openness to eclecticism and the liberatory effects of “paradox” or even “contradiction,” to use Proudhonian hyperbole. Accordingly, and without prejudice to the earnestness of many anarchistic practices, a case can be made that many of the ideas of social and economic reconstruction that in the past have been advanced in the name of “anarchy” were often drawn from Marxism (including my own concept of “post-scarcity,” which understandably infuriated many anarchists who read my essays on the subject). Regrettably, the use of socialistic terms has often prevented anarchists from telling us or even understanding clearly what they are: individualists whose concepts of autonomy originate in a strong commitment to personal liberty rather than to social freedom, or socialists committed to a structured, institutionalized, and responsible form of social organization. Anarchism's idea of self-regulation (*auto nomos*) led to a radical celebration of Nietzsche's all-absorbing will. Indeed the history of this “ideology” is peppered with idiosyncratic acts of defiance that verge on the eccentric, which not surprisingly have attracted many young people and aesthetes.

In fact anarchism represents the most extreme formulation of liberalism's ideology of unfettered autonomy, culminating in a celebration of heroic acts of defiance of the state. Anarchism's mythos of self-regulation (*auto nomos*)—the radical assertion of the individual over or even against society and the personalistic absence of responsibility for the collective welfare—leads to a radical affirmation of the all-powerful will so central to Nietzsche's ideological peregrinations. Some self-professed anarchists have even denounced mass social action as futile and alien to their private concerns and made a fetish of what the Spanish anarchists called *grupismo*, a small-group mode of action that is highly personal rather than social.

Anarchism has often been confused with revolutionary syndicalism, a highly structured and

well-developed mass form of libertarian trade unionism that, unlike anarchism, was long committed to democratic procedures,⁵ to discipline in action, and to organized, long-range revolutionary practice to eliminate capitalism. Its affinity with anarchism stems from its strong libertarian bias, but bitter antagonisms between anarchists and syndicalists have a long history in nearly every country in Western Europe and North America, as witness the tensions between the Spanish CNT and the anarchist groups associated with *Tierra y Libertad* early in the twentieth century; between the revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist groups in Russia during the 1917 revolution; and between the IWW in the United States and Sweden, to cite the more illustrative cases in the history of the libertarian labor movement. More than one American anarchist was affronted by Joe Hill's defiant maxim on the eve of his execution in Utah: "Don't mourn—Organize!" Alas, small groups were not quite the "organizations" that Joe Hill, or the grossly misunderstood idol of the Spanish libertarian movement, Salvador Seguí, had in mind. It was largely the shared word libertarian that made it possible for somewhat confused anarchists to coexist in the same organization with revolutionary syndicalists. It was often verbal confusion rather than ideological clarity that made possible the coexistence in Spain of the FAI, as represented by the anarchist Federica Montseny, with the syndicalists, as represented by Juan Prieto, in the CNT-FAI, a truly confused organization if ever there was one.

Revolutionary syndicalism's destiny has been tied in varying degrees to a pathology called *ouvrierisme*, or "workerism," and whatever philosophy, theory of history, or political economy it possesses has been borrowed, often piecemeal and indirectly, from Marx—indeed, Georges Sorel and many other professed revolutionary syndicalists in the early twentieth century expressly regarded themselves as Marxists and even more expressly eschewed anarchism. Moreover, revolutionary syndicalism lacks a strategy for social change beyond the general strike, which revolutionary uprisings such as the famous October and November general strikes in Russia during 1905 proved to be stirring but ultimately ineffectual. Indeed, as invaluable as the general strike may be as a prelude to direct confrontation with the state, they decidedly do not have the mystical capacity that revolutionary syndicalists assigned to them as means for social change. Their limitations are striking evidence that, as episodic forms of direct action, general strikes are not equatable with revolution nor even with profound social changes, which presuppose a mass movement and require years of gestation and a clear sense of direction. Indeed, revolutionary syndicalism exudes a typical *ouvrierist* anti-intellectualism that disdains attempts to formulate a purposive revolutionary direction and a reverence for proletarian "spontaneity" that, at times, has led it into highly self-destructive situations. Lacking the means for an analysis of their situation, the Spanish syndicalists (and anarchists) revealed only a minimal capacity to understand the situation in which they found themselves after their victory over Franco's forces in the summer of 1936 and no capacity to take "the next step" to institutionalize a workers' and peasants' form of government.

What these observations add up to is that Marxists, revolutionary syndicalists, and authentic anarchists all have a fallacious understanding of politics, which should be conceived as the civic arena and the institutions by which people democratically and directly manage their community affairs. Indeed the Left has repeatedly mistaken statecraft for politics by its persistent failure to understand that the two are not only radically different but exist in radical tension—in fact, opposition—to each other.⁶ As I have written elsewhere, historically politics did not emerge from the state—an apparatus whose professional machinery is designed to dominate and facilitate the exploitation of the citizenry in the interests of a privileged class. Rather, politics, almost by definition, is the active engagement of free citizens in the handling their municipal affairs and in their defense of its freedom. One can almost say that politics is the “embodiment” of what the French revolutionaries of the 1790s called *civisme*. Quite properly, in fact, the word politics itself contains the Greek word for “city” or polis, and its use in classical Athens, together with democracy, connoted the direct governing of the city by its citizens. Centuries of civic degradation, marked particularly by the formation of classes, were necessary to produce the state and its corrosive absorption of the political realm.

A defining feature of the Left is precisely the Marxist, anarchist, and revolutionary syndicalist belief that no distinction exists, in principle, between the political realm and the statist realm. By emphasizing the nation-state—including a “workers’ state”—as the locus of economic as well as political power, Marx (as well as libertarians) notoriously failed to demonstrate how workers could fully and directly control such a state without the mediation of an empowered bureaucracy and essentially statist (or equivalently, in the case of libertarians, governmental) institutions. As a result, the Marxists unavoidably saw the political realm, which it designated a “workers’ state,” as a repressive entity, ostensibly based on the interests of a single class, the proletariat.

Revolutionary syndicalism, for its part, emphasized factory control by workers’ committees and confederal economic councils as the locus of social authority, thereby simply bypassing any popular institutions that existed outside the economy. Oddly, this was economic determinism with a vengeance, which, tested by the experiences of the Spanish revolution of 1936, proved completely ineffectual. A vast domain of real governmental power, from military affairs to the administration of justice, fell to the Stalinists and the liberals of Spain, who used their authority to subvert the libertarian movement—and with it, the revolutionary achievements of the syndicalist workers in July 1936, or what was dourly called by one novelist “The Brief Summer of Spanish Anarchism.”

As for anarchism, Bakunin expressed the typical view of its adherents in 1871 when he wrote that the new social order could be created “only through the development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working class in city and country,” thereby rejecting with characteristic inconsistency the very municipal politics

which he sanctioned in Italy around the same year. Accordingly, anarchists have long regarded every government as a state and condemned it accordingly—a view that is a recipe for the elimination of any organized social life whatever. While the state is the instrument by which an oppressive and exploitative class regulates and coercively controls the behavior of an exploited class by a ruling class, a government—or better still, a polity—is an ensemble of institutions designed to deal with the problems of consociational life in an orderly and hopefully fair manner. Every institutionalized association that constitutes a system for handling public affairs—with or without the presence of a state—is necessarily a government. By contrast, every state, although necessarily a form of government, is a force for class repression and control. Annoying as it must seem to Marxists and anarchist alike, the cry for a constitution, for a responsible and a responsive government, and even for law or *nomos* has been clearly articulated—and committed to print!—by the oppressed for centuries against the capricious rule exercised by monarchs, nobles, and bureaucrats. The libertarian opposition to law, not to speak of government as such, has been as silly as the image of a snake swallowing its tail. What remains in the end is nothing but a retinal afterimage that has no existential reality.

The issues raised in the preceding pages are of more than academic interest. As we enter the twenty-first century, social radicals need a socialism—libertarian and revolutionary—that is neither an extension of the peasant-craft “associationism” that lies at the core of anarchism nor the proletarianism that lies at the core of revolutionary syndicalism and Marxism. However fashionable the traditional ideologies (particularly anarchism) may be among young people today, a truly progressive socialism that is informed by libertarian as well as Marxian ideas but transcends these older ideologies must provide intellectual leadership. For political radicals today to simply resuscitate Marxism, anarchism, or revolutionary syndicalism and endow them with ideological immortality would be obstructive to the development of a relevant radical movement. A new and comprehensive revolutionary outlook is needed, one that is capable of systematically addressing the generalized issues that may potentially bring most of society into opposition to an ever-evolving and changing capitalist system.

The clash between a predatory society based on indefinite expansion and nonhuman nature has given rise to an ensemble of ideas that has emerged as the explication of the present social crisis and meaningful radical change. Social ecology, a coherent vision of social development that intertwines the mutual impact of hierarchy and class on the civilizing of humanity, has for decades argued that we must reorder social relations so that humanity can live in a protective balance with the natural world.⁷

Contrary to the simplistic ideology of “eco-anarchism,” social ecology maintains that an ecologically oriented society can be progressive rather than regressive, placing a strong emphasis not on primitivism, austerity, and denial but on material pleasure and ease. If a

society is to be capable of making life not only vastly enjoyable for its members but also leisurely enough that they can engage in the intellectual and cultural self-cultivation that is necessary for creating civilization and a vibrant political life, it must not denigrate technics and science but bring them into accord with visions human happiness and leisure. Social ecology is an ecology not of hunger and material deprivation but of plenty; it seeks the creation of a rational society in which waste, indeed excess, will be controlled by a new system of values; and when or if shortages arise as a result of irrational behavior, popular assemblies will establish rational standards of consumption by democratic processes. In short, social ecology favors management, plans, and regulations formulated democratically by popular assemblies, not freewheeling forms of behavior that have their origin in individual eccentricities.

It is my contention that Communalism is the overarching political category most suitable to encompass the fully thought out and systematic views of social ecology, including libertarian municipalism and dialectical naturalism.⁸ As an ideology, Communalism draws on the best of the older Left ideologies—Marxism and anarchism, more properly the libertarian socialist tradition—while offering a wider and more relevant scope for our time. From Marxism, it draws the basic project of formulating a rationally systematic and coherent socialism that integrates philosophy, history, economics, and politics. Avowedly dialectical, it attempts to infuse theory with practice. From anarchism, it draws its commitment to antistatism and confederalism, as well as its recognition that hierarchy is a basic problem that can be overcome only by a libertarian socialist society.⁹

The choice of the term Communalism to encompass the philosophical, historical, political, and organizational components of a socialism for the twenty-first century has not been a flippant one. The word originated in the Paris Commune of 1871, when the armed people of the French capital raised barricades not only to defend the city council of Paris and its administrative substructures but also to create a nationwide confederation of cities and towns to replace the republican nation-state. Communalism as an ideology is not sullied by the individualism and the often explicit antirationalism of anarchism; nor does it carry the historical burden of Marxism's authoritarianism as embodied in Bolshevism. It does not focus on the factory as its principal social arena or on the industrial proletariat as its main historical agent; and it does not reduce the free community of the future to a fanciful medieval village. Its most important goal is clearly spelled out in a conventional dictionary definition: Communalism, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, is "a theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely bound in a federation."¹⁰

Communalism seeks to recapture the meaning of politics in its broadest, most emancipatory sense, indeed, to fulfill the historic potential of the municipality as the developmental arena of mind and discourse. It conceptualizes the municipality, potentially at least, as a

transformative development beyond organic evolution into the domain of social evolution. The city is the domain where the archaic blood-tie that was once limited to the unification of families and tribes, to the exclusion of outsiders, was—juridically, at least—dissolved. It became the domain where hierarchies based on parochial and sociobiological attributes of kinship, gender, and age could be eliminated and replaced by a free society based on a shared common humanity. Potentially, it remains the domain where the once-feared stranger can be fully absorbed into the community—initially as a protected resident of a common territory and eventually as a citizen, engaged in making policy decisions in the public arena. It is above all the domain where institutions and values have their roots not in zoology but in civil human activity.

Looking beyond these historical functions, the municipality constitutes the only domain for an association based on the free exchange of ideas and a creative endeavor to bring the capacities of consciousness to the service of freedom. It is the domain where a mere animalistic adaptation to an existing and pre-given environment can be radically supplanted by proactive, rational intervention into the world—indeed, a world yet to be made and molded by reason—with a view toward ending the environmental, social, and political insults to which humanity and the biosphere have been subjected by classes and hierarchies. Freed of domination as well as material exploitation—indeed, recreated as a rational arena for human creativity in all spheres of life—the municipality becomes the ethical space for the good life. Communalism is thus no contrived product of mere fancy: it expresses an abiding concept and practice of political life, formed by a dialectic of social development and reason.

As an explicitly political body of ideas, Communalism seeks to recover and advance the development of the city (or commune) in a form that accords with its greatest potentialities and historical traditions. This is not to say that Communalism accepts the municipality as it is today. Quite to the contrary, the modern municipality is infused with many statist features and often functions as an agent of the bourgeois nation-state. Today, when the nation-state still seems supreme, the rights that modern municipalities possess cannot be dismissed as the epiphenomena of more basic economic relations. Indeed, to a great degree, they are the hard-won gains of commoners, who long defended them against assaults by ruling classes over the course of history—even against the bourgeoisie itself.

The concrete political dimension of Communalism is known as libertarian municipalism, about which I have previously written extensively.¹¹ In its libertarian municipalist program, Communalism resolutely seeks to eliminate statist municipal structures and replace them with the institutions of a libertarian polity. It seeks to radically restructure cities' governing institutions into popular democratic assemblies based on neighborhoods, towns, and villages. In these popular assemblies, citizens—including the middle classes as well as the working classes—deal with community affairs on a face-to-face basis, making policy

decisions in a direct democracy, and giving reality to the ideal of a humanistic, rational society.

Minimally, if we are to have the kind of free social life to which we aspire, democracy should be our form of a shared political life. To address problems and issues that transcend the boundaries of a single municipality, in turn, the democratized municipalities should join together to form a broader confederation. These assemblies and confederations, by their very existence, could then challenge the legitimacy of the state and statist forms of power. They could expressly be aimed at replacing state power and statecraft with popular power and a socially rational transformative politics. And they would become arenas where class conflicts could be played out and where classes could be eliminated.

Libertarian municipalists do not delude themselves that the state will view with equanimity their attempts to replace professionalized power with popular power. They harbor no illusions that the ruling classes will indifferently allow a Communalist movement to demand rights that infringe on the state's sovereignty over towns and cities. Historically, regions, localities, and above all towns and cities have desperately struggled to reclaim their local sovereignty from the state (albeit not always for high-minded purposes). Communalists' attempt to restore the powers of towns and cities and to knit them together into confederations can be expected to evoke increasing resistance from national institutions. That the new popular-assemblyist municipal confederations will embody a dual power against the state that becomes a source of growing political tension is obvious. Either a Communalist movement will be radicalized by this tension and will resolutely face all its consequences, or it will surely sink into a morass of compromises that absorb it back into the social order that it once sought to change. How the movement meets this challenge is a clear measure of its seriousness in seeking to change the existing political system and the social consciousness it develops as a source of public education and leadership.

