

# The US Social Forum Movement School with May First/People Link

## When?

Saturday, September 13, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Sunday, September 14, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

## Where?

Location: Turning Point

423 39th Street

Brooklyn NY

(bet. 4th and 5th Avenues in Brooklyn)

Take the BMT "R" or "N" train to 36th Street station and walk three blocks

## Readings

1. The Questions – based on feedback from registrants
2. *Human Crisis and May First's Future* - a kind of political overview of the questions facing our organization
3. *Race and Transformation* - another "what is the movement" article by Jerome and Walda - part of a book
4. *USSF framing Document* - explaining where the Social Forum process is right now
5. *White Skin Privilege Knapsack* - Peggy McIntosh's near legendary article
6. *Mapping the Left: Progressive Politics in the United States* – Ethan Young's review of the US left, written for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
7. *Solidarity Economy: Elements that lead to a development model* – Juan Dominguez Gerardo Carrasco's analysis of the solidarity economy in the context of the global economy

## **Our Questions**

**What are the main, root problems facing the people you know and know about? What makes these problems "root" and what threat do they pose?**

-- How is this crisis of capitalism different from previous crises?

-- how do we understand the development model in the western world?

**What is the current response? How would you describe the movement of resistance in this country?**

-- The ways in which anti-blackness, anti-poor and ableism influence what we value as 'proper' activism. What are ways we can bridge communities to invigorate lives both individually and communally?

-- how we can move beyond the nonprofit industrial complex, to get outside of our silos, and instead start addressing the questions of land, labor, and capital from a movement perspective rather than an organizational perspective.

-- is solidarity economy an alternative to market economy? Is it already a world wide movement?

-- are cooperatives a better form of organizing work instead of corporations?

**How can this movement lead us to resolving our root problems?**

-- How can the U.S.-based movement overcome the internalized capitalism and imperialism that gets in the way of envisioning victory, and building the unity to win.

-- How do we effectively build coalitions across movements?

-- How can we build ongoing collaborations across divides that are effective

-- What are the scalable actions that successful movements utilize to create impact, longevity and unity?

-- how do we support the building of organizations that do not exist yet?

-- How can we better unite movements and organizations on the left without diminishing intersectionality?

-- what role does identity of the human being play in the solidarity economy model?

**What is the role of communications technology in supporting the root problems, supporting the response to them and participating in the framing of the resolution?**

**In light of the situation in our society and our movement and the role of technology in both, what is the role of May First/People Link and how does that role impact on its strategy and structure.**

-- How can working in the US Social Forum help May First/People Link expand and strengthen its organizing work and mission?

## The Human Crisis and May First's Future

by Alfredo López

The human race is facing imminent extinction and, at the same time, the opportunity to structure and build a new, functional and sustainable society.

While we have long been exploited and oppressed, the possibility of our extinction is a relatively new possibility and that possibility is forcing major changes in the strategies and organizational forms in movements throughout the world. How do we save ourselves? How do we frame our struggle? And, given the myriad things going wrong, what do we struggle around?

People, led by organizations and movements of the Global Majority world-wide, are searching for and starting to come up with real answers. In the United States, where the crisis is evident and a significant portion of the reason for the problem resides, the first seeds of that quest are starting to show.

More than any other time in our history, the human race is making a life and death choice and its choices are more clear than they have ever been.

This situation has put our organization at a cross-roads because we are involved in many of the major movements of response to this crisis in this country and Mexico. In some cases, we are a significant part of their leadership.

For MF/PL the question expresses itself like this: what is the role of technology in the destruction of the human race and how do we organize to ensure its productive use?

To answer the question, I think we first need to take a look at what's going wrong.

### Searching for the Social Consensus and Fitting Technology into It

All societies, even the most repressive, rest on a social consensus to continue their existence.

In modern capitalism, that social consensus represents a belief in the strength and functionality of three "areas of interaction":

- 1 -- the ability of the economy to process people's work to produce wealth, based on people's ability to purchase the products and services they make...and need. This is the source of wealth in capitalist society but it's also the source of sustenance. If this fails, the society goes into crisis.
- 2 -- the existence of a government capable of moderating differences inside the ruling class and between the ruling class and the rest of the population. At various times and in various situations, this takes different forms. In general over the last half century, the U.S. government has been able to either adopt reforms to coopt movements or undercut them by either repression or ideological diversion. It has also been remarkably successful in mediating differences between sectors of the ruling class.
- 3 -- the relatively harmonious relationship between humanity and Earth: a nearly miraculous natural balancing act that has generated millions of life forms in constant development while providing a central and distinctive role and safe existence for humanity.

