

Class Interest Drives the Politics of Healthcare for All

When Representative Joe Wilson shouted “you lie” in Congress in September 2009, referring to whether or not undocumented workers will get healthcare under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the politics of the current period of healthcare reform were set. It continued with Sarah Palin’s June 2012 tweet, “Obama lies, Freedom Dies,” and ex-militia Mike Vanderboegh’s threat of “civil war” after the recent Supreme Court decision on the “Individual Mandate,” referring to whether or not the mandate was a tax. Responding to this politics of attack, the Democratic Party has been successful in posing the fight for ACA as the fight for universal health care itself. Both sides obscure what’s really going on and what’s really at stake.

Both main parties insist that the majority of society must accept economic scarcity while guaranteeing the interests of global investment capital. The fight between the capitalists over how to sustain their class interests, over who will gain the most power and wealth in this process while keeping class peace, obscures working-class interests.

This reality is the context for the 2012 election cycle and beyond. Healthcare is increasingly central to everything from the struggle against the loss of trade union benefits, cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, to fights against hospital closures. U.S. workers are joining an international class battle against a global austerity agenda, against government cuts in social programs for the sake of so-called fiscal responsibility. This agenda attempts to solve the crisis of capitalism, rooted in the application of labor-replacing technology to every aspect of production in the economy.

The way forward relies on revolutionaries who can develop the consciousness and ignite the potential power of the new class of workers. These workers cannot ignore the reality that job loss is fundamentally the result of increasingly laborless production. Healthcare can no longer be tied to jobs, provided as part of a social contract between labor and capital. The battle over health care reform is the fight to hold government responsible for providing basic necessities, and against the reorganization of society in the interests of Wall Street and corporate America. Revolutionaries have to guarantee the coalescence of a broad social consciousness around programmatic demands that healthcare and other basic necessities be provided to all of society on the basis of being human, regardless of job status, citizen status or the ability to pay.

A NEW LEGALITY OF EXCLUSION

The politics of austerity necessitates a restructuring of government based in a new legality of exclusion, while guaranteeing

scapegoating and division among working people. The recent Supreme Court decisions on the “individual mandate” for healthcare and on Arizona’s “alien registration” law illustrate how the fight over the role of government in establishing this legality of exclusion in America is shaping up.

The individual mandate and the basic restructuring of healthcare reflect the bipartisanship at the heart of current health reform. The ACA is modeled after Mitt Romney’s Massachusetts state healthcare plan established in 2006. The mandate itself was originally proposed by the Heritage Foundation in 1989 as a counterpoint to both Medicare For All and the employer mandate, and ap-

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peared legislatively in 1993 as the GOP alternative to Clinton’s health reform bill.

The limited and short-term benefits of ACA will help pockets of the population. This leaves the millions who need equal, quality and affordable healthcare hoping they will gain something. Unfortunately, the reform relies on the same corporations that created “pre-existing conditions” and other problems in control while creating exclusion on an even broader basis. Despite the hopes of many progressive advocates who defend the Act, it is essentially the private insurance industry’s solution to capital’s inability to sustain the existing system of health insurance.

The individual mandate is regressive, requiring the near poor to pay a much higher percentage of their income for their coverage than the affluent. As costs continue to rise many times faster than wages, employer provided healthcare will continue to go the way of defined benefit pensions and the “Cadillac healthcare plans” that were the result of over a century of trade union battles.

STATES’ RIGHTS AND MEDICAID

The same Supreme Court decision that upheld the individual mandate struck down the provision that would penalize states for refusing to expand Medicaid, the key guarantee in the plan for expanded coverage. Medicaid is the main way poor and disabled people have gotten healthcare in this country. This was already problematic. Having coverage doesn’t guarantee you get seen by a doctor because it reimburses doctors and hospitals less than care actually costs. Already fewer are willing to accept Medicaid.

Furthermore, states have been struggling to sustain the Medicaid programs as they are. Under the current economic system loss of jobs has forced more into poverty. But these problems are compounded with the ruling that states can decide if they even want to implement federally-supported expansion of the program. Some states have already announced they do not have enough doctors and other health care workers to carry out the expansion. The same 26 states that sued over the Medicaid expansion in the first place, arguing it was unconstitutional coercion, contain 55 percent of the nation’s uninsured, a total of 27.6 million uninsured people. Some states are al-

then is a conduit for social restructuring in the interests of global capital through our country’s particular historical support of states’ rights. Furthermore, by ruling the mandate a “tax” the Supreme Court decision establishes the basis for future judicial challenges to the social insurance model, as well as establishing the basis for undoing the entire legislation.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS SET STANDARD OF CARE

The exclusion of all workers without citizenship documentation sets a legal limit on who has the right to stay well and to live in this country, particularly in light of the direction reflected in the other recent Supreme Court decisions to maintain the “show me your papers” provision of Arizona’s new anti-immigrant law. ACA clearly and specifically excludes undocumented immigrants from healthcare coverage. These exclusions give the attack by the right on “Obamacare” greater significance. The attack on healthcare is part of an attack on wages and the standard of living for the working class as a whole. Companies can go anywhere and their tendency is to go where wages are cheaper. Labor has the opposite tendency. They go where the wages and standards are higher. The denial of healthcare to undocumented workers represents an attack on the legal status of the entire new class who are increasingly forced to move within and across borders to survive in this global capitalist economy.