Communalism constitutes a critique of hierarchical and capitalist society as a whole. It seeks to alter not only the political life of society but also its economic life. On this score, its aim is not to nationalize the economy or retain private ownership of the means of production but to municipalize the economy. It seeks to integrate the means of production into the existential life of the municipality, such that every productive enterprise falls under the purview of the local assembly, which decides how it will function to meet the interests of the community as a whole. The separation between life and work, so prevalent in the modern capitalist economy, must be overcome so that citizens' desires and needs, the artful challenges of creation in the course of production, and role of production in fashioning thought and self-definition are not lost. "Humanity makes itself," to cite the title of V. Gordon Childe's book on the urban revolution at the end of the Neolithic age and the rise of cities, and it does so not only intellectually and esthetically, but by expanding human needs as well as the productive methods for satisfying them. We discover ourselves—our

potentialities and their actualization—through creative and useful work that not only transforms the natural world but leads to our self-formation and self-definition.

We must also avoid the parochialism and ultimately the desires for proprietorship that have afflicted so many self-managed enterprises, such as the “collectives” in the Russian and Spanish revolutions. Not enough has been written about the drift among many “socialistic” self-managed enterprises, even under the red and red-and-black flags, respectively, of revolutionary Russia and revolutionary Spain, toward forms of collective capitalism that ultimately led many of these concerns to compete with one another for raw materials and markets.¹²

Most importantly, in Communalist political life, workers of different occupations would take their seats in popular assemblies not as workers—printers, plumbers, foundry workers and the like, with special occupational interests to advance—but as citizens, whose overriding concern should be the general interest of the society in which they live. Citizens should be freed of their particularistic identity as workers, specialists, and individuals concerned primarily with their own particularistic interests. Municipal life should become a school for the formation of citizens, both by absorbing new citizens and by educating the young, while the assemblies themselves should function not only as permanent decision-making institutions but as arenas for educating the people in handling complex civic and regional affairs.¹³

In a Communalist way of life, conventional economics, with its focus on prices and scarce resources, would be replaced by ethics, with its concern for human needs and the good life. Human solidarity—or *philia*, as the Greeks called it—would replace material gain and egotism. Municipal assemblies would become not only vital arenas for civic life and decision-making but centers where the shadowy world of economic logistics, properly coordinated production, and civic operations would be demystified and opened to the scrutiny and participation of the citizenry as a whole. The emergence of the new citizen would mark a transcendence of the particularistic class being of traditional socialism and the formation of the “new man” which the Russian revolutionaries hoped they could eventually achieve. Humanity would now be able to rise to the universal state of consciousness and rationality that the great utopians of the nineteenth century and the Marxists hoped their efforts would create, opening the way to humanity’s fulfillment as a species that embodies reason rather than material interest and that affords material post-scarcity rather than an austere harmony enforced by a morality of scarcity and material deprivation.¹⁴

Classical Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C.E., the source of the Western democratic tradition, was based on face-to-face decision-making in communal assemblies of the people and confederations of those municipal assemblies. For more than two millennia,

the political writings of Aristotle recurrently served to heighten our awareness of the city as the arena for the fulfillment of human potentialities for reason, self-consciousness, and the good life. Appropriately, Aristotle traced the emergence of the polis from the family or oikos—i.e., the realm of necessity, where human beings satisfied their basically animalistic needs, and where authority rested with the eldest male. But the association of several families, he observed, “aim[ed] at something more than the supply of daily needs”¹⁵; this aim initiated the earliest political formation, the village. Aristotle famously described man (by which he meant the adult Greek male¹⁶) as a “political animal” (politikon zoon) who presided over family members not only to meet their material needs but as the material precondition for his participation in political life, in which discourse and reason replaced mindless deeds, custom, and violence. Thus, “[w]hen several villages are united in a single complete community (koinonon), large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing,” he continued, “the polis comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life.”¹⁷

For Aristotle, and we may assume also for the ancient Athenians, the municipality’s proper functions were thus not strictly instrumental or even economic. As the locale of human consociation, the municipality, and the social and political arrangements that people living there constructed, was humanity’s telos, the arena par excellence where human beings, over the course of history, could actualize their potentiality for reason, self-consciousness, and creativity. Thus for the ancient Athenians, politics denoted not only the handling of the practical affairs of a polity but civic activities that were charged with moral obligation to one’s community. All citizens of a city were expected to participate in civic activities as ethical beings.

Examples of municipal democracy were not limited to ancient Athens. Quite to the contrary, long before class differentiations gave rise to the state, many relatively secular towns produced the earliest institutional structures of local democracy. Assemblies of the people may have existed in ancient Sumer, at the very beginning of the so-called “urban revolution” some seven or eight thousand years ago. They clearly appeared among the Greeks, and until the defeat of the Gracchus brothers, they were popular centers of power in republican Rome. They were nearly ubiquitous in the medieval towns of Europe and even in Russia, notably in Novgorod and Pskov, which, for a time, were among the most democratic cities in the Slavic world. The assembly, it should be emphasized, began to approximate its truly modern form in the neighborhood Parisian sections of 1793, when they became the authentic motive forces of the Great Revolution and conscious agents for the making of a new body politic. That they were never given the consideration they deserve in the literature on democracy, particularly democratic Marxist tendencies and revolutionary syndicalists, is dramatic evidence of the flaws that existed in the revolutionary tradition.

These democratic municipal institutions normally existed in combative tension with

grasping monarchs, feudal lords, wealthy families, and freebooting invaders until they were crushed, frequently in bloody struggles. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that every great revolution in modern history had a civic dimension that has been smothered in radical histories by an emphasis on class antagonisms, however important these antagonisms have been. Thus it is unthinkable that the English Revolution of the 1640s can be understood without singling out London as its terrain; or, by the same token, any discussions of the various French Revolutions without focusing on Paris, or the Russian Revolutions without dwelling on Petrograd, or the Spanish Revolution of 1936 without citing Barcelona as its most advanced social center. This centrality of the city is not a mere geographic fact; it is, above all, a profoundly political one, which involved the ways in which revolutionary masses aggregated and debated, the civic traditions that nourished them, and the environment that fostered their revolutionary views.

Libertarian municipalism is an integral part of the Communalist framework, indeed its praxis, just as Communalism as a systematic body of revolutionary thought is meaningless without libertarian municipalism. The differences between Communalism and authentic or “pure” anarchism, let alone Marxism, are much too great to be spanned by a prefix such as anarcho-, social, neo-, or even libertarian. Any attempt to reduce Communalism to a mere variant of anarchism would be to deny the integrity of both ideas—indeed, to ignore their conflicting concepts of democracy, organization, elections, government, and the like. Gustave Lefrancais, the Paris Commune who may have coined this political term, adamantly declared that he was “a Communalist, not an anarchist.”¹⁸

Above all, Communalism is engaged with the problem of power.¹⁹ In marked contrast to the various kinds of communitarian enterprises favored by many self-designated anarchists, such as “people’s” garages, print shops, food coops, and backyard gardens, adherents of Communalism mobilize themselves to electorally engage in a potentially important center of power—the municipal council—and try to compel it to create legislatively potent neighborhood assemblies. These assemblies, it should be emphasized, would make every effort to delegitimize and depose the statist organs that currently control their villages, towns, or cities and thereafter act as the real engines in the exercise of power. Once a number of municipalities are democratized along communalist lines, they would methodically confederate into municipal leagues and challenge the role of the nation-state and, through popular assemblies and confederal councils, try to acquire control over economic and political life.

Finally, Communalism, in contrast to anarchism, decidedly calls for decision-making by majority voting as the only equitable way for a large number of people to make decisions. Authentic anarchists claim that this principle—the “rule” of the minority by the majority—is authoritarian and propose instead to make decisions by consensus. Consensus, in which single individuals can veto majority decisions, threatens to abolish society as such. A free

society is not one in which its members, like Homer's lotus-eaters, live in a state of bliss without memory, temptation, or knowledge. Like it or not, humanity has eaten of the fruit of knowledge, and its memories are laden with history and experience. In a lived mode of freedom—contrary to mere café chatter—the rights of minorities to express their dissenting views will always be protected as fully as the rights of majorities. Any abridgements of those rights would be instantly corrected by the community—hopefully gently, but if unavoidable, forcefully—lest social life collapse into sheer chaos. Indeed, the views of a minority would be treasured as potential source of new insights and nascent truths that, if abridged, would deny society the sources of creativity and developmental advances—for new ideas generally emerge from inspired minorities that gradually gain the centrality they deserve at a given time and place—until, again, they too are challenged as the conventional wisdom of a period that is beginning to pass away and requires new (minority) views to replace frozen orthodoxies.

It remains to ask: how are we to achieve this rational society? One anarchist writer would have it that the good society (or a true “natural” disposition of affairs, including a “natural man”) exists beneath the oppressive burdens of civilization like fertile soil beneath the snow. It follows from this mentality that all we are obliged to do to achieve the good society is to somehow eliminate the snow, which is to say capitalism, nation-states, churches, conventional schools, and other almost endless types of institutions that perversely embody domination in one form or another. Presumably an anarchist society—once state, governmental, and cultural institutions are merely removed—would emerge intact, ready to function and thrive as a free society. Such a “society,” if one can even call it such, would not require that we proactively create it: we would simply let the snow above it melt away. The process of rationally creating a free Communalist society, alas, will require substantially more thought and work than embracing a mystified concept of aboriginal innocence and bliss.

A Communalist society should rest, above all, on the efforts of a new radical organization to change the world, one that has a new political vocabulary to explain its goals, and a new program and theoretical framework to make those goals coherent. It would, above all, require dedicated individuals who are willing to take on the responsibilities of education and, yes, leadership. Unless words are not to become completely mystified and obscure a reality that exists before our very eyes, it should minimally be acknowledged that leadership always exists and does not disappear because it is clouded by euphemisms such as “militants” or, as in Spain, “influential militants.” It must also be acknowledged that many individuals in earlier groups like the CNT were not just “influential militants” but outright leaders, whose views were given more consideration—and deservedly so!—than those of others because they were based on more experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as the psychological traits that were needed to provide effective guidance. A serious libertarian approach to leadership would indeed acknowledge the reality and crucial importance of

leaders—all the more to establish the greatly needed formal structures and regulations that can effectively control and modify the activities of leaders and recall them when the membership decides their respect is being misused or when leadership becomes an exercise in the abusive exercise of power.

A libertarian municipalist movement should function, not with the adherence of flippant and tentative members, but with people who have been schooled in the movement's ideas, procedures and activities. They should, in effect, demonstrate a serious commitment to their organization—an organization whose structure is laid out explicitly in a formal constitution and appropriate bylaws. Without a democratically formulated and approved institutional framework whose members and leaders can be held accountable, clearly articulated standards of responsibility cease to exist. Indeed, it is precisely when a membership is no longer responsible to its constitutional and regulatory provisions that authoritarianism develops and eventually leads to the movement's immolation. Freedom from authoritarianism can best be assured only by the clear, concise, and detailed allocation of power, not by pretensions that power and leadership are forms of "rule" or by libertarian metaphors that conceal their reality. It has been precisely when an organization fails to articulate these regulatory details that the conditions emerge for its degeneration and decay.

Ironically, no stratum has been more insistent in demanding its freedom to exercise its will against regulation than chiefs, monarchs, nobles, and the bourgeoisie; similarly even well-meaning anarchists have seen individual autonomy as the true expression of freedom from the "artificialities" of civilization. In the realm of true freedom—that is, freedom that has been actualized as the result of consciousness, knowledge, and necessity—to know what we can and cannot do is more cleanly honest and true to reality than to avert the responsibility of knowing the limits of the lived world. Said a very wise man more than a century and a half ago: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please."

Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser: Capitalism's Crisis of Care

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Nancy Fraser is a professor of philosophy and politics at The New School for Social Research and one of the most respected critical theorists working today. In her latest book *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, Fraser contends with liberal feminism's troubling convergence with capitalism, and the ways in which feminism can provide a veneer of liberation for a system of relentless exploitation. Advancing a critique of capitalism and a radically different vision of feminism, she shows how gender justice must lie at the heart of any struggle for an egalitarian society. Lately, Fraser has turned to address what she calls a "crisis of care." Her essay of that title appears in issue 100 of *New Left Review* (July/August).

Sarah Leonard: What is social reproduction, and why does it lie at the core of your feminist analysis?

Nancy Fraser: Social reproduction is about the creation and maintenance of social bonds. One part of this has to do with the ties between the generations—so, birthing and raising children and caring for the elderly. Another part is about sustaining horizontal ties among friends, family, neighborhoods, and community. This sort of activity is absolutely essential to society. Simultaneously affective and material, it supplies the "social glue" that underpins social cooperation. Without it, there would be no social organization—no economy, no polity, no culture. Historically, social reproduction has been gendered. The lion's share of responsibility for it has been assigned to women, although men have always performed some of it too.

The rise of capitalism intensified this gender division—by splitting economic production off from social reproduction, treating them as two separate things, located in two distinct institutions and coordinated in two different ways. Production moved into factories and

offices, where it was considered “economic” and remunerated with cash wages. Reproduction was left behind, relegated to a new private domestic sphere, where it was sentimentalized and naturalized, performed for the sake of “love” and “virtue,” as opposed to money. Well, that was the theory at least. In fact, social reproduction was never situated exclusively within the confines of the private household, but has been located as well in neighborhoods, public institutions, and civil society; and some of it has been commodified. Nevertheless, the gendered separation of social reproduction from economic production constitutes the principal institutional basis for women’s subordination in capitalist societies. So for feminism, there can be no more central issue than this.

Leonard: In your judgment, we have entered a crisis of care. What does that mean and how have we arrived here?

Fraser: In capitalist societies, the capacities available for social reproduction are accorded no monetized value. They are taken for granted, treated as free and infinitely available “gifts,” which require no attention or replenishment. It’s assumed that there will always be sufficient energies to sustain the social connections on which economic production, and society more generally, depend. This is very similar to the way that nature is treated in capitalist societies, as an infinite reservoir from which we can take as much as we want and into which we can dump any amount of waste. In fact, neither nature nor social reproductive capacities are infinite; both of them can be stretched to the breaking point. Many people already appreciate this in the case of nature, and we are starting to understand it as well in the case of “care.” When a society simultaneously withdraws public support for social reproduction and conscripts the chief providers of it into long and grueling hours of paid work, it depletes the very social capacities on which it depends. This is exactly our situation today. The current, financialized form of capitalism is systematically consuming our capacities to sustain social bonds, like a tiger that eats its own tail. The result is a “crisis of care” that is every bit as serious and systemic as the current ecological crisis, with which it is, in any case, intertwined.