The crisis in the United States is reflected in and driven by the complete failure in all three areas of interaction. That crisis, in various levels of intensity, is being experienced in all countries of the world. The crisis in the U.S. is dramatic and unquestionable:

- 1 - The traditional cohesion between work and wealth has been spectacularly disrupted. Owners of property are accumulating spectacular wealth while fewer people work and those who work make less money. That wealth isn't coming mainly from production or consumption and, given the fact that the economy can only survive when people buy stuff, it is not sustainable.

The next period will be driven by an intense struggle between masses of people seeking to survive -- often split politically between right and left -- and a ruling class, incapable of thinking in any long-term sense, frantically looking for social alternatives to give it a bit more time.

- 2 - That frantic dance is reflected in our government's complete break-down. Congress is incapable of doing anything. The President is bounced from one crisis to the next. The primary institution of U.S. society is the military -- the country's largest employer with 3 million employees and a budget that is almost as large as all the world's other military budgets combined. To maintain its functionality and the

profit emanating from it (among other purposes) it is fighting an interminable and expanding war with absolutely no socially or politically comprehensible purpose.

Meanwhile the state apparatus (including the NSA, prosecutors, the FBI and local police forces) is redesigning itself to enable a police state that can be activated in a moment's time. Such police state culture is mirrored and even intensified ideologically; people's rights, always in contention, are now essentially forgotten on the streets of many of our cities and in the policies of our state and federal governments.

3 - Looming over all of this is the collapse of our relationship with the Earth. At this point, we are facing imminent extinction as a species. The UN's major scientific studies conclude that large portions of the human race will be wiped out within a century which logically will lead to lives of unending crisis for those who survive. We batter nature with our exploitation and, as important, we over-pressure it with our consumption.

If the entire world were to consume what the United States does, we would need five Earth planets. What's more most of what we purchase and acquire is discarded within six months.

#### The Technology Wild Card

All of this is made possible by the qualitative leaps in technological development. Technology has changed the character of work, the movement of information and the relationships among people. Its rapid growth has made obsolete the logical social functioning of the past. It's the motor of this crisis.

As such, it has sharpened many contradictions among them the use and presence of national borders (one of the areas of major contention during this period). The Internet makes borders ridiculous and the tension between the technological possibilities and the legal restraints is ever-present. The problem of spying among countries is only one small, albeit dramatic, manifestation.

Where there are contradictions, there are possibilities and technology is also the potential motor of the crisis' resolution and the creation of a new society that makes all these "challenges" manageable and ultimately solvable. For the first time in human history:

- world-wide communication and information-sharing among movements and populations is instantaneous, boundless and accurate

- organizing knows no boundaries and is hampered by none. We have the potential for an international movement

- technology now exists to feed the human race

- technology now exists to build social and physical structures that will keep people safe and secure and keep societies functional during "weather events". In fact, technology can make what are now catastrophic events merely normal parts of our functional lives

- technology can help us value the contribution, lives and thinking of everyone thereby expanding our social possibilities and eliminating the painful and often violent reactions of people to not being heard or appreciated

- technology can eliminate mass disease, early death, catastrophic illness and other aberrations that murder large populations but can easily be eliminated

In short, we have the technology to build another world but what kind of society and world emerges from this (and whether it includes the human race) depends on how technology is used and how it's used depends on who controls it.

#### The Battle Over Technology

The future of technology is a critical and central issue for the Left world-wide and, because of the advanced character of technology is in the United States, Mexico and Canada, it should be a primary issue for our movement in those countries.

The ruling class of our country isn't ignoring this fact. With stunning and impressive speed, it has overtaken most of our technology. In the case of the Internet, it now controls not only much of the functionality but is winning the ideological battle over what the Internet is, who developed it and who, by some murky process of inheritance, deserves to control it.

While most of our movements would agree that this control should never be in the hands of governments and corporations, we continue to hand it over by using software, engaging in forms of Internet communications and collaborating with the rules and culture of the corporate Internet. The explosive growth of Gmail use, for example, is a profile in contradictory thinking: most of our movement uses it while understanding that it has become almost a branch of the government surveillance systems and a major corporate marketing tool.

The push to encourage use of Free and Open Source Software, the banner and tool of a free Internet, has reached only a very small and highly conscious minority of these movements. We are losing that battle.