Immigrants’ rights to benefits have divided and hobbled the healthcare movement in the US for decades. In New Deal legislation, as the social contract for the industrial working class was consolidated in the U.S., farmworkers, domestic workers and others were excluded from benefits, wages and collective bargaining rights. The restructuring being implemented through “reform” is upping the ante. The standard of living of the U.S. working-class, until recently relatively

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As discontent grows and people are pulled into political motion, the electoral process is creating the opportunity to take another step toward breaking the ideological and political connections that tie the workers to the capitalists.

The elections presage a coming “perfect” political storm: a fiscal economic cliff, the Washington quagmire, and a rising new class of dispossessed whose needs cannot be met within the confines of the capitalist economic and political order. As the article “Jobs and the Elections” points out, “The introduction of robotics has changed the whole game. Production without labor means job categories disappear forever — like the bowman or mule-skinner. Jobs that exist are paying lower and lower wages as robotics expands. The economic order is disintegrating.”

People are seeking answers. This is the

moment to get out the new ideas that make history. From this perspective, the Green Party presidential campaign with its focus on program and the actual demands of the movement provides a real opportunity. Revolutionaries can connect with this motion and get out the program of the new class to the leaders of the emerging struggle. In so doing, we help develop the consciousness that shapes and propels the movement along its historical path.

Given the developing polarization, a third party can be a tool in the interests of the bourgeoisie or of the working class. Revolutionaries make the fight for an anti-fascist, anti-corporate third party. They work to help shape the process along the line of march — they break the workers away from the Democratic Party, helping to separate the thinking of the masses from their rulers.

The disintegration is reverberating throughout society. The article “Class

Interest Drives the Politics of Healthcare for All,” shows how a restructuring of government is taking place based on a politics of austerity. The recent Supreme Court decision on the individual mandate, as well as their rendering of the Arizona “alien registration” law illustrate how the fight is shaping up to a “legality of exclusion” in America.

The article on “Abolish Student Debt, Hold Government Accountable” shows that “today a new stage is emerging: higher education has become financialized ... configured as a mechanism to benefit Wall Street, not students.” Likewise, as the article “The Jobs of Tomorrow?” points out, community colleges are being devastated as they too are being reconfigured to conform to for profit only institutions.

The article “Unfinished America: A History of Culture Wars” recognizes that American history has always been a history of culture wars, but the war today is taking the

form not only of the corporate control of culture for profit, but is also a sustained effort by the ruling class to discredit, isolate and control the new class regardless of color.

The capitalist class has good reason to fear the workers, particularly the newly dispossessed.

As corporate America forces the rising class of permanently unemployed, part-time, low-wage and contingent workers into a corner, they find themselves hemmed in on every side by a dying system that can no longer address their needs. As the article “Solving the Riddle of History” shows, the only solution this class has is to abolish private property and “lead society forward to a new world.”

The storm clouds are forming. Society is polarizing. The line of march of the new class of dispossessed is to fight forward to a solution that is attained on behalf of all of humanity.

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privileged, is being driven down. This lays the basis for scapegoating among the workforce, ignoring the reality that job loss is fundamentally the result of this era of increased laborless production.

The fact is that the standard of care for the undocumented is becoming the norm. This relies on a moral acceptance that more and more of us won't have rights corporations or government is bound to respect. The acceptance of propaganda that isolates the dispossessed and unemployed as criminals — and the legalizing of this criminalization — creates the social base for fascism in this country. This is the social and political cost

of exclusion in healthcare or any other basic human need.

It's not that ACA isn't “good enough.” It is not an incremental step toward Medicare For All. It does not solve the problem we are faced with. We need access to healthcare. ACA provides access to private healthcare businesses for some, while excluding millions.

EQUAL QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Revolutionaries rely on the objective interests of a new class of working people.

Those suffering for lack of access to healthcare but legally excluded are at the heart of this class. They cannot afford to “boycott” ACA. Those fighting for Medicaid expansion in their states have the potential to become part of the movement calling for government to guarantee the needs of everyone. A programmatic politics based in these class interests is the only force that can hold government responsible for equal, quality healthcare for all.

Revolutionaries have to guarantee that the fight for Medicare For All continues, while building on the growing consciousness that accessible quality health care for all

can be secured only if our health care system is restructured, not in the interest of big corporate hospitals, big Pharma or private insurers, but in the public's interest and under our public control. To secure that, government must act to nationalize health care resources in our interest. Provision of healthcare shows the social interdependence of humankind. Such interdependence requires a social system that supports health decisions based on science, ecological sustainability and human morality. This is incompatible with the dictates of capitalism.

Health care is corporatized. It needs to be nationalized. The future is up to us.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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League of Revolutionaries for a New America WHAT WE STAND FOR

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a co-operative society. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement. A new fascist state form, the naked rule of corporate power, is arising to oppose this motion.