To understand how we got here, I would contrast this form of capitalism with previous forms. It is a common idea that the history of capitalism consists of a succession of different regimes of accumulation—for example, liberal capitalism, state-managed (or social-democratic) capitalism, and neoliberal financialized capitalism. Scholars usually distinguish between these regimes in terms of the distinctive ways in which states and markets are related in each. But they have neglected the relation between production and reproduction, which is equally consequential. That relation is a defining feature of capitalist society and belongs at the center of our analysis of it. We can go a long way toward understanding capitalism’s history by focusing on how social reproduction is organized in each of its phases: for any given era, how much of “care work” is commodified? How much is supported through state or corporate provision? How much is located in households? In

neighborhoods? In civil society?

On this basis, we can trace a historical path from the so-called liberal capitalism of the nineteenth century to the state-managed regime of the mid-twentieth and on to the financialized capitalism of the present day. In a nutshell: liberal capitalism *privatized* social reproduction; state-managed capitalism partially *socialized* it; financialized capitalism is increasingly *commodifying* it. In each case, a specific organization of social reproduction went with a distinctive set of gender and family ideals: from the liberal-capitalist vision of “separate spheres” to the social-democratic model of the “family wage” to the neoliberal financialized norm of the “two-earner family.” Let me explain.

The case of liberal capitalism is pretty clear. States largely looked on from the sidelines as industrialists dragooned newly proletarianized people, including women and children, into the factories and mines. The result was a crisis of social reproduction, which prompted a public outcry and campaigns for “protective legislation.” But such policies could not possibly solve the problem, and their effect was to leave working-class and peasant communities to fend for themselves as best they could. Nevertheless, this form of capitalism was culturally generative. Recasting social reproduction as the province of women within the private family, it invented the new, bourgeois imaginary of domesticity, “separate spheres,” “the haven in the heartless world,” and “the angel in the house,” even as it deprived most people of the conditions needed to realize those ideals.

Wracked by crisis, the liberal regime gave way in the twentieth century to a new, state-managed variant of capitalist society. In this phase, which was based on mass production and mass consumption, social reproduction was partially socialized, through state and corporate provision of “social welfare.” And the increasingly quaint model of “separate spheres” gave way to the new, more “modern” norm of the “family wage.” According to that norm, which had the strong support of labor movements, the industrial workingman should be paid enough to support his whole family, enabling his wife to devote herself full-time to their children and household. Again, only a relatively privileged minority achieved this ideal; but it was aspirational for many more—at least, in the wealthy North Atlantic states of the capitalist core. The colonies and post-colonies were excluded from these arrangements, which rested on continuing predation of the global South. And there were built-in racial asymmetries in the United States, where domestic and agricultural workers were excluded from social security and other forms of public provision. And of course, the family wage institutionalized women’s dependency and heteronormativity. So state-managed capitalism was no golden age, but still quite different from what we have today.

Today, of course, the family wage ideal is dead. It’s a casualty, on the one hand, of the fall in real wages, which makes it impossible to support a family on a single salary (unless one belongs to the 1 percent); and on the other hand, of the success of feminism, which

delegitimized the idea of women's dependency that was built into the family wage. As a result of this one-two punch, we now have the new norm of the "two-earner family." Sounds lovely, doesn't it—assuming you're not single? Like the family wage ideal, however, this too is an obfuscation. It mystifies the steep rise in the number of hours of paid work now required to support a household, and if the household includes children or elderly relatives or people who are sick or disabled and cannot function as full-time wage earners, then so much the worse. And if it's a single-parent family, it's even worse than that. Now add to this that the two-earner ideal is being promoted at a time of cutbacks in state provision. Between the need for increased working hours and the cutback in public services, the financialized capitalist regime is systematically depleting our capacities for sustaining social bonds. This form of capitalism is stretching our "caring" energies to the breaking point. This "crisis of care" should be understood structurally. By no means contingent or accidental, it is the expression, under current conditions, of a tendency to social-reproductive crisis that is inherent in capitalist society, but that takes an especially acute form in the present regime of financialized capitalism.

Leonard: Can you talk more about feminism's role in this crisis? Feminists were not aiming for a struggling two-earner household.

Fraser: No, of course not. But there's still a deep and disturbing question about what role feminism has played in all of this. Feminists rejected the ideal of the family wage as an institutionalization of female dependency—and rightly so. But we did so at just the moment when the relocation of manufacturing kicked the bucket out from under the idea economically. In another world, feminism and shifts in industry might not have reinforced one another, but in this world they did. As a result, even though feminist movements did not in any way *cause* that economic shift, we ended up unwittingly supplying some legitimation for it. We provided some charisma, some ideological ballast to others' agendas.

But let's not forget, meanwhile, that there really are neoliberal feminists who are completely on board with this agenda, who represent the 1 percent. Dare I say it looks like we're about to elect one of them as president of the United States. Neoliberal feminists *are* feminists, by the way; we can't say they're not. But in that strand of feminism we see feminist ideas simplified, truncated, and reinterpreted in market-friendly terms, as for example, when we come to think of women's subordination in terms of discrimination that prevents talented women from rising to the top. Such thinking validates the entire hierarchical corporate imaginary. It legitimates a worldview that is fundamentally hostile to the interests of the majority of women, indeed of all people throughout the world. And this version of feminism provides an emancipatory veneer for neoliberal predation.

Leonard: Can you say more about how the distribution of care work in our financialized economy pits women against one another?

Fraser: Absolutely. We now have a dual organization of care work in which those who can afford domestic help simply pay for it, while those who cannot scramble to take care of their families, often by doing the paid care work for the first group, and often at very, very low wages with virtually no protections. We're starting to see campaigns for rights and living wages in this sector. So clearly, that is a direct pitting of interests against one another. I always thought that Sheryl Sandberg's "lean in" idea was ironic; it is only possible for her readership to envision leaning in at the corporate boardroom in so far as they can lean *on* the low-paid care workers who clean their toilets and their homes, diaper their children, care for their aging parents, and so on.

And we have to talk about race here. It is, after all, chiefly immigrant women of color, African-American women, and Latino women who are doing this work. You need only go to any park in a middle-class neighborhood of New York City to see this—it's crystal clear. There are countries whose entire so-called "development" strategy is to facilitate emigration of women to wealthy countries and regions for this purpose. The Philippines, for instance, depends very heavily on remittances from the domestic workers it sends abroad. And this is a state-organized labor exchange—it's the state strategy of development. The states in question have been subjected to structural adjustment. They are indebted, cash-strapped, and in need of hard currency, and they have no way to get it other than sending their women out to do this work, leaving their own kids and families behind in the care of other poor people. I'm not suggesting, by the way, that care work should never be a paid job, but it makes a big difference how it's paid, how it's organized, and by whom.

Leonard: Is there specific organizing work that you see addressing these problems in a way that gets to their root?

Fraser: There's a tremendous amount of organizing and activism going on, a lot of creativity, a lot of energy. But it remains rather dispersed and doesn't rise to the level of a counter-hegemonic project to change the organization of social reproduction. If you put together struggles for a shorter work week, for an unconditional basic income, for public child care, for the rights of migrant domestic workers and workers who do care work in for-profit nursing homes, hospitals, child care centers—then add struggles over clean water, housing, and environmental degradation, especially in the global South—what it adds up to, in my opinion, is a demand for some new way of organizing social reproduction.

Struggles over social reproduction are virtually ubiquitous. They just don't carry that label. But if it came to pass that these struggles did understand themselves in this way, there would be a powerful basis for linking them together in a broad movement for social transformation. And if they also understood that the structural basis of today's crisis of care is capitalism's inherent drive to subordinate reproduction to production, then things could get really interesting.

Leonard: Given the growing interest in socialism among young Americans, do you relate a struggle over social reproduction to a struggle for socialism?

Fraser: Absolutely. I call myself a democratic socialist, just as Bernie Sanders does, but we're living in a time where we have to frankly admit that we don't know exactly what that means. We know that it doesn't mean anything like the authoritarian command economy, single-party model of Communism. We know it means something deeper and more robust and egalitarian than social democracy. We know that it can't be nation-state bounded in a world where exploitation and expropriation and extraction are thoroughly transnational. We know all the things that it can't be, in other words, but we have a hard time defining the positive program.

One piece that I would insist on is that reimagining social reproduction must be central to any form of socialism that we could claim as desirable in the twenty-first century. How should the reproduction/production distinction be reinvented today, and what can replace the two-earner family? It's interesting—if you look at the history of socialism, even the old utopian socialism that Marx and Engels famously rejected, there was a great focus on what I'm calling social reproduction: how to organize family and community life and so on. It was utopian in ways that are not workable for us, but the problematic was there, and even in the history of modern industrial socialism, Marxian socialism, and non-Marxian industrial socialism, this problematic has flitted in and out of view. For the most part it has been treated as secondary to the problem of how to organize industrialization and plan production. But if you focus on one pole of the production/reproduction dyad alone the other will come back and bite you in ways that are unintended and that will vitiate the whole project.

Leonard: Many of the questions that you raise about social life and the family have come to seem utopian again, like some remnant of the 1960s, and not necessarily central to a socialist program. And yet, you argue that we're actually at a crisis point—these issues *must* be central. The challenge of social reproduction is so fundamental to everyone's lived day-to-day experience that it's been surprising to me that it's often absent in the current revival of socialism.

Fraser: I agree very strongly with that. Given the acuteness of this crisis of social reproduction, it would be utopian, in the bad sense, for the left not to be focusing on this. The idea that we could somehow bring back manufacturing, that's what's utopian—again, in the bad sense. Unlike the idea that you could build a society that assumes every adult is a person with primary care responsibilities, community engagements, and social commitments. *That's* not utopian. It's a vision based on what human life is really like.

Leonard: Do you see a positive role for technology in all this, or does mechanizing domestic

labor just lead to more leaning in? We've heard a lot lately about egg freezing at Google, which is designed to allow women to work longer before having kids. Since we tend to think that lots of mundane industrial work should be mechanized, do you see care work in a similar way? Or is it too intimate for that?

Fraser: I'm certainly not a Luddite. I very much appreciate having an electric light to read by at night, being able to Skype with you from far away, and so on and so forth. I'm not against even those technologies that I've written critically about, like egg freezing or mechanical breast milk pumps. The question is context: how they're produced and used, by whom, and for whose benefit. So I could easily imagine a context in which the availability of those things could be a legitimate choice. I'm not at all in the business of trying to shame anybody for the very constrained choices that we make between very bad and limited options.

I also think that activities oriented to sustaining social connection contain an ineliminable personal element. They are by definition interpersonal, involving intersubjective communication and in some cases, physical touching. And that militates against the idea of a total mechanization of care. But then again, I doubt we can envision the total automation of anything, if that means the elimination of all human input.

Leonard: Right, because in a way we're just talking about time. We mechanize things like care to save ourselves time, because we don't have enough. And only in a situation in which you have ample time do you really figure out what you want to mechanize anyway.

Fraser: I feel quite sure that I don't want to be washing all of my laundry by hand and I already know there are lots of things I don't want to spend my time doing. I'd love to have more time to do other things, including have talks like this.

Maurizio Lazzarato and Éric Alliez: To Our Enemies (A Nuestros Enemigos - incluido en

Español)

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1. We are living in the time of the subjectivation of civil wars. We did not leave the period of triumph of the market, automation of governmentality, and depoliticization of the economy of debt to go back to the era of “world views” and the conflicts between them. We have entered a time of building new war machines.

2. Capitalism and neoliberalism carry wars within them like clouds carry storms. While the financialization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to total war and the Russian Revolution, the 1929 crash and European civil wars, contemporary financialization is at the helm of global civil war and controls all its polarizations.

3. Since 2011, the multiple forms of subjectivation of civil wars have deeply altered both the semiology of capital and the pragmatics of the struggle to keep the manifold powers of war from being the perpetual framework of life. Among the experiments with anticapitalist machines, Occupy Wall Street in the US, the Indignados in Spain, the student movements in Chile and Quebec, and Greece in 2015 all fought with unequal arms against the debt

economy and austerity policies. The “Arab Spring,” the major protests in Brazil, and the Gezi Park clashes in Turkey circulated the same watchwords of organization and disorder throughout the Global South. Nuit Debout in France is the latest development in a cycle of conflict and occupation that may have started with Tiananmen Square in 1989. On the side of power, neoliberalism promotes an authoritarian and policed post-democracy managed by market technicians to stoke the flames of its predatory economic policies, while the new right (or “strong right”) declares war on foreigners, immigrants, Muslims, and the underclasses in the name of the “de-demonized” extreme right. This extreme right openly comes to occupy the terrain of civil wars, which it subjectivizes by rekindling *racial class warfare*. Neofascist hegemony over the processes of subjectivation is confirmed by the renewed war on the autonomy of women and the becoming-minor of sexuality (in France, “La Manif pour tous”) as an *extension of the endocolonial domain of civil war*.

The era of limitless deterritorialization under Thatcher and Reagan is now followed by the racist, nationalist, sexist, and xenophobic reterritorialization of Trump, who has already become the leader of the new fascisms. The American Dream has been transformed into the nightmare of an insomniac planet.

4. There is a flagrant imbalance between the war machines of Capital and the new fascisms on the one hand, and the multiform struggles against the world-system of new capitalism on the other. It is a political imbalance but also an *intellectual* one. This text focuses on a void, a blank, a theoretical and practical repressed which is, however, always at the heart of the power and powerlessness of revolutionary movements: the concept of “war” and “civil war.”

5. “It’s like being in a war,” was heard in Athens during the weekend of July 11-12, 2015. And for good reason. The population was faced with a large-scale strategy of continuing war by means of debt: it completed the destruction of Greece and, at the same time, triggered the self-destruction of the “construction of Europe.” The goal of the European Commission, the ECB, and the IMF was never mediation or finding compromise but defeating the adversary on an open field.

The statement “It’s like being in a war” should be immediately corrected: *it is a war*. The reversibility of war and economy is at the very basis of capitalism. And it has been a long time since Carl Schmitt revealed the “pacifist” hypocrisy of neoliberalism by reestablishing the continuity between economy and war: the economy pursues the objectives of war through other means (“blocking credit, embargo on raw materials, devaluation of foreign currency”).