Indeed, most of the struggles against corporate and government control of the Internet have concentrated on convincing governments and corporations to relinquish or curtail that control. The major coalitions against surveillance and other Internet abuses, for example, focus on lobbying and petitioning mobilization. Our movements have yet to develop strong and viable alternative strategies that don't depend on those repressive forces.

#### The Role of MF/PL

Because of the importance of technology and the fierce character of the battle over it, May First is in a unique position with very unique responsibilities. We are the Left's technology organization in the U.S. and Mexico and our role is to hold down the leadership on technology within the revolutionary movements in those countries.

Our priority should always be to make sure we're ready to play that role. So the questions we must ask ourselves are increasingly clear.

1 -- What is real role of technology within our movement?

Is it a tool, a unifier, a motor for change and transformation, a laboratory for testing new political ideas? All? Other things? And how do we "represent" that role in our movement?

2 -- The movement in this country is diverse and dispersed, led mainly by People of Color (at this point). It emanates from a century-long linear history of a movement led by people of color and working class people. We are a white organization.

Is our organization part of this movement and, if so, how do we reflect it? What have we been doing to prevent people of color from joining May First/People Link?

3 -- Our organization is stagnant. At a time when the growth of Internet use by the movement and the intensification of technology issues as movement issues should be driving a spectacular growth spurt, we aren't growing very much at all. What's more, the important movement organizations in this country for the most aren't members.

Is there, in fact, room for an organization of our type in the movement? If so, how do we build it?

4 -- Our organization does not act like we want it to. We have always believed that a membership organization involves its members in all its activities. We don't do that.

Is the kind of organization we have been envisioning possible? If so, how do we build it? If not, what do we build? Is there an inherent problem with leadership as we envision it?

4 -- The Mexican section of our organization is our most advanced, active and integrated politically. In a sense, that's predictable. But there is very little cohesion between our organizations in Mexico and the United States.

What is the real importance in having a Mexican section? How do we reflect this importance in our structure and our work?

#### Summing Up

As this document shows, we can be more concrete about the situation we're in than what we do about it.

It's probable that these questions, or versions of them, will constantly be with us. Even if we can answer them in the present, we will face these or similar questions in the future as the conditions in our societies and the movements of which we are part continue to change their character, thinking and activities. That's why it's essential that we become more adept at considering these types of questions and addressing them collaboratively...because we'll have to do just that, with ever greater intensity and

more significant outcome, as long as we're an organization.

The main question for our organization, perhaps, resides in our relationship to that movement. Are we ready and able to be led by the movement of which we are part? Because being led by that movement allows us to think about it, talk with it, react to it and, in the areas we specialize in, provide leadership for it.

In the end, the key to providing leadership is in the willingness to be led. Are we ready to do that and how, in fact, do we do it?

## Chapter 26

# Race, Class and Transformation: Confronting Our History to Move Forward

Walda Katz-Fishman, Jerome Scott, and Ralph Gomes

From inside today's bottom-up movement for equality, justice, democracy and social transformation, we share experiences and lessons for understanding race and class in the context of historical and contemporary U.S. capitalism and social struggle. We cannot resolve a problem unless there is clarity about its root cause. America at its inception was a Southern nation grounded in genocide and slavery. The colonial occupation and stealth of the land and resources of the western hemisphere from Indigenous peoples combined with the super-exploitation of African slave labor in the plantation system was extraordinarily profitable for capital. To continue to produce and reproduce this source of capital accumulation and wealth, white supremacy and institutional racism were embedded in U.S. law, ideology, and society. Though no longer *de jure*, the content of white supremacy and racism remains *de facto* in every aspect of social life, even in the so-called "post-racial era" of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2006; Heagerty and Peery 2000).

The question of race in America – from Indigenous genocide and the slave system, to the attack on immigrant communities and the state execution of Troy Davis – inextricably links race and a racially exploitative and oppressive system to the very core of American class exploitation and super-exploitation, State power and repression, ideological hegemony, and social and environmental crises. Based on this history of U.S. capitalism and the deep interpenetration of race and class, we argue that it is not possible to resolve the fundamental problems of capitalism, especially white supremacy and institutional racism, without ending capitalism (Katz-Fishman and Scott 2004; Peery 2002).

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K. Haltinner (ed.), *Teaching Race and Anti-Racism in Contemporary America: Adding Context to Colorblindness*, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-7101-7\_26,  
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In the classroom of life – whether formal education settings, or the movement itself – theory, practice, and study around these questions is increasingly converging. We offer as a pedagogical tool the critical study of social history – the debunking of historical myth and the claiming of our real history of domination, oppression, exploitation, and of resistance and social struggle. This means gaining clarity around the victories of past movements, what has and has not been won, where we are today and why, and the path forward (Katz-Fishman et al. 2007).