Society must take over these corporations or these corporations will take over society. The new class must have political power to achieve these goals. In the effort

to achieve this political power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war.

Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

Destruction of the ecology, the threat of nuclear war and the looming pandemics are calling the very existence of the human race into question. The battle is class struggle. The war is for the existence of humanity.

We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new class and to secure that imperiled future.

Abolish Student Debt, Hold Government Accountable

“Trillion Dollar Day” was the day last April when student debt in the U.S. exceeded one trillion dollars, surpassing even U.S. credit card debt. Student debt amounted to only \$100 billion in 2010, just two years ago! It is growing faster today than did the sub-prime mortgages during the housing bubble.

Since the 1960s, four-year public universities have been a way out of poverty for a majority of Americans. On January 24, 2011, the *New York Times* reported the dire news: “In most states the era of affordable four-year public universities, heavily subsidized by the state, may be over.”

Now students virtually have to ask Wall Street’s permission to go to college — by accepting student loans. Students go into debt to get an education to get a job to pay off the debt. But employers regularly check credit card status and will fire you if you are not current on the debt you took on to get a job in the first place.

The current generation of college students belongs to the most indebted, as well as the most criminalized, generation in history.

Thirty-six million Americans have student debts. 94% of students getting degrees have become indebted. States increase student fees, which further increases debt and feeds private profits. University of California fees, for example, have doubled since 2007.

More than 80% of the class of 2011 have had to move back in with their parents — an unheard-of figure. Only one student in two of the Class of 2012 will find a job that matches their degree.

The rising student movement, from California to Quebec to everywhere else, has taken to the streets to save public education. As students fight tuition increases, often focusing anger on school administrators, they are also raising the question of the role of the banks in the situation they face. The next step is to confront the question of how power is held in this country and how the power of the government is used for the benefit of the banks and corporate class, not to educate young people. This requires examining some critical questions that clarify the way forward.

Is the destruction of public education the result of the actions of a few “rich guys”, or is it an attack by the capitalist class on the working class? Can we return to the way things were or must we fight forward to a new system? Can a political attack be countered by incremental reforms, or must the economic system be transformed? How can we pass over from defensive positions to take the political offensive?

THE CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The root of the current crisis is that public education at all levels, once perceived as a public good, has always been a publicly financed system to prepare the workers the capitalist system needs. The introduction of

the microprocessor in the 1970s led to increased computerization that replaces human labor. Fewer workers are needed, and the capitalist class is reconfiguring higher education accordingly.

In the late 1960s, student strikes by African Americans and Latinos forced open the doors of higher education to millions of poor students of all colors. By the 1980s, the capitalists had begun promoting a “War on Drugs”, creating a political climate where politicians could be “tough on crime”. Millions of mostly African American and Latino men are now imprisoned in what has become the world’s largest system of incarceration and control. This Prison-Industrial Complex has been financed at the state level by revenue taken from public higher education.

Corporations expanded into the vacuum left by these cuts to public education, claiming that corporate practices were more efficient and cheaper than those of the state or federal government. This corporatization meant forcing universities more tightly into a profit-making model and integrating them into the corporate system.

Under corporate pressure, universities began to reduce their offerings while entering into research determined by corporations, which then have proprietary control over the results. By the mid 1990s, public higher education institutions such as the University of California, Michigan State and others received more revenue from corporations than from state governments. Student fees and tuition have increasingly been diverted to support corporate research, rather than corporate fees being used to keep tuitions affordable.

In 1994, the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA), passed by the Clinton administration, defined public education as a “service,” a consumer product, a commodity offered by the market, not a right guaranteed by government. This treaty opened the doors to privatization — diverting public assets into corporate hands.

STUDENT DEBT — FINANCIALIZED AND CRIMINALIZED

Since the financial meltdown of 2008, government at all levels has become actively involved in guaranteeing corporate profitability in industry after industry. Government has actively restructured the financial industry, auto, health care, energy and public education. Under capitalism, maximum profit trumps every social necessity. In this period of austerity and declining profit, public education, as with all public goods, will ultimately be entirely privatized. This requires that the government abandon its accountability to the public, even as it gives trillions of dollars in public taxes directly to corporations.

Students are forced into debt so that corporations can profit. This is the inevitable result of turning a social good into a commercial process.

As the 21st century began, students were told that they were doing everything right — take out more student loans, get a Bachelor’s degree and get a good job. When everything collapsed in 2008, students discovered that they had become debt slaves and that the jobs had vanished. Today a new stage in this process is emerging. Higher education has become financialized, transformed into a financial security like a sub-prime mortgage. Public higher education is becoming configured as a mechanism to benefit Wall Street, not students.

Student fees are immediately invested by universities in bonds so the university can finance more corporate research. Student debt is “securitized” into SLABS — Student Loan Asset Backed Securities. Like mortgages, SLABS are sliced and diced, sold and re-sold daily to turn students into an ATM for Wall Street. The speculative market on the trillion dollar student debt is estimated to be over \$2.67 trillion. The student loan bubble may be the next hit to the economy.