Two superior officers in the Chinese Air Force, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, define financial offensives as “bloodless wars”; a *cold* violence, just as cruel and effective as “bloody wars.” With globalization, as they explain, “while constricting the battlespace in the

narrow sense, at the same time we have turned the entire world into a battlefield in the broad sense.”

The expansion of war and the multiplication of its domain names has led to the establishment of a continuum between war, economy, and politics. Yet from the beginning, liberalism has been a *philosophy of total war*.

(Pope Francis seems to be preaching in the desert when he asserts, with a clarity that is lacking in politicians, experts of all stripes, and even the most hardened critics of capitalism, “Let’s recognize it. *The world is in a state of war in bits and pieces* ... When I speak of war, I talk about real war. Not a war of religion. No. There is a war of interests. There is a war for money. There is a war for natural resources. There is a war for domination of peoples. This is the war.”)

6. During that same year of 2015, a few months after the defeat of the Greek “radical left,” the president of the French Republic announced on the evening of November 13 that France was “at war” and declared a state of emergency. The law authorizing him to do so and authorizing the suspension of “democratic freedoms” to grant “extraordinary” powers to the administration of public security had been passed in 1955 during the colonial war in Algeria. Implemented in New Caledonia in 1984 and during the “suburban riots” in 2005, the state of emergency brought colonial and postcolonial war back into the spotlight.

What happened in Paris on an awful night in November is what occurs daily in cities in the Middle East. This is the horror that the millions of refugees “pouring” into Europe are fleeing. They are visible evidence of the oldest colonialist technology to regulate migratory movement by its “apocalyptic” extension in the “infinite wars” started by Christian fundamentalist George Bush and his cabinet of neocons. Neocolonial war is no longer taking place only in the “margins” of the world. In every way possible, it moves through the “center” by taking on the figure of the “internal Islamist enemy,” immigrants, refugees, and migrants. The eternal outcasts are not left out: the poor and impoverished workers, those in unstable jobs and long-term unemployment, and the “endocolonized” on both sides of the Atlantic ...

7. The “stability pact” (“financial” state of emergency in Greece) and the “security pact” (“political” state of emergency in France) are two sides of the same coin. Constantly dismantling and restructuring the world-economy, the flows of credit and the flows of war are, with the States that *integrate* them, the condition of existence, production, and reproduction of contemporary capitalism.

Money and war are the global market’s military police, which is still referred to as the “governance” of the world-economy. In Europe, it is incarnated in the financial state of

emergency that shrinks workers' rights and social security rights (health, education, housing, and so forth.) to nothing while the antiterrorist state of emergency suspends their already emptied "democratic" rights.

8. Our first thesis is that war, money, and the State are constitutive or constituent forces, in other words the ontological forces of capitalism. The critique of political economy is insufficient to the extent that the economy does not replace war but continues it by other means, ones that go necessarily through the State: monetary regulation and the legitimate monopoly on force for internal and external wars. To produce the genealogy of capitalism and reconstruct its "development," we must always engage and articulate together the critique of political economy, critique of war, and critique of the State.

The accumulation of and monopoly on property titles by Capital, and the accumulation of and monopoly on force by the State feed off of each other. Without the external exercise of war, and without the exercise of civil war by the State inside its borders, it would never have been possible to amass capital. And inversely: without the capture and valorization of wealth carried out by capital, the State would never have been able to exercise its administrative, legal, and governmental functions or organize armies of ever growing power. The expropriation of the means of production and the appropriation of the means of exercising force are the conditions of the formation of Capital and the constitution of the State that develop in parallel. Military proletarianization goes hand in hand with industrial proletarianization.

9. But what "war" are we talking about? Does the concept of "global civil war," advanced at the same time (1961) by Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt, impose itself at the end of the Cold War as the most appropriate form? Do the categories of "infinite war," "just war," and "war on terrorism" correspond to the new conflicts of globalization?

And is it possible to use the syntagma of "the" war without immediately assuming the point of view of the State? The history of capitalism, since its origin, is crisscrossed and constituted by a multiplicity of wars: wars of class(es), race(s), sex(es),

wars of subjectivity(ies), wars of civilization (the singular gave its capital letter to History). "*Wars*" and not *the* war is our second thesis. "*Wars*" as the foundation of internal and external order, as organizing principle of society. Wars, not only wars of class, but also military, civil, sex, and race wars are integrated so constitutively in the definition of Capital that *Das Kapital* should be rewritten from start to finish to account for their dynamic in its most real functioning. At all of the major turning points in capitalism, we do not find the "creative destruction" of Schumpeter carried out by entrepreneurial innovation, but always the enterprise of civil wars.

10. Since 1492, Year One of Capital, the formation of capital has unfolded through this multiplicity of wars on both sides of the Atlantic. Internal colonization (Europe) and external colonization (Americas) are parallel, mutually reinforcing, and together define the world-economy. This dual colonization defines what Marx called primitive accumulation. Unlike, if not Marx, then at least a certain long-dominant Marxism, we do not restrict primitive accumulation to a mere phase in the development of capital destined to be surpassed in and through the “specific mode of production” of capital. We consider that it constitutes a condition of existence that constantly accompanies the development of capital, such that if primitive accumulation is pursued in all of the forms of expropriation of a continued accumulation, then *the wars* of class, race, sex, and subjectivity are *endless*. The conjunction of these wars, and in particular the wars against the poor and women in the internal colonization of Europe, and the wars against the “first” peoples in external colonization, precede and make possible the “class struggles” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by projecting them into a common war against *productive pacification*. Pacification obtained by any means (“bloody” and “not bloody”) is the goal of the war of capital as “social relationship.”

11. “By focusing exclusively on the relationship between capitalism and industrialism, in the end, Marx gives no attention to the close connection between these two phenomena and militarism.”

War and the arms race have been conditions for both economic development and technological and scientific innovation since the start of capitalism. Each stage in the development of capital invents its own “Keynesianism of war.” The only fault in this thesis by Giovanni Arrighi is in limiting itself to “the” war between States and paying “no attention to the close connection” that Capital, technology, and science maintain with civil wars. A colonel in the French army sums up the directly economic functions of war as follows: “We are producers like any other.” He reveals one of the most troubling aspects of the concept of production and work, an aspect that economists, unions, and Marxist recruits avoid thematizing.

12. Since primitive accumulation, the strategic force of destructure/restructure of the world-economy is Capital in its most deterritorialized form: financial Capital (which had to be expressed as such before receiving its letters of credit from Balzac). Foucault critiques the Marxist conception of Capital because there will never be “the” capitalism but always a historically qualified “political-institutional ensemble” (an argument that received much attention).

Although Marx never in fact used the concept of capitalism, we must still maintain the distinction between it and “the” capital, because “its” logic, the logic of financial Capital (M-M’), is (still historically) the most operational one. What has been called the “financial

crisis" shows it at work even in its most "innovative" post-critical performances. The multiplicity of State forms and transnational organizations of power, the plurality of political-institutional ensembles defining the variety of national "capitalisms," are violently centralized, subordinated, and commanded by globalized financial Capital in its aim of "growth." The multiplicity of power formations submits, more or less docilely (albeit more rather than less), to the logic of the most abstract property, that of the creditors. "The" Capital, with "its" logic (M-M') of planetary reconfiguration of space through the constant acceleration of time, is an historical category, a "real abstraction" as Marx would say, producing the most real effects of universal privatization of "human" and "nonhuman" Earth, and removal of the "commons" of the world. (Think here of the land grabbing which is both a direct consequence of the "food crisis" of 2007-08 and one of the *exit strategies* from the "worst financial crisis in Global History.") We are using the "historical-transcendental" concept of Capital in this way by pulling it (and dropping the capitalization as often as possible) towards the systematic colonization of the world of which it is the long-distance agent.

13. Why doesn't the development of capitalism go through cities, which have long served as its vectors, but instead through the State? Because only the State, throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, was capable of achieving the expropriation/appropriation of the multiplicity of war machines of the feudal period (turned towards "private" wars), to centralize them and institutionalize them in a war machine transformed into an army with the legitimate monopoly on public force. The division of labor does not only take place in production, but also in the specialization of war and the professional soldier. While centralization and the exercise of force in a "regulated army" is the work of the State, it is also the condition for the accumulation of "wealth" by "civilized and opulent" nations at the expense of poor nations (Adam Smith)—which, in truth, are not nations at all but "wastelands" (John Locke).

14. The constitution of the State as a "megamachine" of power thus relied on the capture, centralization, and institutionalization of the means of exercising force. Starting in the 1870s, however, and especially under the effect of the brutal acceleration imposed by "total war," Capital was no longer satisfied with maintaining a relationship of alliance with the State and its war machine. It started to appropriate it *directly* by integrating its instruments of polarization. The construction of this new capitalist war machine integrated the State, its sovereignty (political and military), and all its "administrative" functions by profoundly modifying them under the direction of financial Capital. Starting with the First World War, the model of scientific organization of labor and the military model of organization and execution of war deeply penetrated the political functioning of the State by reconfiguring the liberal division of powers under the hegemony of the executive, while inversely the politics, not of the State but of Capital, were imposed on the organization, execution, and aims of war. With neoliberalism, this process of capture of the war machine and the State

was fully realized in the axiomatics of Integrated Global Capitalism. In this way, we bring in Félix Guattari's IGC to serve our third thesis: Integrated Global Capitalism is the axiomatic of the war machine of Capital that was able to submit the military deterritorialization of the State to the superior deterritorialization of Capital. The machine of production is no longer distinguishable from the war machine integrating civilian and military, peace and war, in the single process of a continuum of isomorphic power in all its forms of valuation.

15. In the *longue durée* of the capital/war relationship, the outbreak of "economic war" between imperialisms at the end of the nineteenth century represented a turning point, a process of irreversible transformation of war and the economy, the State and society. *Financial capital transmits the unlimitedness (of its valuation) to war by making it into a power without limits (total war)*. The conjunction of the unlimited flows of war and the unlimited flows of financial capital during the First World War pushed back the limits of both production and war by raising the terrifying specter of *unlimited production for unlimited war*. The two World Wars are responsible for realizing, for the first time, "total" subordination (or "real subsumption") of society and its "productive forces" to the war economy through the organization and planning of production, labor and technology, science and consumption, at a hitherto unheard-of scale. Implicating the entire population in "production" was accompanied by the constitution of processes of mass subjectivation through the management of communications techniques and opinion creation. From the establishment of unprecedented research programs with the aim of "destruction" came scientific and technological discoveries that, transferred to the production of the means of production of "goods," would constitute the new generations of constant capital. This entire process was missed by workerism (and post-workerism) in the short-circuit which made it situate the Great Bifurcation of Capital in the 1960s-70s, combined in this way with the critical movement of self-affirmation of workerism *in the factory* (it would take the arrival of post-Fordism to reach the "diffuse factory").

16. The origin of *welfare* cannot be found solely within a logic of insurance against the risks of "work" and the risks of "life" (the Foucauldian school under managerial influence), but first and foremost in the logic of war. *Warfare* largely anticipated and prepared *welfare*. Starting in the 1930s, the two became indistinguishable.

The enormous militarization of total war, which transformed internationalist workers into sixty million nationalist soldiers, was "democratically" reterritorialized by and in welfare. The conversion of the war economy into the liberal economy, the conversion of the science and technology of the instruments of death into the means of production of "goods," and the subjective conversion of the militarized population into "workers" took place thanks to the enormous apparatus of state intervention along with the active participation of "companies" (corporate capitalism). Warfare pursued its logic by other means in welfare. Keynes himself recognized that the policy of effective demand had no other model of realization than a

regime of war.

17. Inserted in 1951 into his “Overcoming Metaphysics” (the overcoming in question was conceived during the Second World War), this passage by Heidegger defines exactly what the concepts of “war” and “peace” became at the end of the two total wars:

Changed into their deformation of essence, “war” and “peace” are taken up into erring, and disappear into the mere course of the escalating manufacture of what can be manufactured, because they have become unrecognizable with regard to any distinction. The question of when and where there will be peace cannot be answered not because the duration of war is unfathomable, but rather because the question already asks about something which no longer exists, since war is no longer anything which could terminate in peace. War has become a distortion of the consumption of beings which is continued in peace ... This long war in its length slowly eventuated not in a peace of the traditional kind, but rather in a condition in which warlike characteristics are no longer as such at all and peaceful characteristics have become meaningless and without content.

This passage was later rewritten at the end of *A Thousand Plateaus* to indicate how technical-scientific “capitalization” (referring to what we call the “military-industrial, scientific-university complex”) creates “a new conception of security as materialized war, as organized insecurity or molecularized, distributed, programmed catastrophe.”¹⁸ The Cold War is intensive socialization and capitalization of the real subsumption of society and populations in the war economy of the first half of the twentieth century. It constitutes a

fundamental passage in the formation of the war machine of Capital, which does not appropriate the State and war without subordinating “knowledge” to its process. The Cold War stoked the hearth of technological and scientific production that had been lit by the total wars. Practically all contemporary technologies, and in particular cybernetics, computer, and information technologies, are, directly or indirectly, the fruits of total war re-totalized by the Cold War. What Marx called “General Intellect” was born of/in the “production for destruction” of total wars before being reorganized by the Operational Research (OR) of the Cold War into an instrument (R&D) of command and control of the world-economy. The war history of Capital constrains us to this other major displacement in relation to workerism and post-workerism. The order of labor (“*Arbeit macht frei*”) established by the total wars is transformed into a liberal-democratic order of full employment as an instrument of social regulation of the “mass-worker” *and of his or her entire domestic environment*.

19. '68 is situated under the sign of the political reemergence of wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity that the “working class” could no longer subordinate to its “interests” and its forms of organization (party-unions). While labor struggles “reached the highest absolute level of their development” in the United States (“Marx in Detroit”), they were also defeated there after the major postwar strikes. The destruction of the “order of labor” resulting from the total wars and continuing in and through the Cold War as “order of the wage system” was not only the objective of a new working class rediscovering its political autonomy; it is also the effect of the multiplicity of all these wars which, somewhat all at the same time, were inflamed by tracing back from the singular experiences of “group-subjects” that carried them towards their common conditions of subjective rupture. The wars of decolonization and of all the racial minorities, women, students, homosexuals, alternatives, antinuclear protesters, “*lumpen*,” and so on. thus define new modalities of struggle, organization, and especially the delegitimation of all “power-knowledge” throughout the 1960s and 1970s. We not only read the history of capital through war, but we also read war through '68, which is the only possible way to make the theoretical and political passage from “war” to “wars.”