### 26.1 The Current Crisis, Developing Motion, and Openings for Education and Consciousness-Raising

This examination of race and class in America takes place in the context of today's crisis and developing social motion. We are experiencing a crisis of the entire global capitalist system and, thus, for all of its components and institutions. Systemic crisis exacerbates and exposes the ever starker contradictions of society – of great abundance on a global scale of all the things people require, but of great want, deprivation, exploitation, oppression, and dispossession. Vanishing jobs, plummeting wages, soaring poverty, a broken social contract and neoliberal policies, growing militarism and police repression, and ecological collapse are a daily reality for U.S. workers and the vast majority of the world's peoples (Amin 2011; Berberoglu 2009).

Because of the historic reality of white supremacy, Blacks, Indigenous peoples, Latinos and immigrant communities are disproportionately affected by these multiple crises. In addition, patriarchy results in working class women and children being among the most impoverished and oppressed. At the same time wealth and power are being concentrated among an ever smaller class of global capitalists, who are using global institutions and their national governments to bailout capital's global financial institutions and corporations and to wage war to advance their class interests (Harvey 2010; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2011).

The question is how to secure the necessities of life for all humanity, eliminate white supremacy and national and gender oppression, protect the planet, and win the peace. Social movements and revolutionaries are in motion. Twenty-first century global capitalism requires a coordinated global movement from the bottom-up with diverse working class leadership, including workers of color and Indigenous as part of collective leadership (Peery 2002; Pleyers 2010; Santos 2006). The struggle is growing in the United States and around the world – from uprisings in Tunisia, in Egypt's Tahrir Square and throughout the Middle East, to the *Indignados* in Spain, to Greece, Britain and across Europe, to Wisconsin and, most recently, to Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Together, including cities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Associated Press 2011).

These realities present new openings for movement organizing, analyzing, visioning, and strategizing (Gonzales and Katz-Fishman 2010; Harvey 2010). The

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### 26.2 Lessons from Race and Class

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## Motion, and Openings s-Raising

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growing popular response to the deepening crisis is the beginning of a rupture in consciousness of the past period and is a strategic opportunity for creating critical learning spaces – in K-12 and higher education and in the movement struggle. Today's emerging counter-hegemonic movement requires that we undertake a mass education project to raise consciousness and to develop the collective leadership from below that embodies a political clarity of vision and strategy to keep the movement on its path to the real resolution to the problems before us – the path to an egalitarian and cooperative society in which all human needs are met and the earth is renewed and protected. In the United States, this means confronting our history of division based on race, class, and capitalism within social movements and in the larger society to move forward in unity (Katz-Fishman and Scott 2008, 2011).

## 26.2 Lessons from Social History on White Supremacy, Race and Class

Knowing our history so we can grasp the root causes of today's crises and move beyond the mistakes of the past sets the conditions for us to move into the future we want for ourselves, humanity and the planet. Through the lens of public sociology and scholar activism, social history contains powerful lessons for the classroom, and especially for students, scholars and activists engaged in today's transformative movement from below. We have to understand the ongoing disproportionate oppression and exploitation of Black, Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers and, at the same time, explain why workers, and especially White workers over the centuries, have acted against their own self-interest because of the racial divide.

The daily struggle against exploitation and oppression and for the necessities of life – housing, health care, food and water, education, energy and transportation, jobs and living wages – is a school for learning how capitalism, the State, and ideology move to crush working and poor people of all races and nationalities, across gender and sexuality, and intensify white supremacist inequality and oppression. So, any effort to eliminate white supremacy and institutional racism requires addressing it within in the transformative movement against capitalism (Katz-Fishman et al. 2007; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2008).

Here we lift up key lessons on white supremacy, race and class from social history for today's struggle

1. *The ruling class early on developed a strategy based on white supremacy and race to control the multiracial working class and to justify forms of wealth accumulation.*

Capitalism in the United States and worldwide embodies white supremacy and institutional racism in the material conditions of political economy, the State, and

social structures, and in ideological institutions and culture. White supremacy is deeply embedded in U.S. State law and practice, in the economy and reality of daily life, and in the social consciousness of masses of people. Consider the historical record – from genocide to the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears, and continuing broken treaties. From Slave Codes to the Three-fifths rule in the U.S. Constitution, from Black Codes to Jim Crow Constitutions, to recent anti-immigrant law for ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) enforcement and massive deportations (see Heagerty and Peery 2000; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2004; Peery 2002 for detailed discussion).