Highly-indebted college students now see that criminalization inevitably follows financialization. “Corporate persons” have the right of individuals to go bankrupt, but individuals do not. The State steps in and uses its coercive powers to collect the debt. There’s no way out. Federal law guarantees these profits to Wall Street, since students cannot discharge student loan debt through bankruptcy. Further, the Department of Education assumes this debt as a guarantee to the speculators. In essence, it has become a crime not to pay off student debts.

These modern forms of criminalization extend legal sanctions to students that go further than incarceration. The State empowers private corporations as collection agencies. They are given extraordinary legal powers to garnish wages, tax returns, social security, and disability payments. They can also, without a court order, suspend professional licenses and terminate public employment. This is similar to the situation of felons on parole, who are likewise still ensnared in the criminal justice system, even though they are out of jail.

Meanwhile colleges at all levels are eliminating classes, making it harder to get a degree. Increasingly schools are denying students the chance to make up a course they fail. Turning people away from public higher education “creates the market”, commercializing education to benefit for-profit higher ed corporations.

Parasitic “education” corporations, like Kaplan and the University of Phoenix, reveal the future capitalism has in store for the working class. For-profits are principally financed by student loans. They have 12% of the students, but get 26% of the student loans. They charge much more for each credit, yet graduate a mere 20% of their students. The University of Phoenix has the 4th largest student population in world and gets 90% of its revenue from student loans.

The Jobs of Tomorrow?

The U.S. community college system is the largest public education system in the world, with over 5 million students. Community colleges traditionally have been used by students for remediation, life-long learning, training in specific skills, and for two-year degrees, leading to university.

Obama has announced a new mission — training the work force of today for the jobs of tomorrow. At the same time, community colleges are being cut by hundreds of millions of dollars. The same “public/private partnerships” that lead to corporatization and privatization are supposedly going to save the day. But what exactly are the jobs of tomorrow?

The introduction of electronics is destroying the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that marked the Industrial Era. Computers are transforming these jobs into temp jobs and precarious labor that works little, but is always on call.

It is simply a lie that the capitalist system will produce jobs that can sustain families for the whole working class. That’s not profitable. The capitalist class can use what they need of the huge U.S. population as an army of low-paid and contingent workers. Why would they fund a two-year community college degree program that equips people for anything more?

To restructure for this future, community colleges are cutting classes and driving out students. They will no longer permit students to re-take a course they fail, and will require every student to be on a job track and take only those courses. In community colleges, as in K-12 education and public universities, the government is being re-organized to directly conform to a for-profit system.

For-profits spend half their revenue — guaranteed by student loans — for profit, executive salaries and marketing. The government is actually forcing students to fund the privatization of their own education!

THE EMERGING POLITICAL DIRECTION

The form of the crisis today is the open reorganization of government at every level to become agents of corporations, rather than promoting the interests of the public.

Student debt, financialization and criminalization are part of a government-led system that benefits corporations and is enforced by the State. *This* is the program for public higher education that is put forward by the

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Unfinished America, a History of Culture Wars

In *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*, Charles Murray (famous for *The Bell Curve*, which made use of racist ideas and quasi-scientific research) worries that America's ruling class is succumbing to the influence of the lower classes. He references Cold War era historian Arnold J. Toynbee's concern over the spreading "sickness of 'proletarianization'" as a sign of the decline of our civilization.

Murray places his book firmly in the context of a three decade old culture war as he sides with Tipper Gore's attempt to clean up "rock and rap lyrics" and compares that issue to "four-letter words...in glossy upscale magazines," "the hooker look" as "a fashion trend among nice girls from the suburbs," and the increasing popularity of tattoos as evidence of the disintegration of "White America." His larger argument is that America's "founding virtues" — "industriousness, honesty, marriage and religiosity" — are disintegrating from the bottom up, and he uses "White America" as a baseline to examine all of American society.

Murray says much with his portrayal of Tipper Gore as an innocent Washington wife doing the right thing. She, in fact, used her husband's Senate Transportation Committee to hold a hearing on rock lyrics, making him more famous than ever half a decade before his presidential run and vice presidency. Her bipartisan campaign of Washington wives, called the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), drew on the work of racist and religious extremists to unite Congress in an attack on popular music. At the exact moment, benefit records, social justice campaigns and a reintegration of American popular radio suggested that popular culture had more potential for political influence than at any point in the past.

For all intents and purposes, the PMRC won its objectives. Today's music bears explicit lyric stickers, which label whole albums "adults only." As a result, individual stores and civil ordinances refuse such music to minors (Wal-Mart, the largest brick and mortar retailer of music today only sells edited music). These seemingly moral victories led to more censorship organizing as a bi-partisan strategy. Many of the past two decade's most influential political figures — Hillary Clinton, Joseph Lieberman, Sam Brownback and Rick Santorum — all gained political traction attacking sex and violence in popular culture.

Murray's book suggests a more ideological strategy suited to a new moment. America is coming apart economically and cultural unrest is certain to rise. Murray blames the culture of the working class for the disintegrating economy. Labeling working class culture "a sickness," his conclusions argue against a revolutionary vision.