20. War and strategy occupy a central place in the revolutionary theory and practices of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Lenin, Mao, and General Giap conscientiously annotated Clausewitz's *On War*. '68 Thought refrained from theorizing war, with the notable exception of Foucault and Deleuze-Guattari. They not only proposed a reversal of Clausewitz's celebrated formula (“war is the continuation of politics by other means”) by analyzing the modalities through which “politics” can be seen as war continued by other means: *they especially and radically transformed the concepts of war and politics*. Their problematization of war is strictly dependent on the mutations of capitalism and the struggles against it in the so-called postwar period, before crystallizing in the strange revolution of 1968: the “microphysics” of power advanced by Foucault is a critical

actualization of “generalized civil war”; the “micropolitics” of Deleuze and Guattari is inseparable from the concept of “war machine” (its construction relies on the activist history of one of the pair). If we isolate the analysis of power relations from generalized civil war, like Foucauldian critique does, the theory of governmentality is nothing more than a variant of neoliberal “governance”; and if we cut micropolitics from the war machine, like Deleuzian critique does (it also undertakes an aestheticization of the war machine), only “minorities” remain that are powerless in the face of Capital, which keeps the initiative.

21. Siliconed by new technologies that they developed into a strike force, the military combined technological machines with war machines. The political consequences were formidable.

The USA planned and led the war in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003) based on the principle “Clausewitz out, computer in” (the same operation is oddly enough used by the defenders of cognitive capitalism who dissolve the omni-reality of wars into computers and the “algorithms” that had served in the first place to wage them). Believing they could dissipate the “fog” and uncertainty of war by nothing less than the primitive accumulation of information, the strategists of hyper-technological, digital, and “network-centered” war quickly changed their tune: the victory that was so rapidly attained turned into a political-military disaster that triggered the disaster in the Middle East *in situ*, without sparing the Free World that had arrived bringing its values like a remake of *Dr. Strangelove*. The technical machine explains nothing and can do little without mobilizing all the other “machines.” Its efficacy and its very existence depend on the social machine and the war machine, which most often outline the technological avatar according to a model of society based on divisions, dominations, and exploitations (*Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, to use the title of Kristin Ross’s fine work).

22. If the fall of the Wall delivered the death certificate of a mummy whose Communist prehistory ’68 made us forget, and if it is to be considered a nonevent (as the thesis of the *End of History* states in its melancholic way), the bloody fiasco of the imperial war machine’s first post-Communist wars made history. In part because of the debate that it started *inside the military*, where a new paradigm of war appeared. An antithesis of the industrial wars of the twentieth century, the new paradigm is defined as a “war amongst the population.” This concept, which inspired an improbable “military humanism,” is one we make our own by returning its meaning to the source and real terrain of wars of capital, and by rewriting this “war within the population” in the plural of *our wars*. The population is the battlefield in which counter-insurrectional operations of all kinds are underway. At the same time, and indistinguishably, they are both military and nonmilitary because they also carry the new identity of “bloody wars” and “non-bloody wars.”

Under Fordism, the State not only guaranteed State territorialization of Capital but also of

war. As a result, globalization cannot not free capital from State control without also freeing war, which passes to a superior power of continuity by integrating the *plane of capital*. Deterritorialized war is no longer inter-State war at all, but an uninterrupted succession of multiple wars against populations, definitively sending “governmentality” to the side of governance in a common enterprise of denial of global civil wars. What is governed and what allows governing are the *divisions* that project wars into the heart of the population at the level of the real content of biopolitics. A biopolitical governmentality of war as differential distribution of instability and norm of “daily life.” The complete opposite of the Great Narrative of the liberal birth of biopolitics taking place in a famous course at the Collège de France in the break between the 1970s and 1980s.

23. Accentuating divisions, aggravating the polarization of every capitalist society, the debt economy transforms “global civil war” (Schmitt, Arendt) into interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on “minorities,” wars on women, wars of subjectivity. The matrix of these civil wars is the colonial war. Colonial war was never a war between States but, in essence, a war *in and against* the population, where the distinctions between war and peace, between combatants and noncombatants, between economy, politics, and military were never used. Colonial war in and against populations is the model of the war that financial Capital unleashed starting in the 1970s in the name of a neoliberalism of combat. Its war is both fractal and transversal: fractal, because it indefinitely produces its invariance by constant changes of scale (its “irregularity” and the “cracks” it introduces operate at different scales of reality); and transversal, because it is simultaneously deployed at the macropolitical level (by playing on all of the major binary oppositions: social classes, whites and nonwhites, men and women) and the micropolitical level (by molecular “engineering” privileging the highest interactions). It can also connect the civilian and military levels in the Global South and North, in the Souths and Norths of *everyone* (or almost everyone). Its first characteristic is therefore to be less *indiscriminate* war than *irregular* war.

The war machine of capital which, in the early 1970s, definitively integrated the State, war, science, and technology, clearly declares the strategy of contemporary globalization: to bring to an end the very short history of reforming capital—*Full Employment in a Free Society*, according to the manifesto of Lord Beveridge published in 1944—by attacking everywhere and with all means available the conditions of reality of the power struggle that imposed it. An infernal creativity is deployed by the neoliberal political project in pretending to grant the “market” superhuman qualities of *information processing*: the market as the ultimate cyborg.

24. The newfound consistency of neofascisms starting with the financial “crisis” in 2008 represents a turning point in the waging of wars amongst populations. Their dimensions, both fractal and transversal, take on a new and formidable effectiveness in dividing and polarizing. The new fascisms challenge all of the resources of the “war machine,” because if

the “war machine” is not necessarily identified with the State, it can also escape the control of Capital. While the war machine of Capital governs through an “inclusive” differentiation of property and wealth, the new fascist war machines function through exclusion based on racial, sexual, and national identity. The two logics seem incompatible. In reality, they inevitably converge (see “national preference”) as the state of economic and political emergency takes residence in the coercive time of *global flow*.

If the capitalist machine continues to be wary of the new fascisms, it is not because of its democratic principles (Capital is ontologically antidemocratic!) or the *rule of law*, but because, as it happened with Nazism, post-fascism can claim its “autonomy” from the war machine of Capital and escape its control. Isn’t this exactly the same thing that has happened with Islamic fascisms? Trained, armed, and financed by the US, they turned their weapons against the superpower and its allies who had instrumentalized them. From the West to the lands of the Caliphate *and back*, the neo-Nazis of all allegiances embody the suicidal subjectivation of the capitalist “mode of destruction.” It is also the final scene of the return of the colonial repressed: the jihadists of generation 2.0 haunt Western cities like their most internal enemy. Endocolonization also becomes the generalized conjugation of “topical” violence of the most intense domination of capitalism over populations. As for the process of convergence or divergence between the capitalist and neofascist war machines, it will depend on the evolution of the civil wars now underway and the risks that a future revolutionary process could run for private property, and more generally for the power of Capital.

25. Prohibiting the reduction of Capital and capitalism to a system or a structure, and of the economy to a history of self-enclosed cycles, wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity also challenge every principle of autonomy in science and technology, every highway to “complexity” or emancipation forged by the progressive (and now accelerationist) idea of the movement of History.

Wars constantly inject the indeterminacy of conflict into open strategic relationships, making inoperable every mechanism of self-regulation (of the market) or every regulation by feedback (“man-machine systems” open their “complexity” to the future). The strategic “opening” of war is radically other than the systematic opening of cybernetics, which was not born in/of war for nothing. Capital is not structure or system; it is “machine” and *war machine*, of which the economy, politics, technology, the State, the media, and so forth are only the articulations informed by strategic relations. In the Marxist/Marxian definition of *General Intellect*, the war machine integrating science, technology, and communication into its functioning is curiously neglected for the sake of a hardly credible “communism of capital.”

26. Capital is not a mode of production without being at the same time a mode of

destruction. The infinite accumulation that constantly moves its limits to recreate them again is at the same time unlimited, widespread destruction. The gains in productivity and gains of destructiveness progress in parallel. They manifest themselves in the generalized war that scientists prefer to call “Anthropocene” rather than “Capitalocene,” even if, in all evidence, the destruction of the environments in and through which we live does not begin with “humans” and their growing needs, but with Capital. The “ecological crisis” is not the result of a modernity and humanity blinded to the negative effects of technological development but the “fruit of the will” of some people to exercise absolute domination over other people through a global geopolitical strategy of unlimited exploitation of all human and nonhuman resources.

Capitalism is not only the deadliest civilization in the history of humanity, the one that introduced us to the “shame of being human”; it is also the civilization through which labor, science, and technology have created—another (absolute) privilege in the history of humanity—the possibility of (absolute) annihilation of all species and the planet that houses them. In the meantime, the “complexity” of (saving) “nature” still offers the prospect of healthy profits combining the *techno* utopia of *geoengineering* and the reality of the new markets of “polluting rights.” At the confluence of one and the other, the Capitalocene does not send capitalism to the Moon (it has been there and back); it completes the global merchandizing of the planet by asserting its rights to the well-named troposphere.

27. The logic of Capital is the logistics of an infinite valuation. It implies the accumulation of a power that is not merely economic for the simple reason that it is complicated by strategic power and knowledge of the *strength* and *weakness* of the classes struggling, to which it is applied and with which they are in constant explanation. Foucault tells us that the Marxists turned their attention to the concept of “class” to the detriment of the concept of “struggle.” Knowledge of strategy is thus evacuated in favor of an alternative enterprise of pacification (Tronti offers the most *epic* version of this). Who is strong and who is weak? In what way did the strong become weak, and why did the weak become strong? How to strengthen oneself and weaken the other to dominate and exploit it? We propose to follow and reinvent the anticapitalist path of French Nietzscheism.

28. Capital came out the victor in the total wars and in the confrontation with global revolution, for which the number for us is 1968. Since then, it has gone from victory to victory, perfecting its *self-cooled motor*, where it verifies that the first function of power is to deny the existence of civil wars by erasing even the memory of them (pacification is a *scorched earth* policy). Walter Benjamin is there to remind us that reactivating the memory of the victories and defeats from which the victors take their domination can only come from the “defeated.” Problem: the “defeated” of ’68 threw out the bath water of civil wars with the old Leninist baby at the end of the “Hot Autumn” sealed by the failure of the dialectic of the “party of autonomy.” Entry into the “winter years” on the edge of a second Cold War

that ensures the triumph of the “people of capitalism” (“‘*People’s Capitalism*’—*This IS America!*”), the End of History will take the relay without stopping at a Gulf War that “did not take place.” Except there is a constellation of new wars, revolutionary machines, or mutant militants (Chiapas, Birmingham, Seattle, Washington, Genoa ...) and new defeats. The new writing generations describe “the missing people” dreaming of insomnia and destituent processes unfortunately reserved *for their friends*.

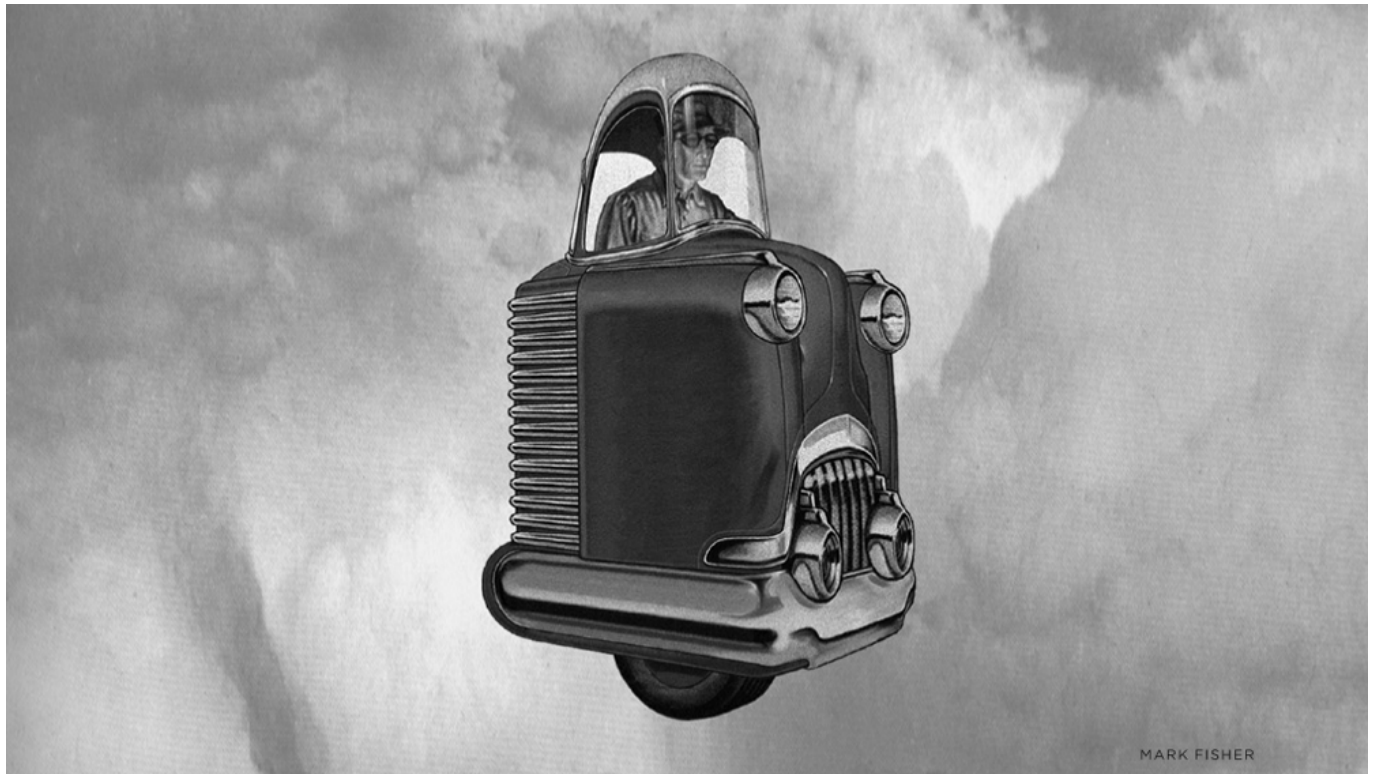
29. We will cut it short, in addressing *our enemies*. Because this text has no other object, under the economy and its “democracy,” behind the technological revolutions and “mass intellectuality” of the General Intellect, than to make heard the “rumble” of real wars now underway in all of their multiplicity. A multiplicity which is not to be made but *unmade and remade* to charge the “masses or flows,” which are doubly *subjects*, with new possibilities. On the side of relations of power as subject *to* war or/and on the side of strategic relationships that are capable of projecting them to the rank of subjects *of wars*, with “their mutations, their quanta of deterritorialization, their connections, their precipitations.” In short, it is a question of drawing the lessons from what seems to us like the failure of the thought of ’68 which we have inherited, even in our inability to think and construct a collective war machine equal to the civil war unleashed in the name of neoliberalism and the absolute primacy of the economy as exclusive policy of capital. Everything is taking place as if ’68 was unable *to think all the way*, not its defeat (there are, since the New Philosophers, professionals in the matter), but the warring order of reasons that broke its insistence through a *continuous destruction*, placed in the present infinitive of the struggles of “resistance.”