White supremacy and institutional racism in all these forms has been and continues to be strategic to the method of control of the working class – to divide the working class along color lines to insure rule by capital. White supremacy and racism are also strategic to the justification for wealth accumulation through genocide and stealth from the Indigenous peoples, the super-exploitation of Black labor in the slave system and sharecropping, and the continuing racial divide and white privilege economically, politically and socially among Whites in America today.

Realizing maximum profits and suppressing working class struggle through division across race, nationality, and gender are essential to capitalist class rule and are reproduced within and through education, culture, and State repression. White supremacy and institutional racism are thus strategic and foundational to ruling class control and domination and are central to the whole capitalist system and its continuity.

2. *Victories resulting in policy changes around white supremacy and race do not change fundamental systemic structures and realities. And, for every victory and advance, there is reaction and repression by the state and extralegal terror. The struggle continues.*

As brutal and violent as the history of white supremacy and institutional racism in America is, it has been met over the centuries with fierce resistance and powerful movements that have brought about heroic victories. Slave rebellions and Maroon communities of Native Americans and African Americans challenged systemic genocide and slavery. The Seminole Wars waged by Native Americans and liberated slaves from 1816 to 1842 opposed Indian removal, and the Underground Railroad transported thousands of slaves to freedom. All this was prelude to the Civil War (see Heagerty and Peery 2000; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2004; Peery 2002 for detailed discussion).

Among the legal victories of this bloody war were the Civil War Amendments and Reconstruction Act of 1867. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime – which is a huge exception. The Fourteenth Amendment established very generally the rights of citizenship, and the Fifteenth granted citizens the right to vote regardless of race, color, and previous servitude. Armed with new legislation, Blacks made gains in the election of Black officials during the Reconstruction period and reorganizing Southern society.

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But, no sooner had the Civil War ended than the reaction and counter-revolution set in. The Ku Klux Klan, Knights of the White Camellia and other vigilante organizations, led by the ex-planter class, resisted and rebelled against Reconstruction and unleashed a reign of terror on former slaves, poor Whites, and their allies. The near slave conditions of the sharecropping system replaced chattel slavery, but Blacks remained trapped in a super-exploitative economic system enforced by an oppressive political system. The Hayes Tilden Compromise of 1877 and withdrawal of federal troops from the South, along with Black Codes and Jim Crow constitutions, set the conditions for extreme white supremacy, and bloody and repressive fascist rule in the South. Legal and extra-legal methods including violent lynch mobs became the daily reality of life well into the twentieth century.

Thus, almost a century later, the victories and gains of the Civil War had to be revisited to once again mount an oppositional movement to the white supremacy and institutional racism so deeply embedded in the American State and society. The movement activists – students and children, women and men – strategized, organized, and educated, boycotted busses, sat in at lunch counters, marched, sang, prayed, rode freedom busses, and camped out. They suffered the abuse and violence of the lynch mob, dogs and water hoses, police billy clubs and beatings, fires and bombs, prison and death. And they endured and were resilient. The Black freedom struggle of the twentieth century again won victories and made advances through civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation of the 1950s and 1960s. *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed separate but equal education; the Montgomery Bus Boycott ended legal segregation in public transit in Alabama; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, nationality, religion, or gender; and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 again protected the right of all citizens to vote (Heagerty and Peery 2000; Peery 2002).

Once again, reaction against these reforms and the pull of history asserted themselves. Five decades later, systemic white supremacy and institutional racism have again intensified. The economic crisis of corporate capitalism means a disproportionate crisis in unemployment and poverty among Black, Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers and their families, and a lack of access to housing, education, and health care. The ecological crisis means more environmental racism and growing struggles often led by indigenous communities over commodification of nature and natural resources and their treaty rights. An increasingly repressive and racialized State, from the so-called “war on drugs” to ICE arrests and deportations, means massive rates of incarceration and state repression of Black, Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers (Alexander 2010; Bonilla-Silva 2010; Harvey 2010).

Over the centuries, the hard fought battles for reforms changed law, but not the deep institutions, structures, daily life and overall capitalist system within which white supremacy and racism are embedded. To say that a change in law or the historic election of the first Black president, as essential and powerful as these things are, is sufficient to eliminate all aspects of white supremacy and institutional racism is to fly in the face of history and social reality.