AMERICAN IDENTITY AS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN IDEALS AND REALITIES

American history is filled with culture wars. The Puritan leadership which founded this country sought religious and political

freedom for itself. But that class was always outnumbered by the Native American peoples, the Spanish, the French and what the author of *Letters of an American Farmer*, Jean Crevecoeur, called the "New American" — the great two-thirds from all parts of Europe and Africa who came here as indentured servants. Like Murray, Crevecoeur insisted on the importance of industry and opportunity, the difference being that revolutionary era America had an expanding economy with seemingly endless potential.

Popular culture has been used by artists and audiences to overcome racial and sexual stereotypes, protest political and religious authority and express the hopes and dreams of those held back by the system.

American culture has always revealed the contradictions between our ideals and our realities. The poet Walt Whitman and former slave turned statesman Frederick Douglas touted working class abolitionist singers like the Cheney Family and the Hutchinsons as real American artists because they did not represent any vestige of European aristocracy. Years later, W.E.B. Dubois stated that the first authentic American music had to be the slave "sorrow songs." But Douglas also used that phrase as he described slave music — "I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject would do....Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains."

Douglas also noted the contradictions of slave music, contradictions that define American popular music. He notes the juxtaposition of medium and message — "They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone." And he defines the dangers of oversimplifying such cultural expressions — "I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake."

A REBELLIOUS CULTURE

At least since British troops sang "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to mock the rebels, American culture has been attacked as "vulgar." It's worth noting here that the term vulgar comes from a Middle English term for the public and has long meant the behavior of those without aristocratic breeding. Why wouldn't the Americans be proud of that? To be American was to reject just such European concepts. This is tied closely to another censorship term — "indecent." For most of the history of this six hundred year old word, "decent" meant knowing one's place in society. But America was built to challenge "one's place."

Since the rise of American mass culture in the early 20th Century, movies, pulp fiction, comic books, television and popular music have all been targeted for censorship — leading to the Hays Code, books banned from libraries, the comics code, the MPAA ratings system, the RIAA explicit lyrics stickers and the TV ratings system. Every attack on popular culture assumes that vulgarity or indecency destroys society. The reality is that popular culture has been used by both artists and audiences to overcome racial and

sexual stereotypes, protest political and religious authority and express the hopes and dreams of those held back by the system.

At the height of the Great Depression, gangster movies often featured sympathetic outlaws, appealing to the audience's sense of powerlessness. Some of the movies portrayed the outlaws as innocent victims of an unjust system. Gangster molls became popular female characters, and tough-talking, sexually frank women like Mae West became a threat to middle class standards for women. Horror movies, many made by refugees from Europe's growing fascism, expressed sympathy for those outside of society and showed the dangers of societies ruled by fear.

RACE AND CULTURE

The popularity of all of these films corresponded with the rise of the Hollywood Left and the Popular Front. In reaction, the motion picture industry's Hays Code insisted movie crimes always be punished, laws never be criticized and "indecent" suggestiveness cease. Among those indecencies, the Hays Code forbade depicting sexual relations between whites and blacks. After World War II, the House Un-American Activities Committee would be established to eliminate any Hollywood filmmakers who didn't know their place.

Over the course of the 20th Century, music often pushed the dialogue between races and over social issues. The popularity of jazz, hillbilly and race records in the 1930s would give birth to the integrationist character of rock and roll twenty years later. Blues, jazz and gospel — those forms most clearly related to "sorrow songs" — would influence all of American music. Blues in particular deals with survival themes in terms that would upset every principle of the Hays Code. At the same time, folk songs like "Stagger Lee," based on a supposedly real shooting in the late 19th Century, has often been sung as a tribute to a Black man who may be a murderer but lived the way he wanted to live. There's a little Stagger Lee throughout American culture — from Blaxploitation

heroes to Clint Eastwood characters to that persona Johnny Cash takes on in "Folsom Prison Blues" when he sings "I shot a man in Reno/Just to watch him die."

Culture is complex, art always meaning more than any single literal interpretation. With fantasies of power for the powerless, men and women who feel little real control over their lives express self-worth. Blues singers have celebrated sexuality as a positive, creative impulse in humanity despite the fact that we live in a dominant Puritan culture that views it as shameful.

This is particularly important because it is that dominant white culture that sexually abused Black slaves for three hundred years (and then did everything it could to emasculate and sexually denigrate free blacks) that still wants to bind sexuality to shame. Black artists break those binds more often than any other artists in America. Similarly, those rural white American sounds that get labeled terms like "heavy metal" express anger over the political and religious ideologies that constrict the lives of poor white America.

A CULTURAL STRATEGY

What Charles Murray champions as 'the dominant minority' (the ruling class or what today we call the 1%) has justified slavery, segregation and gender discrimination for centuries. This same small group has rationalized the use of robotics and globalized production, giving rise to a new global class of proletarians who live in unprecedented poverty and misery. The ruling class has led efforts to dismantle the public education system, the postal system, and the public library system while privatizing public utilities so that many Americans face escalating bills for health care and other necessities. A handful of multinational corporations control all media markets, but narrowed, targeted marketing practices have media consumers more divided than ever before.