30. It is not a question, it is not at all a question of *stopping resistance*. It is a question of dropping a “theoricism” satisfied with a strategic discourse that is powerless in the face of what is happening. And what has happened to us. Because if the mechanisms of power are constitutive, to the detriment of strategic relationships and the wars taking place there, there can only be phenomena of “resistance” against them. With the success we all know. *Graecia docet*.

David Graeber: Of Flying Cars

and the Declining Rate of Profit

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A secret question hovers over us, a sense of disappointment, a broken promise we were given as children about what our adult world was supposed to be like. I am referring not to the standard false promises that children are always given (about how the world is fair, or how those who work hard shall be rewarded), but to a particular generational promise—given to those who were children in the fifties, sixties, seventies, or eighties—one that was never quite articulated as a promise but rather as a set of assumptions about what our adult world would be like. And since it was never quite promised, now that it has failed to come true, we're left confused: indignant, but at the same time, embarrassed at our own indignation, ashamed we were ever so silly to believe our elders to begin with.

Where, in short, are the flying cars? Where are the force fields, tractor beams, teleportation pods, antigravity sleds, tricorders, immortality drugs, colonies on Mars, and all the other technological wonders any child growing up in the mid-to-late twentieth century assumed would exist by now? Even those inventions that seemed ready to emerge—like cloning or cryogenics—ended up betraying their lofty promises. What happened to them?

We are well informed of the wonders of computers, as if this is some sort of unanticipated compensation, but, in fact, we haven't moved even computing to the point of progress that people in the fifties expected we'd have reached by now. We don't have computers we can

have an interesting conversation with, or robots that can walk our dogs or take our clothes to the Laundromat.

As someone who was eight years old at the time of the Apollo moon landing, I remember calculating that I would be thirty-nine in the magic year 2000 and wondering what the world would be like. Did I expect I would be living in such a world of wonders? Of course. Everyone did. Do I feel cheated now? It seemed unlikely that I'd live to see all the things I was reading about in science fiction, but it never occurred to me that I wouldn't see any of them.

At the turn of the millennium, I was expecting an outpouring of reflections on why we had gotten the future of technology so wrong. Instead, just about all the authoritative voices—both Left and Right—began their reflections from the assumption that we do live in an unprecedented new technological utopia of one sort or another.

The common way of dealing with the uneasy sense that this might not be so is to brush it aside, to insist all the progress that could have happened has happened and to treat anything more as silly. "Oh, you mean all that Jetsons stuff?" I'm asked—as if to say, but that was just for children! Surely, as grown-ups, we understand The Jetsons offered as accurate a view of the future as The Flintstones offered of the Stone Age.

Surely, as grown-ups, we understand The Jetsons offered as accurate a view of the future as The Flintstones did of the Stone Age.

Even in the seventies and eighties, in fact, sober sources such as National Geographic and the Smithsonian were informing children of imminent space stations and expeditions to Mars. Creators of science fiction movies used to come up with concrete dates, often no more than a generation in the future, in which to place their futuristic fantasies. In 1968, Stanley Kubrick felt that a moviegoing audience would find it perfectly natural to assume that only thirty-three years later, in 2001, we would have commercial moon flights, city-like space stations, and computers with human personalities maintaining astronauts in suspended animation while traveling to Jupiter. Video telephony is just about the only new technology from that particular movie that has appeared—and it was technically possible when the movie was showing. 2001 can be seen as a curio, but what about Star Trek? The Star Trek mythos was set in the sixties, too, but the show kept getting revived, leaving audiences for Star Trek Voyager in, say, 2005, to try to figure out what to make of the fact that according to the logic of the program, the world was supposed to be recovering from fighting off the rule of genetically engineered supermen in the Eugenics Wars of the nineties.

By 1989, when the creators of Back to the Future II were dutifully placing flying cars and anti-gravity hoverboards in the hands of ordinary teenagers in the year 2015, it wasn't clear

if this was meant as a prediction or a joke.

The usual move in science fiction is to remain vague about the dates, so as to render “the future” a zone of pure fantasy, no different than Middle Earth or Narnia, or like Star Wars, “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.” As a result, our science fiction future is, most often, not a future at all, but more like an alternative dimension, a dream-time, a technological Elsewhere, existing in days to come in the same sense that elves and dragon-slayers existed in the past—another screen for the displacement of moral dramas and mythic fantasies into the dead ends of consumer pleasure.



Might the cultural sensibility that came to be referred to as postmodernism best be seen as a prolonged meditation on all the technological changes that never happened? The question struck me as I watched one of the recent Star Wars movies. The movie was terrible, but I couldn't help but feel impressed by the quality of the special effects. Recalling the clumsy special effects typical of fifties sci-fi films, I kept thinking how impressed a fifties audience would have been if they'd known what we could do by now—only to realize, “Actually, no. They wouldn't be impressed at all, would they? They thought we'd be doing this kind of thing by now. Not just figuring out more sophisticated ways to simulate it.”

That last word—simulate—is key. The technologies that have advanced since the seventies are mainly either medical technologies or information technologies—largely, technologies of simulation. They are technologies of what Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco called the “hyper-real,” the ability to make imitations that are more realistic than originals. The postmodern sensibility, the feeling that we had somehow broken into an unprecedented new historical period in which we understood that there is nothing new; that grand historical narratives of progress and liberation were meaningless; that everything now was simulation, ironic repetition, fragmentation, and pastiche—all this makes sense in a technological environment in which the only breakthroughs were those that made it easier to create, transfer, and rearrange virtual projections of things that either already existed, or, we came to realize, never would. Surely, if we were vacationing in geodesic domes on Mars or toting about pocket-size nuclear fusion plants or telekinetic mind-reading devices no one would ever have been talking like this. The postmodern moment was a desperate way to take what could otherwise only be felt as a bitter disappointment and to dress it up as something epochal, exciting, and new.

In the earliest formulations, which largely came out of the Marxist tradition, a lot of this technological background was acknowledged. Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" proposed the term "postmodernism" to refer to the cultural logic appropriate to a new, technological phase of capitalism, one that had been heralded by Marxist economist Ernest Mandel as early as 1972. Mandel had argued that humanity stood at the verge of a "third technological revolution," as profound as the Agricultural or Industrial Revolution, in which computers, robots, new energy sources, and new information technologies would replace industrial labor—the "end of work" as it soon came to be called—reducing us all to designers and computer technicians coming up with crazy visions that cybernetic factories would produce.

End of work arguments were popular in the late seventies and early eighties as social thinkers pondered what would happen to the traditional working-class-led popular struggle once the working class no longer existed. (The answer: it would turn into identity politics.) Jameson thought of himself as exploring the forms of consciousness and historical sensibilities likely to emerge from this new age.

What happened, instead, is that the spread of information technologies and new ways of organizing transport—the containerization of shipping, for example—allowed those same industrial jobs to be outsourced to East Asia, Latin America, and other countries where the availability of cheap labor allowed manufacturers to employ much less technologically sophisticated production-line techniques than they would have been obliged to employ at home.

From the perspective of those living in Europe, North America, and Japan, the results did seem to be much as predicted. Smokestack industries did disappear; jobs came to be divided between a lower stratum of service workers and an upper stratum sitting in antiseptic bubbles playing with computers. But below it all lay an uneasy awareness that the postwork civilization was a giant fraud. Our carefully engineered high-tech sneakers were not being produced by intelligent cyborgs or self-replicating molecular nanotechnology; they were being made on the equivalent of old-fashioned Singer sewing machines, by the daughters of Mexican and Indonesian farmers who, as the result of WTO or NAFTA-sponsored trade deals, had been ousted from their ancestral lands. It was a guilty awareness that lay beneath the postmodern sensibility and its celebration of the endless play of images and surfaces.



Why did the projected explosion of technological growth everyone was expecting—the moon bases, the robot factories—fail to happen? There are two possibilities. Either our expectations about the pace of technological change were unrealistic (in which case, we need to know why so many intelligent people believed they were not) or our expectations were not unrealistic (in which case, we need to know what happened to derail so many credible ideas and prospects).

Most social analysts choose the first explanation and trace the problem to the Cold War space race. Why, these analysts wonder, did both the United States and the Soviet Union become so obsessed with the idea of manned space travel? It was never an efficient way to engage in scientific research. And it encouraged unrealistic ideas of what the human future would be like.

Could the answer be that both the United States and the Soviet Union had been, in the century before, societies of pioneers, one expanding across the Western frontier, the other across Siberia? Didn't they share a commitment to the myth of a limitless, expansive future, of human colonization of vast empty spaces, that helped convince the leaders of both superpowers they had entered into a "space age" in which they were battling over control of the future itself? All sorts of myths were at play here, no doubt, but that proves nothing about the feasibility of the project.

Some of those science fiction fantasies (at this point we can't know which ones) could have been brought into being. For earlier generations, many science fiction fantasies had been brought into being. Those who grew up at the turn of the century reading Jules Verne or H.G. Wells imagined the world of, say, 1960 with flying machines, rocket ships, submarines, radio, and television—and that was pretty much what they got. If it wasn't unrealistic in 1900 to dream of men traveling to the moon, then why was it unrealistic in the sixties to dream of jet-packs and robot laundry-maids?

In fact, even as those dreams were being outlined, the material base for their achievement was beginning to be whittled away. There is reason to believe that even by the fifties and sixties, the pace of technological innovation was slowing down from the heady pace of the first half of the century. There was a last spate in the fifties when microwave ovens (1954), the Pill (1957), and lasers (1958) all appeared in rapid succession. But since then, technological advances have taken the form of clever new ways of combining existing technologies (as in the space race) and new ways of putting existing technologies to consumer use (the most famous example is television, invented in 1926, but mass produced only after the war.) Yet, in part because the space race gave everyone the impression that remarkable advances were happening, the popular impression during the sixties was that the pace of technological change was speeding up in terrifying, uncontrollable ways.

Alvin Toffler's 1970 best seller *Future Shock* argued that almost all the social problems of the sixties could be traced back to the increasing pace of technological change. The endless outpouring of scientific breakthroughs transformed the grounds of daily existence, and left Americans without any clear idea of what normal life was. Just consider the family, where not just the Pill, but also the prospect of in vitro fertilization, test tube babies, and sperm and egg donation were about to make the idea of motherhood obsolete.

Humans were not psychologically prepared for the pace of change, Toffler wrote. He coined a term for the phenomenon: "accelerative thrust." It had begun with the Industrial Revolution, but by roughly 1850, the effect had become unmistakable. Not only was everything around us changing, but most of it—human knowledge, the size of the population, industrial growth, energy use—was changing exponentially. The only solution, Toffler argued, was to begin some kind of control over the process, to create institutions that would assess emerging technologies and their likely effects, to ban technologies likely to be too socially disruptive, and to guide development in the direction of social harmony.

While many of the historical trends Toffler describes are accurate, the book appeared when most of these exponential trends halted. It was right around 1970 when the increase in the number of scientific papers published in the world—a figure that had doubled every fifteen years since, roughly, 1685—began leveling off. The same was true of books and patents.

Toffler's use of acceleration was particularly unfortunate. For most of human history, the top speed at which human beings could travel had been around 25 miles per hour. By 1900 it had increased to 100 miles per hour, and for the next seventy years it did seem to be increasing exponentially. By the time Toffler was writing, in 1970, the record for the fastest speed at which any human had traveled stood at roughly 25,000 mph, achieved by the crew of Apollo 10 in 1969, just one year before. At such an exponential rate, it must have seemed reasonable to assume that within a matter of decades, humanity would be exploring other solar systems.

Since 1970, no further increase has occurred. The record for the fastest a human has ever traveled remains with the crew of Apollo 10. True, the commercial airliner Concorde, which first flew in 1969, reached a maximum speed of 1,400 mph. And the Soviet Tupolev Tu-144, which flew first, reached an even faster speed of 1,553 mph. But those speeds not only have failed to increase; they have decreased since the Tupolev Tu-144 was cancelled and the Concorde was abandoned.

None of this stopped Toffler's own career. He kept retooling his analysis to come up with new spectacular pronouncements. In 1980, he produced *The Third Wave*, its argument lifted from Ernest Mandel's "third technological revolution"—except that while Mandel thought these changes would spell the end of capitalism, Toffler assumed capitalism was eternal. By 1990, Toffler was the personal intellectual guru to Republican congressman Newt Gingrich, who claimed that his 1994 "Contract With America" was inspired, in part, by the understanding that the United States needed to move from an antiquated, materialist, industrial mind-set to a new, free-market, information age, Third Wave civilization.

There are all sorts of ironies in this connection. One of Toffler's greatest achievements was inspiring the government to create an Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). One of Gingrich's first acts on winning control of the House of Representatives in 1995 was defunding the OTA as an example of useless government extravagance. Still, there's no contradiction here. By this time, Toffler had long since given up on influencing policy by appealing to the general public; he was making a living largely by giving seminars to CEOs and corporate think tanks. His insights had been privatized.

Gingrich liked to call himself a "conservative futurologist." This, too, might seem oxymoronic; but, in fact, Toffler's own conception of futurology was never progressive. Progress was always presented as a problem that needed to be solved.

Toffler might best be seen as a lightweight version of the nineteenth-century social theorist Auguste Comte, who believed that he was standing on the brink of a new age—in his case, the Industrial Age—driven by the inexorable progress of technology, and that the social cataclysms of his times were caused by the social system not adjusting. The older feudal order had developed Catholic theology, a way of thinking about man's place in the cosmos perfectly suited to the social system of the time, as well as an institutional structure, the Church, that conveyed and enforced such ideas in a way that could give everyone a sense of meaning and belonging. The Industrial Age had developed its own system of ideas—science—but scientists had not succeeded in creating anything like the Catholic Church. Comte concluded that we needed to develop a new science, which he dubbed "sociology," and said that sociologists should play the role of priests in a new Religion of Society that would inspire everyone with a love of order, community, work discipline, and family values. Toffler was less ambitious; his futurologists were not supposed to play the

role of priests.

Gingrich had a second guru, a libertarian theologian named George Gilder, and Gilder, like Toffler, was obsessed with technology and social change. In an odd way, Gilder was more optimistic. Embracing a radical version of Mandel's Third Wave argument, he insisted that what we were seeing with the rise of computers was an "overthrow of matter." The old, materialist Industrial Society, where value came from physical labor, was giving way to an Information Age where value emerges directly from the minds of entrepreneurs, just as the world had originally appeared *ex nihilo* from the mind of God, just as money, in a proper supply-side economy, emerged *ex nihilo* from the Federal Reserve and into the hands of value-creating capitalists. Supply-side economic policies, Gilder concluded, would ensure that investment would continue to steer away from old government boondoggles like the space program and toward more productive information and medical technologies.