Policy changes do not change the content of the economic and political system – leaving intact the root cause. White supremacy and institutional racism are not just a “policy” that can be changed or reformed. They are systemic and thus require system change (Feagin 2006; Heagerty and Peery 2000; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2004).

3. *The reform movement is good, but is not enduring. What is our vision and strategy for the future?*

Resurgent bottom-up social movements won major victories and reforms in the twentieth century around labor, civil rights, gender, sexuality, poverty, ability, the environment, and peace. These reforms made a real difference in peoples’ lives – a section of workers (mostly White and male) gained collective bargaining rights and better working conditions. The Indigenous, Blacks, Latinos and immigrants became integrated into the class structure. Ending *de jure* forms of Jim Crow domination and super-exploitation lessened extreme inequality and racial oppression. Environmental consciousness was raised. And the Vietnam War came to a close.

Yet, many of these reforms themselves were flawed and informed by white supremacy and racism. The New Deal social contract of the 1920s–1930s excluded agricultural workers, domestic workers, and many service workers – sections of the labor force where Black, Latino, immigrant, women, and poor workers are concentrated. As social reform and the welfare state expanded in the 1960s, the poor – again disproportionately women, Black, Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers and families – were subjected to indignities and scrutiny other workers were not to receive government benefits. And during the 1950s and 1960s the government’s COINTELPRO program of counter-insurgency at home brought the most extreme forms of political repression – disruption, incarceration and even assassination – to especially the Black, Indigenous and Puerto Rican liberation struggles (Williams 2003).

By the late 1970s and 1980s, the popular movements were not able to hold onto the victories and gains of the reform period in the context of a rapidly transforming and crisis driven economy, ecology, and society. The “war on drugs” swelled the prison population with young working class Black and Brown men and the prison-industrial complex took on new life. With the destruction of the welfare state and social reforms, neoliberal policies prevailed. The safety net was shredded; the public sphere, nature, and common goods were privatized; the private sector was deregulated, and the political class got busy with reorganizing the State to serve the interests of global corporations with no concern for the well being of the masses – the people now rising up representing the 99 % (Amin 2011; Berberoglu 2009; Gonzales and Katz-Fishman 2010; Harvey 2010). In the post-911 years the U.S. Patriot Act and Homeland Security renewed a deeply repressive policy of State control over all who dare challenge the system. But, as usual, Indigenous, Black, Latino and immigrant workers were disproportionately ensnared (Alexander 2010).

These key lessons of the U.S. capitalist State creating and reproducing new forms of white supremacy and institutional racism across history that oppress, super-exploit and dispossess especially Black, Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers

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*What is our vision and strategy*

major victories and reforms in the areas of sexuality, poverty, ability, the difference in peoples' lives – a collective bargaining rights and that Latinos and immigrants became victims of Jim Crow domination and racial oppression. Environmental War came to a close.

Unlawful and informed by white supremacy of the 1920s–1930s excluded service workers – sections of women, and poor workers are being expanded in the 1960s, the inclusion of Indigenous, Latino and immigrant workers and scrutiny other workers during the 1950s and 1960s the insurgency at home brought the abolition of imprisonment and even the liberation of Puerto Rican liberation

movements were not able to hold onto the context of a rapidly transforming world. The "war on drugs" swelled the ranks of Brown men and the prison-industrial complex of the welfare state safety net was shredded; the environment was privatized; the private sector was being organized the State to serve the needs of the well being of the masses – (Amin 2011; Berberoglu 2009; Katz-Fishman 2011) the post-9/11 years the U.S. has a highly repressive policy of State violence against as usual, Indigenous, Black, and Latino, ensnared (Alexander 2010). The system is creating and reproducing new social classes history that oppress, super-exploitation and immigrant workers

and their families, and divide the multiracial working class make real the limitations of reform struggles (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2006).

Today shifts in the base of the capitalist economy – globalization and the technological revolution using electronic tools (computers, automation, robotics) that are labor replacing – have created a systemic rupture in capitalist relations and accumulation. Workers, increasingly replaced by robots, are becoming redundant and disposable. Huge swathes of Black, Indigenous, Latino, immigrant and women workers are disproportionately poor, underemployed and unemployed, homeless, hungry, without quality education and health care, and exposed to environmental toxins and disasters. At the same time the entire working class is more and more dispossessed and experiencing these new realities of economic and ecological crisis and destruction and political repression. The corporate state has replaced the welfare state, and while this affects the working class as a whole, it weighs most heavily on those it always has (Amin 2011; Berberoglu 2009; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2011).