After over three decades of economic decline and social isolation caused by such policies, Murray and those he represents have chosen to blame the victims. His books serve to label those who have suffered the worst as infectious of the moral fiber of the country. His capitalist ruling class solutions call for those in power to further dismantle social services and boldly preach morality to the new class of underemployed and permanently unemployed (in a nation that no longer offers them any opportunity).

Today's folk art, popular culture serves as a barometer of the American spirit. Within this culture, abundant real dialogue takes place that helps expose injustice, celebrates freedom outside of the terms of capitalism and envisions a better world impossible under the current system. The League of Revolutionaries for a New America has always held an ongoing respect for our popular culture as such a complex set of indicators revealing the spirit of the American people. As revolutionaries, we must never forget — for all its flaws — that popular culture's offenses come nowhere near the obscenities perpetuated by the ruling class.

Solving the Riddle of History

The introduction of labor-replacing technology is destroying value, polarizing society and giving rise to the formation of a new class of workers — the majority of which includes contingent, below-minimum wage and part-time workers. A new section of the working class, they are a new quality within it. Increasingly driven out of the relationship between worker and capitalist, they are forced to fight for a new society where society owns the means of production and the social product is distributed according to need. The actual program of this new class is to abolish private property, and this program is in the interest of the whole of society.

Objectively, the historic role of the new class is to unite all those who can be united and lead society forward to this new world. All wealth, all property has been created by the exploitation of human labor — from slave to serf to wage-slave — and appropriated as the private property of the ruling class. Only the elimination of private property can end the class system and its various forms of exploitation. All of the inequalities that human beings have known and continue to suffer today are rooted in this fundamental relation between the owning class and the exploited class.

The ability of the new class to fulfill its historic role will depend on it achieving consciousness of itself as a class and consciousness of its historic mission. That consciousness has to be brought to it by revolutionaries.

POLARIZATION AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Our society is based on the unity of two contradictory poles — a capitalist class that owns the socially necessary means of production, and a working class which essentially owns nothing but their ability to work at these means of production. One side sells labor power; the other sells the wherewithal to create this labor power. This is their essential economic connection. If these poles stood starkly in opposition to one another they would soon tear society apart over the division of the social product. Spontaneously, and by design, social and economic gradations on both sides prevent this. Our society has not only poles, but also almost numberless gradations from poverty to wealth, the most important being a bribed, skilled, secure “labor aristocracy” with one foot in the proletariat and the other in the lower ranks of the capitalist class. Each social stratum inter-penetrates the next, tying them all together into a stable society.

How can such a leviathan be overthrown? The beginning of change is polarization, which the dictionary defines as “a sharp division into opposing factions.” For polarization to begin, some qualitative aspect of the old has to be removed, or some aspect of a new quality has to be introduced. Since the “middle” in any process holds the poles together, something has to be introduced that destroys this middle and creates polarization.

This “something” of a new quality is labor-replacing, automated production. With the introduction of robotics, the relation

between the sale of labor power and the purchase of the means of subsistence began to break. With such an attack against the qualitative foundations of the economic order, everything else came under attack. Capitalists lost their political dependency on the “labor aristocracy” which in turn lost the good jobs and the life that went with it. All the ideological and social institutions connected to the old order came under fire. The “welfare state” which guaranteed a docile, healthy, educated workforce began to be dismantled.

As the economic and social “middle” began to disintegrate, the poles, or opposing factions, have begun to clash in a real way for the first time since the Civil War. We are only at the beginning of the beginning of polarization, but the process is now irreversible.

This destruction and polarization is objective. It is not the result of someone’s idea or wish, but the inevitable outcome of an economic revolution on the one hand and a static political and social structure on the other. So, as the economy polarizes, so does society. Consequently, the legal, social and ideological threads that held society together are breaking. What we have known as democracy is coming under attack from all sides.

Considering the large percentage of people who were not allowed to participate in formulating these laws, we have never had a real democracy.

What we did have was widespread ownership of petty capital, i.e., small businesses and especially the family farm. Such economic independence made it impossible to govern without consensus. Despite the horrors of chattel slavery, the centuries of the Native American holocaust, and the political exclusion of the female half of the population — the political life of the country, American democracy, “our way of life” was stable. There was a community of interest so long as there was a community of ownership.

As technology replaces labor, the economic, political, ideological and social “middle” threatens to burst asunder. The community of interest between a very large section of the population and the giant corporations threatens to dissolve into thin air. The strengthening community of interest between the government and the corporations replaces the former community and becomes the foundation for a new form of rule. This is fascism.

Faced with an expanding property-less mass of workers with constantly declining standards of living, the ruling class is forced to discard the trappings of democracy in one political and social arena after another. The rise of fascism during the 1920s and 30s was political — it was a program that a section of society visualized and fought for. Today, the rise of fascism is objective; there is no other way to preserve private property.