But if there was a conscious, or semi-conscious, move away from investment in research that might lead to better rockets and robots, and toward research that would lead to such things as laser printers and CAT scans, it had begun well before Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970) and Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* (1981). What their success shows is that the issues they raised—that existing patterns of technological development would lead to social upheaval, and that we needed to guide technological development in directions that did not challenge existing structures of authority—echoed in the corridors of power. Statesmen and captains of industry had been thinking about such questions for some time.



Industrial capitalism has fostered an extremely rapid rate of scientific advance and technological innovation—one with no parallel in previous human history. Even capitalism's greatest detractors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, celebrated its unleashing of the "productive forces." Marx and Engels also believed that capitalism's continual need to revolutionize the means of industrial production would be its undoing. Marx argued that, for

certain technical reasons, value—and therefore profits—can be extracted only from human labor. Competition forces factory owners to mechanize production, to reduce labor costs, but while this is to the short-term advantage of the firm, mechanization's effect is to drive down the general rate of profit.

For 150 years, economists have debated whether all this is true. But if it is true, then the decision by industrialists not to pour research funds into the invention of the robot factories that everyone was anticipating in the sixties, and instead to relocate their factories to labor-intensive, low-tech facilities in China or the Global South makes a great deal of sense.

As I've noted, there's reason to believe the pace of technological innovation in productive processes—the factories themselves—began to slow in the fifties and sixties, but the side effects of America's rivalry with the Soviet Union made innovation appear to accelerate. There was the awesome space race, alongside frenetic efforts by U.S. industrial planners to apply existing technologies to consumer purposes, to create an optimistic sense of burgeoning prosperity and guaranteed progress that would undercut the appeal of working-class politics.

These moves were reactions to initiatives from the Soviet Union. But this part of the history is difficult for Americans to remember, because at the end of the Cold War, the popular image of the Soviet Union switched from terrifyingly bold rival to pathetic basket case—the exemplar of a society that could not work. Back in the fifties, in fact, many United States planners suspected the Soviet system worked better. Certainly, they recalled the fact that in the thirties, while the United States had been mired in depression, the Soviet Union had maintained almost unprecedented economic growth rates of 10 percent to 12 percent a year—an achievement quickly followed by the production of tank armies that defeated Nazi Germany, then by the launching of Sputnik in 1957, then by the first manned spacecraft, the Vostok, in 1961.

It's often said the Apollo moon landing was the greatest historical achievement of Soviet communism. Surely, the United States would never have contemplated such a feat had it not been for the cosmic ambitions of the Soviet Politburo. We are used to thinking of the Politburo as a group of unimaginative gray bureaucrats, but they were bureaucrats who dared to dream astounding dreams. The dream of world revolution was only the first. It's also true that most of them—changing the course of mighty rivers, this sort of thing—either turned out to be ecologically and socially disastrous, or, like Joseph Stalin's one-hundred-story Palace of the Soviets or a twenty-story statue of Vladimir Lenin, never got off the ground.

After the initial successes of the Soviet space program, few of these schemes were realized, but the leadership never ceased coming up with new ones. Even in the eighties, when the

United States was attempting its own last, grandiose scheme, Star Wars, the Soviets were planning to transform the world through creative uses of technology. Few outside of Russia remember most of these projects, but great resources were devoted to them. It's also worth noting that unlike the Star Wars project, which was designed to sink the Soviet Union, most were not military in nature: as, for instance, the attempt to solve the world hunger problem by harvesting lakes and oceans with an edible bacteria called spirulina, or to solve the world energy problem by launching hundreds of gigantic solar-power platforms into orbit and beaming the electricity back to earth.

The American victory in the space race meant that, after 1968, U.S. planners no longer took the competition seriously. As a result, the mythology of the final frontier was maintained, even as the direction of research and development shifted away from anything that might lead to the creation of Mars bases and robot factories.

The standard line is that all this was a result of the triumph of the market. The Apollo program was a Big Government project, Soviet-inspired in the sense that it required a national effort coordinated by government bureaucracies. As soon as the Soviet threat drew safely out of the picture, though, capitalism was free to revert to lines of technological development more in accord with its normal, decentralized, free-market imperatives—such as privately funded research into marketable products like personal computers. This is the line that men like Toffler and Gilder took in the late seventies and early eighties.

In fact, the United States never did abandon gigantic, government-controlled schemes of technological development. Mainly, they just shifted to military research—and not just to Soviet-scale schemes like Star Wars, but to weapons projects, research in communications and surveillance technologies, and similar security-related concerns. To some degree this had always been true: the billions poured into missile research had always dwarfed the sums allocated to the space program. Yet by the seventies, even basic research came to be conducted following military priorities. One reason we don't have robot factories is because roughly 95 percent of robotics research funding has been channeled through the Pentagon, which is more interested in developing unmanned drones than in automating paper mills.

A case could be made that even the shift to research and development on information technologies and medicine was not so much a reorientation toward market-driven consumer imperatives, but part of an all-out effort to follow the technological humbling of the Soviet Union with total victory in the global class war—seen simultaneously as the imposition of absolute U.S. military dominance overseas, and, at home, the utter rout of social movements.

For the technologies that did emerge proved most conducive to surveillance, work discipline, and social control. Computers have opened up certain spaces of freedom, as

we're constantly reminded, but instead of leading to the workless utopia Abbie Hoffman imagined, they have been employed in such a way as to produce the opposite effect. They have enabled a financialization of capital that has driven workers desperately into debt, and, at the same time, provided the means by which employers have created "flexible" work regimes that have both destroyed traditional job security and increased working hours for almost everyone. Along with the export of factory jobs, the new work regime has routed the union movement and destroyed any possibility of effective working-class politics.

Meanwhile, despite unprecedented investment in research on medicine and life sciences, we await cures for cancer and the common cold, and the most dramatic medical breakthroughs we have seen have taken the form of drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, or Ritalin—tailor-made to ensure that the new work demands don't drive us completely, dysfunctionally crazy.

With results like these, what will the epitaph for neoliberalism look like? I think historians will conclude it was a form of capitalism that systematically prioritized political imperatives over economic ones. Given a choice between a course of action that would make capitalism seem the only possible economic system, and one that would transform capitalism into a viable, long-term economic system, neoliberalism chooses the former every time. There is every reason to believe that destroying job security while increasing working hours does not create a more productive (let alone more innovative or loyal) workforce. Probably, in economic terms, the result is negative—an impression confirmed by lower growth rates in just about all parts of the world in the eighties and nineties.

But the neoliberal choice has been effective in depoliticizing labor and overdetermining the future. Economically, the growth of armies, police, and private security services amounts to dead weight. It's possible, in fact, that the very dead weight of the apparatus created to ensure the ideological victory of capitalism will sink it. But it's also easy to see how choking off any sense of an inevitable, redemptive future that could be different from our world is a crucial part of the neoliberal project.

At this point all the pieces would seem to be falling neatly into place. By the sixties, conservative political forces were growing skittish about the socially disruptive effects of technological progress, and employers were beginning to worry about the economic impact of mechanization. The fading Soviet threat allowed for a reallocation of resources in directions seen as less challenging to social and economic arrangements, or indeed directions that could support a campaign of reversing the gains of progressive social movements and achieving a decisive victory in what U.S. elites saw as a global class war. The change of priorities was introduced as a withdrawal of big-government projects and a return to the market, but in fact the change shifted government-directed research away from programs like NASA or alternative energy sources and toward military, information, and medical technologies.

Of course this doesn't explain everything. Above all, it does not explain why, even in those areas that have become the focus of well-funded research projects, we have not seen anything like the kind of advances anticipated fifty years ago. If 95 percent of robotics research has been funded by the military, then where are the Klaatu-style killer robots shooting death rays from their eyes?

Obviously, there have been advances in military technology in recent decades. One of the reasons we all survived the Cold War is that while nuclear bombs might have worked as advertised, their delivery systems did not; intercontinental ballistic missiles weren't capable of striking cities, let alone specific targets inside cities, and this fact meant there was little point in launching a nuclear first strike unless you intended to destroy the world.

Contemporary cruise missiles are accurate by comparison. Still, precision weapons never do seem capable of assassinating specific individuals (Saddam, Osama, Qaddafi), even when hundreds are dropped. And ray guns have not materialized—surely not for lack of trying. We can assume the Pentagon has spent billions on death ray research, but the closest they've come so far are lasers that might, if aimed correctly, blind an enemy gunner looking directly at the beam. Aside from being unsporting, this is pathetic: lasers are a fifties technology. Phasers that can be set to stun do not appear to be on the drawing boards; and when it comes to infantry combat, the preferred weapon almost everywhere remains the AK-47, a Soviet design named for the year it was introduced: 1947.



The Internet is a remarkable innovation, but all we are talking about is a super-fast and globally accessible combination of library, post office, and mail-order catalogue. Had the Internet been described to a science fiction aficionado in the fifties and sixties and touted as the most dramatic technological achievement since his time, his reaction would have been disappointment. Fifty years and this is the best our scientists managed to come up with? We expected computers that would think!

Overall, levels of research funding have increased dramatically since the seventies. Admittedly, the proportion of that funding that comes from the corporate sector has increased most dramatically, to the point that private enterprise is now funding twice as much research as the government, but the increase is so large that the total amount of government research funding, in real-dollar terms, is much higher than it was in the sixties. “Basic,” “curiosity-driven,” or “blue skies” research—the kind that is not driven by the prospect of any immediate practical application, and that is most likely to lead to unexpected breakthroughs—occupies an ever smaller proportion of the total, though so much money is being thrown around nowadays that overall levels of basic research funding have increased.

Yet most observers agree that the results have been paltry. Certainly we no longer see anything like the continual stream of conceptual revolutions—genetic inheritance, relativity, psychoanalysis, quantum mechanics—that people had grown used to, and even expected, a hundred years before. Why?

Part of the answer has to do with the concentration of resources on a handful of gigantic projects: “big science,” as it has come to be called. The Human Genome Project is often held out as an example. After spending almost three billion dollars and employing thousands of scientists and staff in five different countries, it has mainly served to establish that there isn’t very much to be learned from sequencing genes that’s of much use to anyone else. Even more, the hype and political investment surrounding such projects demonstrate the degree to which even basic research now seems to be driven by political, administrative, and marketing imperatives that make it unlikely anything revolutionary will happen.

Here, our fascination with the mythic origins of Silicon Valley and the Internet has blinded us to what’s really going on. It has allowed us to imagine that research and development is now driven, primarily, by small teams of plucky entrepreneurs, or the sort of decentralized cooperation that creates open-source software. This is not so, even though such research teams are most likely to produce results. Research and development is still driven by giant bureaucratic projects.

What has changed is the bureaucratic culture. The increasing interpenetration of government, university, and private firms has led everyone to adopt the language, sensibilities, and organizational forms that originated in the corporate world. Although this might have helped in creating marketable products, since that is what corporate bureaucracies are designed to do, in terms of fostering original research, the results have been catastrophic.

My own knowledge comes from universities, both in the United States and Britain. In both countries, the last thirty years have seen a veritable explosion of the proportion of working

hours spent on administrative tasks at the expense of pretty much everything else. In my own university, for instance, we have more administrators than faculty members, and the faculty members, too, are expected to spend at least as much time on administration as on teaching and research combined. The same is true, more or less, at universities worldwide.

The growth of administrative work has directly resulted from introducing corporate management techniques. Invariably, these are justified as ways of increasing efficiency and introducing competition at every level. What they end up meaning in practice is that everyone winds up spending most of their time trying to sell things: grant proposals; book proposals; assessments of students' jobs and grant applications; assessments of our colleagues; prospectuses for new interdisciplinary majors; institutes; conference workshops; universities themselves (which have now become brands to be marketed to prospective students or contributors); and so on.

As marketing overwhelms university life, it generates documents about fostering imagination and creativity that might just as well have been designed to strangle imagination and creativity in the cradle. No major new works of social theory have emerged in the United States in the last thirty years. We have been reduced to the equivalent of medieval scholastics, writing endless annotations of French theory from the seventies, despite the guilty awareness that if new incarnations of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, or Pierre Bourdieu were to appear in the academy today, we would deny them tenure.

There was a time when academia was society's refuge for the eccentric, brilliant, and impractical. No longer. It is now the domain of professional self-marketers. As a result, in one of the most bizarre fits of social self-destructiveness in history, we seem to have decided we have no place for our eccentric, brilliant, and impractical citizens. Most languish in their mothers' basements, at best making the occasional, acute intervention on the Internet.



If all this is true in the social sciences, where research is still carried out with minimal

overhead largely by individuals, one can imagine how much worse it is for astrophysicists. And, indeed, one astrophysicist, Jonathan Katz, has recently warned students pondering a career in the sciences. Even if you do emerge from the usual decade-long period languishing as someone else's flunky, he says, you can expect your best ideas to be stymied at every point:

You will spend your time writing proposals rather than doing research. Worse, because your proposals are judged by your competitors, you cannot follow your curiosity, but must spend your effort and talents on anticipating and deflecting criticism rather than on solving the important scientific problems. . . . It is proverbial that original ideas are the kiss of death for a proposal, because they have not yet been proved to work.

That pretty much answers the question of why we don't have teleportation devices or antigravity shoes. Common sense suggests that if you want to maximize scientific creativity, you find some bright people, give them the resources they need to pursue whatever idea comes into their heads, and then leave them alone. Most will turn up nothing, but one or two may well discover something. But if you want to minimize the possibility of unexpected breakthroughs, tell those same people they will receive no resources at all unless they spend the bulk of their time competing against each other to convince you they know in advance what they are going to discover.

In the natural sciences, to the tyranny of managerialism we can add the privatization of research results. As the British economist David Harvie has reminded us, "open source" research is not new. Scholarly research has always been open source, in the sense that scholars share materials and results. There is competition, certainly, but it is "convivial." This is no longer true of scientists working in the corporate sector, where findings are jealously guarded, but the spread of the corporate ethos within the academy and research institutes themselves has caused even publicly funded scholars to treat their findings as personal property. Academic publishers ensure that findings that are published are increasingly difficult to access, further enclosing the intellectual commons. As a result, convivial, open-source competition turns into something much more like classic market competition.