Social movements are creating an alter-globalization from below, and because of electronic technology we can produce an abundance of all the things humanity requires to satisfy our needs. The vision of an egalitarian, cooperative and peaceful society in which production, distribution and consumption are organized to meet human needs and to protect the planet is possible and necessary. In social struggle – e.g., in the Social Forum process and the Occupy Together movement – new forms of self-organizing and horizontal processes of collective leadership and consensus are being practiced. Over the centuries social movements did not resolve the systemic problems of exploitation, poverty, and oppression at their root, leaving this unfinished task to social movements in this historic moment (Karides et al. 2010; Pleyers 2010; Santos 2006).

### ***26.2.1 Confronting Our History to Move Forward for System Change***

To rise to this challenge, scholar and student activists and social movement actors have to engage the truth of our diverse realities in critical learning and consciousness raising spaces. As we prepare for the coming political struggle to transfer power from domination in the hands of the ruling class to cooperation in the hands of the working class, we have to confront our history. To be silent about the hierarchies of power and oppression within the larger society that are reproduced within our learning and movement processes is to consent to them and to the dominant ideology of our oppressor (Katz-Fishman et al. 2007; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2011).

The final lesson is that if the problem of white supremacy and racism, along with classism, sexism and other oppressions, are deeply and historically rooted within the capitalist system, we have to change the system upon which it rests to resolve the problem. We as a society and a movement cannot move forward without confronting the long history of white supremacy and racism and how they continually erupt in

relationships as well as structurally. When individuals reproduce white supremacy and white privilege in their daily interaction, they are acting out the script written by the ruling class. History, the State, culture and education have programmed the American people to play out this scenario of racial division and white privilege. This insures confusion, dissension, a divided working class and a divided movement, and thus continued domination and control by the capitalist class.

What history also teaches us is that while white supremacy is strategic in divide and conquer, it is also the Achilles heel of the ruling class. Thus, swathes of Whites from all strata of the working class are themselves experiencing unemployment and underemployment, poverty, and dispossession of what their privilege historically guaranteed to them. In this context it becomes possible to study and understand the historic hierarchies among working people in the United States and to intentionally struggle to negate these, and also to value our difference and diversity while moving to consciousness of our common working class realities and interests for the long haul (Heagerty and Peery 2000).

The day to day struggle is the school where educators and movement builders connect theory and practice, and teach the truth of our history and the trap it sets for us unless we develop a collective oppositional understanding. It is time to seize the moment to develop a mass education project to raise and deepen consciousness about the need to transform the system, to create a shared vision of the world we are fighting for, and the capacity and strategy to make it happen. In this process we have to walk our talk and model the world we are trying to create (Gonzales and Katz-Fishman 2010; Karides et al. 2010; Katz-Fishman et al. 2007; Katz-Fishman and Scott 2008).

Today's student, scholar, and movement activists are in motion in response to the objective conditions of crisis in society, and are part of the emerging anti-systemic transformative movement in the United States and the world. The social struggle has the mandate and the capacity to confront the enduring history of white supremacy to keep the motion on track and to realize working class unity. The movement toward the future has to be not only anti-capitalist, but also anti-white supremacist and anti-patriarchy. All the various currents of struggle point in the same direction – the need for independent working class politics rooted in the consciousness that capitalism has failed us. History is on the side of the exploited, the oppressed, the impoverished, and the dispossessed. The future is up to us.

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## **US Social Forum III Political Framing Documents & Questions 4.22.13**

### **The urgency of movement building in the current moment of crisis .... On the Road to USSF III**

We live day to day in crisis and struggle. For the first time in history we are experiencing a rapidly deepening crisis of global capitalism affecting millions in the United States and billions world-wide – producing austerity policies and massive permanent unemployment and poverty, unimaginable climate, ecological and social destruction, and intensifying political attacks, repression, and the threat of fascism and war everywhere. At the same time, resistance, activism and organizing are on the rise across all continents, sectors, and fronts of struggle.

This moment requires a huge and unified social movement in the U.S. with millions of politically conscious people to ensure victory for the arising social motion in the interests of the oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed – to protect the earth and affirm life. The US Social Forum can play a role in pushing forward strategic US movement development through the dynamic interrelation of local and regional struggles, and the emergence of a national movement in relation to global movements. The US Social Forum process is striving to step up and take its place in history by advancing the interests of working class, low-income, and grassroots struggles. The moment is urgent and the opportunities are great.