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE UNITY OF THE NEW CLASS

The only way out for the new class — and all those who can be united — is to abolish private property in the means of production

altogether. The new class is objectively communist, which is to say history is forcing it in the direction of a communal or cooperative society, since this is the only way it and the majority of the working class can survive in the age of electronics.

Although it will be a long and difficult process, it is objectively possible today for the majority of the working class to unite around a program that is in their common interest, thereby making it possible for them to lead society to communism.

Labor-replacing electronic production and globalization are creating the objective conditions for the majority of the working class to unite. In the past period of industrial development, temporary unity of the privileged section of the working class was possible, but it was not possible for the workers to unite as a class. Racism, backed up by the social privileges granted the white poor over the Black, kept people divided. Today, white workers are finding themselves on the street corner begging for food alongside of Black workers. Whether the new class realizes it yet or not, white, Black, immigrants — documented and undocumented — are all victims of the capitalist system.

However, it’s important that we see that a new form of racism is developing that can interfere with class unity and be used to develop a fascist culture. Of necessity, this new form of racism is not based on color. As the ruling class and the professional classes have increasingly become integrated, racism based simply on color has to be eliminated. This new form of racism is directed against the “ghetto Blacks,” the “illegal immigrant” and the white, so-called “trailer trash.” In other words, class and cultural differences

with the ruling class, not color, are emerging as the ideological basis for the assault on a section of the new class. If not checked, the ruling class propaganda offensive can serve to isolate this section of the class from the rest of the class, as well as from society.

Unity isn’t automatic. It has to be fought for by conscious people. The white workers are being pushed down, but there is still a fundamental difference between the situations of lower-class blacks and lower-class whites. Nonetheless, the American ruling class is no longer giving anything to anyone. Dispossessed whites are being forced down to the social and economic level of the Black dispossessed and this is creating the objective conditions for unity of this section of the class. Indeed, in many cases around the country, such as the murder of Trayvon Martin and the widespread revulsion of videotaped beatings of the undocumented at the border, and the killings in Anaheim, among others, impulses toward unity are beginning to appear.

PROGRAMMATIC CONTENTION

All sections of society are being affected by the extreme shifts in wealth and the growing polarization between wealth and poverty and are drawn into struggle. All sorts of programmatic appeals — program in the sense of how to solve a problem — contend for dominance.

In the run-up to the 2012 elections, candidates of both political parties preach their claims to the best route to saving the “middle class.” These calls do not address the needs of masses of people who never benefitted

Continues on page 6

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From the Editors: Jobs and the Elections

As the political campaign intensifies so do the efforts of the major candidates to not talk about the central issue by talking all around it. That central issue is a program dealing with the economic destruction caused by the ongoing replacement of human labor by electronics. Romney and Obama attack each other over the creation of jobs as if a job is created politically rather than economically. Neither candidate dare talk concretely about creating jobs, since it calls into question the entire capitalist system.

Whether fixing your automobile or society, you cannot solve a problem you cannot describe. First, let us describe the problem. What is a job? The employer “hires” you. That is exactly the correct term. He agrees to pay you ten dollars for each hour worked. He does not agree to pay you for what you do, but for your ability to work for that specific time. That is why the radicals of yesteryear talked of “wage slavery.” The slave’s ability to work is bought and sold for a lifetime; the modern worker is sold by the hour. The slave’s value is the cost of his or her production. The worker’s wage is pegged to the cost of reproducing his ability to work plus the cost of raising the next generation of workers. The difference between the cost of producing the worker, i.e., wages and the value of what the worker produces, has always been great. It became greater with every labor saving device.

Labor saving means producing more with the same wage. However, a commodity is worth the value of labor involved in its production. Therefore, if there is more production at less cost — it becomes cheaper to produce the worker and the real wage falls accordingly. Real wages have fallen steadily since 1975. Each increase in productivity diminishes the workers’ share and increases the capitalist’s share. Thus, an irreversible polarization of wealth and poverty increases

— not because of “greed,” but that’s the way the system works. The employers see the danger in this — but the market will only accept the cheapest product, so there is no going back to yesteryear.

As the search to lower production costs intensified, it was inevitable that a divide would be reached and machinery that totally replaced labor rather than assisting it would be developed. The introduction of robotics has changed the whole game.

Production without labor means job categories disappear forever — like the bowman or mule-skinner. Jobs that exist are paying lower and lower wages as robotics expands. The economic order is disintegrating.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION TODAY?

Millions are living in poverty, including many who have never before known poverty. “Today, 15% of the USA — one in six Americans — are considered poor... Now among the poor,” writes Marisol Bello in her USA Today article “The New Face of Poverty,” are the college-educated, the former middle-class worker, the suburbanite and the homeowner.”

Citing U.S. Census Bureau figures, she writes:

- A record number of Americans are living in poverty — 46 million. That’s more than at any time since the Census Bureau began tracking poverty data in 1959.
- The number of families below the poverty line rose 18%, from 7.3 million in 2006 to 8.6 million in 2010. The poverty line [in 2010] was a household income of \$22,314 or less for a family of four.
- More people living in the nation’s suburbs are poor. The number of poor people living in the suburbs of metropolitan areas

rose 24%, from 14.4 million in 2006 to 17.8 million [in 2010]. By comparison, the number of poor living in central cities rose by 20%.