There are many forms of privatization, up to and including the simple buying up and suppression of inconvenient discoveries by large corporations fearful of their economic effects. (We cannot know how many synthetic fuel formulae have been bought up and placed in the vaults of oil companies, but it's hard to imagine nothing like this happens.) More subtle is the way the managerial ethos discourages everything adventurous or quirky, especially if there is no prospect of immediate results. Oddly, the Internet can be part of the problem here. As Neal Stephenson put it:

Most people who work in corporations or academia have witnessed something like the following: A number of engineers are sitting together in a room, bouncing ideas off each other. Out of the discussion emerges a new concept that seems promising. Then some laptop-wielding person in the corner, having performed a quick Google search, announces that this “new” idea is, in fact, an old one; it—or at least something vaguely similar—has already been tried. Either it failed, or it succeeded. If it failed, then no manager who wants to keep his or her job will approve spending money trying to revive it. If it succeeded, then it’s patented and entry to the market is presumed to be unattainable, since the first people who thought of it will have “first-mover advantage” and will have created “barriers to entry.” The number of seemingly promising ideas that have been crushed in this way must number in the millions.

And so a timid, bureaucratic spirit suffuses every aspect of cultural life. It comes festooned in a language of creativity, initiative, and entrepreneurialism. But the language is meaningless. Those thinkers most likely to make a conceptual breakthrough are the least likely to receive funding, and, if breakthroughs occur, they are not likely to find anyone willing to follow up on their most daring implications.

Giovanni Arrighi has noted that after the South Sea Bubble, British capitalism largely abandoned the corporate form. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, Britain had instead come to rely on a combination of high finance and small family firms—a pattern that held throughout the next century, the period of maximum scientific and technological innovation. (Britain at that time was also notorious for being just as generous to its oddballs and eccentrics as contemporary America is intolerant. A common expedient was to allow them to become rural vicars, who, predictably, became one of the main sources for amateur scientific discoveries.)

Contemporary, bureaucratic corporate capitalism was a creation not of Britain, but of the United States and Germany, the two rival powers that spent the first half of the twentieth century fighting two bloody wars over who would replace Britain as a dominant world power—wars that culminated, appropriately enough, in government-sponsored scientific programs to see who would be the first to discover the atom bomb. It is significant, then, that our current technological stagnation seems to have begun after 1945, when the United States replaced Britain as organizer of the world economy.

Americans do not like to think of themselves as a nation of bureaucrats—quite the opposite—but the moment we stop imagining bureaucracy as a phenomenon limited to government offices, it becomes obvious that this is precisely what we have become. The final victory over the Soviet Union did not lead to the domination of the market, but, in fact, cemented the dominance of conservative managerial elites, corporate bureaucrats who use the pretext of short-term, competitive, bottom-line thinking to squelch anything likely to

have revolutionary implications of any kind.



If we do not notice that we live in a bureaucratic society, that is because bureaucratic norms and practices have become so all-pervasive that we cannot see them, or, worse, cannot imagine doing things any other way.

Computers have played a crucial role in this narrowing of our social imaginations. Just as the invention of new forms of industrial automation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had the paradoxical effect of turning more and more of the world's population into full-time industrial workers, so has all the software designed to save us from administrative responsibilities turned us into part- or full-time administrators. In the same way that university professors seem to feel it is inevitable they will spend more of their time managing grants, so affluent housewives simply accept that they will spend weeks every year filling out forty-page online forms to get their children into grade schools. We all spend increasing amounts of time punching passwords into our phones to manage bank and credit accounts and learning how to perform jobs once performed by travel agents, brokers, and accountants.

Someone once figured out that the average American will spend a cumulative six months of life waiting for traffic lights to change. I don't know if similar figures are available for how long it takes to fill out forms, but it must be at least as long. No population in the history of the world has spent nearly so much time engaged in paperwork.

In this final, stultifying stage of capitalism, we are moving from poetic technologies to bureaucratic technologies. By poetic technologies I refer to the use of rational and technical means to bring wild fantasies to reality. Poetic technologies, so understood, are as old as civilization. Lewis Mumford noted that the first complex machines were made of people. Egyptian pharaohs were able to build the pyramids only because of their mastery of administrative procedures, which allowed them to develop production-line techniques, dividing up complex tasks into dozens of simple operations and assigning each to one team

of workmen—even though they lacked mechanical technology more complex than the inclined plane and lever. Administrative oversight turned armies of peasant farmers into the cogs of a vast machine. Much later, after cogs had been invented, the design of complex machinery elaborated principles originally developed to organize people.

Yet we have seen those machines—whether their moving parts are arms and torsos or pistons, wheels, and springs—being put to work to realize impossible fantasies: cathedrals, moon shots, transcontinental railways. Certainly, poetic technologies had something terrible about them; the poetry is likely to be as much of dark satanic mills as of grace or liberation. But the rational, administrative techniques were always in service to some fantastic end.

From this perspective, all those mad Soviet plans—even if never realized—marked the climax of poetic technologies. What we have now is the reverse. It's not that vision, creativity, and mad fantasies are no longer encouraged, but that most remain free-floating; there's no longer even the pretense that they could ever take form or flesh. The greatest and most powerful nation that has ever existed has spent the last decades telling its citizens they can no longer contemplate fantastic collective enterprises, even if—as the environmental crisis demands— the fate of the earth depends on it.

What are the political implications of all this? First of all, we need to rethink some of our most basic assumptions about the nature of capitalism. One is that capitalism is identical with the market, and that both therefore are inimical to bureaucracy, which is supposed to be a creature of the state.

The second assumption is that capitalism is in its nature technologically progressive. It would seem that Marx and Engels, in their giddy enthusiasm for the industrial revolutions of their day, were wrong about this. Or, to be more precise: they were right to insist that the mechanization of industrial production would destroy capitalism; they were wrong to predict that market competition would compel factory owners to mechanize anyway. If it didn't happen, that is because market competition is not, in fact, as essential to the nature of capitalism as they had assumed. If nothing else, the current form of capitalism, where much of the competition seems to take the form of internal marketing within the bureaucratic structures of large semi-monopolistic enterprises, would come as a complete surprise to them.

Defenders of capitalism make three broad historical claims: first, that it has fostered rapid scientific and technological growth; second, that however much it may throw enormous wealth to a small minority, it does so in such a way as to increase overall prosperity; third, that in doing so, it creates a more secure and democratic world for everyone. It is clear that capitalism is not doing any of these things any longer. In fact, many of its defenders are retreating from claiming that it is a good system and instead falling back on the claim that it

is the only possible system—or, at least, the only possible system for a complex, technologically sophisticated society such as our own.

But how could anyone argue that current economic arrangements are also the only ones that will ever be viable under any possible future technological society? The argument is absurd. How could anyone know?

Granted, there are people who take that position—on both ends of the political spectrum. As an anthropologist and anarchist, I encounter anticivilizational types who insist not only that current industrial technology leads only to capitalist-style oppression, but that this must necessarily be true of any future technology as well, and therefore that human liberation can be achieved only by returning to the Stone Age. Most of us are not technological determinists.

But claims for the inevitability of capitalism have to be based on a kind of technological determinism. And for that very reason, if the aim of neoliberal capitalism is to create a world in which no one believes any other economic system could work, then it needs to suppress not just any idea of an inevitable redemptive future, but any radically different technological future. Yet there's a contradiction. Defenders of capitalism cannot mean to convince us that technological change has ended—since that would mean capitalism is not progressive. No, they mean to convince us that technological progress is indeed continuing, that we do live in a world of wonders, but that those wonders take the form of modest improvements (the latest iPhone!), rumors of inventions about to happen (“I hear they are going to have flying cars pretty soon”), complex ways of juggling information and imagery, and still more complex platforms for filling out of forms.

I do not mean to suggest that neoliberal capitalism—or any other system—can be successful in this regard. First, there's the problem of trying to convince the world you are leading the way in technological progress when you are holding it back. The United States, with its decaying infrastructure, paralysis in the face of global warming, and symbolically devastating abandonment of its manned space program just as China accelerates its own, is doing a particularly bad public relations job. Second, the pace of change can't be held back forever. Breakthroughs will happen; inconvenient discoveries cannot be permanently suppressed. Other, less bureaucratized parts of the world—or at least, parts of the world with bureaucracies that are not so hostile to creative thinking—will slowly but inevitably attain the resources required to pick up where the United States and its allies have left off. The Internet does provide opportunities for collaboration and dissemination that may help break us through the wall as well. Where will the breakthrough come? We can't know. Maybe 3D printing will do what the robot factories were supposed to. Or maybe it will be something else. But it will happen.



About one conclusion we can feel especially confident: it will not happen within the framework of contemporary corporate capitalism—or any form of capitalism. To begin setting up domes on Mars, let alone to develop the means to figure out if there are alien civilizations to contact, we're going to have to figure out a different economic system. Must the new system take the form of some massive new bureaucracy? Why do we assume it must? Only by breaking up existing bureaucratic structures can we begin. And if we're going to invent robots that will do our laundry and tidy up the kitchen, then we're going to have to make sure that whatever replaces capitalism is based on a far more egalitarian distribution of wealth and power—one that no longer contains either the super-rich or the desperately poor willing to do their housework. Only then will technology begin to be marshaled toward human needs. And this is the best reason to break free of the dead hand of the hedge fund managers and the CEOs—to free our fantasies from the screens in which such men have imprisoned them, to let our imaginations once again become a material force in human history.

Achille Mbembe: The age of humanism is ending

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There is no sign that 2017 will be much different from 2016.

Under Israeli occupation for decades, Gaza will still be the biggest open prison on Earth.

In the United States, the killing of black people at the hands of the police will proceed unabated and hundreds of thousands more will join those already housed in the prison-industrial complex that came on the heels of plantation slavery and Jim Crow laws.

Europe will continue its slow descent into liberal authoritarianism or what cultural theorist Stuart Hall called authoritarian populism. Despite complex agreements reached at international forums, the ecological destruction of the Earth will continue and the war on terror will increasingly morph into a war of extermination between various forms of nihilism.

Inequalities will keep growing worldwide. But far from fuelling a renewed cycle of class struggles, social conflicts will increasingly take the form of racism, ultra nationalism, sexism, ethnic and religious rivalries, xenophobia, homophobia and other deadly passions.

The denigration of virtues such as care, compassion and kindness will go hand in hand with the belief, especially among the poor, that winning is all that matters and who wins — by whatever means necessary — is ultimately right.

With the triumph of this neo-Darwinian approach to history-making, apartheid under various guises will be restored as the new old norm. Its restoration will pave the way to new separatist impulses, the erection of more walls, the militarisation of more borders, deadly forms of policing, more asymmetrical wars, splitting alliances and countless internal divisions including in established democracies.

None of the above is accidental. If anything, it is a symptom of structural shifts, which will become ever more apparent as the new century unfolds. The world as we knew it since the end of World War II, the long years of decolonisation, the Cold War and the defeat of communism has ended.

Another long and deadlier game has started. The main clash of the first half of the 21st century will not oppose religions or civilisations. It will oppose liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism, the rule of finance and the rule of the people, humanism and nihilism.

Capitalism and liberal democracy triumphed over fascism in 1945 and over communism in the early 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the advent of globalisation, their fates were disentangled. The widening bifurcation of democracy and capital is the new threat to civilisation.

Abetted by technological and military might, finance capital has achieved its hegemony over the world by annexing the core of human desires and, in the process, by turning itself into the first global secular theology. Fusing the attributes of a technology and a religion, it relied on uncontested dogmas modern forms of capitalism had reluctantly shared with democracy since the post-war period — individual liberty, market competition and the rule of the commodity and of property, the cult of science, technology and reason.

Each of these articles of faith is under threat. At its core, liberal democracy is not compatible with the inner logic of finance capitalism. The clash between these two ideas and principles is likely to be the most signifying event of the first half of a 21st-century political landscape — a landscape shaped less by the rule of reason than by the general release of passions, emotions and affect.

In this new landscape, knowledge will be defined as knowledge for the market. The market itself will be re-imagined as the primary mechanism for the validation of truth.

As markets themselves are increasingly turning into algorithmic structures and technologies, the only useful knowledge will be algorithmic.

Instead of people with body, history and flesh, statistical inferences will be all that count. Statistics and other big data will mostly be derived from computation.

As a result of the conflation of knowledge, technology and markets, contempt will be extended to anyone who has nothing to sell.

The humanistic and Enlightenment notion of the rational subject capable of deliberation and choice will be replaced by the consciously deliberating and choosing consumer.

Already in the making, a new kind of human will triumph. This will not be the liberal individual who, not so long ago, we believed could be the subject of democracy. The new human being will be constituted through and within digital technologies and computational media.

The computational age — the age of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter — is dominated by the idea that there are clean slates in the unconscious. New media forms have not only lifted the lid previous cultural eras had put on the unconscious. They have become the new infrastructures of the unconscious.

Yesterday, human sociality consisted of keeping tabs on the unconscious. For the social to thrive meant exercising vigilance on ourselves, or delegating to specific authorities the right to enforce such vigilance.

This was called repression.

Repression's main function was to set the conditions for sublimation. Not all desires could be fulfilled. Not everything could be said or enacted. The capacity to limit oneself was the essence of one's freedom and the freedom of all.

Partly thanks to new media forms and the post-repressive era it has unleashed, the unconscious can now roam free. Sublimation is no longer necessary.

Language has been dislocated. The content is in the form and the form is beyond, or in excess of, the content.

We are now led to believe that mediation is no longer necessary.

This explains the growing anti-humanist stance that now goes hand in hand with a general contempt for democracy. Calling this phase of our history fascist might be misleading unless by fascism we mean the normalisation of a social state of warfare.

Such a state would in itself be a paradox because, if anything, warfare leads to the dissolution of the social. And yet under conditions of neoliberal capitalism, politics will become a barely sublimated warfare. This will be a class warfare that denies its very nature — a war against the poor, a race war against minorities, a gender war against women, a religious war against Muslims, a war against the disabled.

Neoliberal capitalism has left in its wake a multitude of destroyed subjects, many of whom are deeply convinced that their immediate future will be one of continuous exposure to violence and existential threat.

They genuinely long for a return to some sense of certainty, the sacred, hierarchy, religion and tradition. They believe that nations have become akin to swamps that need to be drained and the world as it is should be brought to an end. For this to happen, everything should be cleansed off. They are convinced that they can only be saved in a violent struggle to restore their masculinity, the loss of which they attribute to the weaker among them, the weak they do not want to become.

In this context, the most successful political entrepreneurs will be those who convincingly speak to the losers, to the destroyed men and women of globalisation and to their ruined identities.

In the street fight politics will become, reason will not matter. Nor will facts. Politics will revert into brutal survivalism in an ultracompetitive environment.

Under such conditions, the future of progressive and future-oriented mass politics of the left is very uncertain.

In a world set on objectifying everybody and every living thing in the name of profit, the erasure of the political by capital is the real threat. The transformation of the political into

business raises the risk of the elimination of the very possibility of politics.

Whether civilisation can give rise at all to any form of political life is the problem of the 21st century.

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