- Those who have not worked during the previous 12 months make up an increasing share of the poor. The number of poor people 16 and older who had not worked during the previous year increased by 28% from 2006 to 2010.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ U-6 measure of unemployment includes total unemployed, discouraged workers and the marginally attached, *plus* part-time workers who say they would like to be working more, but for economic reasons could only find part-time work. The U-6 unemployment rate was 14.5 percent in April 2012. “The marginally attached are people who are neither working nor looking for work, but indicate they want and are available for a job and have looked for work sometime in the last year. But they

aren’t counted as unemployed, because they didn’t actively search for work in the last four weeks.” (FactCheck.org, 2012)

Other economists put the actual unemployment rate even higher. One alternative estimate by the economist John Williams puts the real unemployment rate in early April 2012 at about 22 percent.

Almost 50.7 million Americans are without health insurance. An estimated 50 million people were unable to buy sufficient food at some point in 2009. The demand at food banks is increasing even in upper income neighborhoods. One in four children are hungry. Rising numbers of Americans are going without water and heat in their homes. The list goes on and on.

The talk about creating jobs flies in the face of this reality. The only way to create jobs is to turn back the pages of time. Other economic systems have gone out of existence with the introduction of new equipment. There is nothing holy about capitalism. Capitalism is at its end.

The riddle of history (Continued from page 5)

much from the past period of capitalist expansion. Nor is it possible to protect something that has already been destroyed. For millions of formerly well-paid workers — the so-called “middle class” — the good jobs are gone forever.

Programmatic agitation against “big government” is a natural response to the bailout. Workers who owed their social and financial security to the expansion of capitalism and its market suddenly found themselves dispossessed of the American Dream just as the government made an unconcealed transfer of wealth of unprecedented magnitude to the banks and other corporations. This anti-big-government programmatic theme relieves the government of responsibility to serve the public interest. It is often culturally coded to appeal to the backward, racist, and self-defeating channels of thinking carved out by the American history of slavery, genocide, and discrimination. Its struggle to rise to predominance is fostering the ideological conditions for a fascist movement.

The growing anti-corporate sentiment represents an awakening of the interests of the people against the corporations, the interests of the 99% against the 1%. But it does not necessarily challenge the ever more direct political power of the corporations and the ever more apparent class nature of the State.

Proposals to forgive some portion of home mortgage debt or student debt could redistribute a trickle of money — much welcomed for students facing a lifetime of debt or families in danger of losing their homes. But these proposals do not solve the problem of diminishing wages, the elimination of jobs, and the inability to pay for the necessities of life.

Changes in the State have inseparably intertwined the corporations and the government, aligning the power of the State itself

against every social struggle. The immediate problems and disasters of the day cannot be resolved as long as the corporations and the capitalists as a class hold political power.

THE WAY FORWARD

The demands of the new class for the food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. This program of the new class is the only program that can solve the problems faced by society.

The contention over what to do about peoples’ immediate needs sets the stage for the coalescing of a defining consciousness of who is fighting whom and who is the target of that struggle. The program of the new class holds the potential to politicize the developing awareness and to develop consciousness of the program that can resolve those problems and inspire it with the determination to struggle for the political power to reconstruct society.

The task of revolutionaries is to introduce new ideas into the minds of the combatants, to make them see that their fight is to build a new society, and give them a vision of the economic paradise that is possible if the new means of production are taken over by the people.

The League of Revolutionaries for a New America has set as its mission to unite the scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class and to educate them to a cooperative, communist resolution of the problems. It is dedicated to assembling a core of revolutionary propagandists who can create the conditions for this new, revolutionary, objectively communist class to play its role in history.

Abolish student debt (Continued from page 3)

class that owns the banks and corporations. What then is the program of *our* class — those who have everything to lose and nothing to gain by the protection of private property?

The government nationalized bank debt by buying it for trillions of dollars. It can easily nationalize student debt. Higher education should be free for everyone. The capitalists’ goal of private profit is completely opposed to the interests of the public. Corporations have no business in the government. It’s time to get them out. Their tyranny and rule has no legitimacy, precisely because it attacks the public.

What’s happening to public education shows that the people will either have to take over the corporations, or corporations will destroy society and the planet in the bargain. The public good is the measure of everything. This is the political battle of our time.

We cannot fix public education by returning to the status quo. The public educational

system of the industrial era is being dissolved by the new possibilities of electronic technology. The resources are there for a new public education system that could go beyond what we see now. Education must be, *is*, a public good that benefits all of society.

Revolutionaries grow out of these struggles as they confront a system that does not allow them to survive. The economic crisis has the potential to pass over into a political crisis where the political power of two antagonistic classes becomes central. Revolutionaries must keep the struggles on track to eliminate the power of the corporations, which are causing the destruction of public education. This defines the direction of our strategy and tactics. Every issue must be used to directly challenge the capitalists’ right to rule and expose the question of political power. Every action must help us to form ourselves into a political force that can achieve political power for our class.