To advance our struggle for shared understanding, political unity, and participation on the road to US movement building and USSF III, we invite you to read and discuss the US Social Forum political framing documents in your organizations, networks, and collectives and to answer the questions below.

- USSF 2014 Goals
- Urgency Statement 2012
- We Believe Statement (2007, updated 2013)
- People's Movement Assembly (PMA) Synthesis 2010
- World Social Forum Charter of Principles

### **Questions for collective and movement political discussion**

- 1 What is the urgency of the current moment – economically, politically, and ecologically?
- 2 What is the state of the movement in the US? What is the dynamic interrelation of local struggles and the emergence of a national movement? How do movements develop?
- 3 How can our movement go from defensive struggles to the offensive? What would this look like day to day, connecting short term goals with long term goals and visions?
- 4 How can the WSF & US Social Forum be a movement building tool – concretely, developing strategy & organizational forms for moving forward the road to 2014-16

plan for organizing and politically framing the social forum process to advance US movement nationally, regionally and locally and in relation to global movements?

- 5 How can we adopt / adapt PMA methodology for outreach, organizing and popular/political education of CVS – consciousness, vision and strategy (and tactics) — for social forum process and road?
- 6 What does a social forum of a new type look like on the road, during the convergence, and moving forward from USSF III?

### **USSF3 Goals (updated 11.9.13)**

1. Create a space for social movement analysis, visioning, popular and political education, convergence, cohesion and strategic discussion.
2. Advance Peoples Movement Assemblies' agendas for ongoing action directed toward social transformation.
3. Build stronger relationships, collaboration, and social movements across fronts of struggle for political understanding, strategic direction, and a powerful political force.
4. Deepen our collaboration with global social movements and our practice of international solidarity and joint struggle.
5. Strengthen local capacity to improve social conditions and social struggle.
6. Model and practice our values and our vision of another world (e.g., celebration, caring, support of identity, cooperation, collectivity, justice, equality, democracy, and sustainability).

### **Urgency Statement 2012 10.28.12**

The Urgency of the moment and the challenge to the US Social Forum process

It will take a huge social movement in the United States with millions of conscious people to ensure victory for the arising social motion in society in the interests of the oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed. Given this, what are the role, responsibility and accountability of the US Social Forum in pushing forward U.S. movement development in relation to global struggles in this urgent moment of deep systemic crisis?

The current moment

The objective situation in the U.S. and the world is a rapidly deepening and widening crisis of the entire global capitalist system. It's evidenced by an irreversible economic crisis affecting millions in the U.S. and billions world-wide, producing massive poverty and irreversible ecological and social destruction, and heightening political attack, repression, war, and the threat of fascism the world over.

In 2001 the Patriot Act marked the beginning of this intensified period of domestic repression, linkage to the so-called "war on terrorism," and the formation of the Department of Homeland Security. More recently the federal government has enacted HR 347 - criminalizing dissent, protest, and activism - and the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act), bringing militarism and preventive detention to the domestic front of our neighborhoods. The police state continues to fill the prisons with young African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, and the poor. This increasingly rapid economic and political polarization and motion toward fascism require a powerful movement response.

Movement development is thus an urgent task; and the US Social Forum, in relation to other forces in motion, can be a powerful tool in this process. If we do not act smartly and intentionally to build our movement, the crisis will only worsen - placing humanity and the planet in peril - and the threat of fascism will become a reality.

The urgency of movement building :: from spontaneity to consciousness

Resistance is on the rise across continents, sectors, and fronts of struggle. Spontaneous motion in response to the crisis is increasing in the U.S. and globally through mobilizations, campaigns, protests, and occupations. But there is little conscious and strategic movement development within this growing activity. The US Social Forum process can and must add this element and help fill the vacuum by advancing the interests of working class, low-income, and grassroots struggles.

Critical moment - moving the US Social Forum process forward

The essential next step for the US Social Forum process, including the Peoples Movement Assembly, is to move forward with organizing a post-election national convergence in March 2013 as a strategic movement building opportunity.

To accomplish this, we have several immediate tasks:

- To organize the NPC to include forces in motion and social movement forces not already part of the US Social Forum process.
- To develop a tight timeline and work assignments for organizing the March 2013 Convening.
- To hold bi-weekly NPC expanded calls, with NPC organizations that engage and organizations, networks and coalitions that may want to join the NPC and /or the 2013 Convening process.
- To hold an NPC expanded face-to-face meeting in early November in Chicago.

The US Social Forum process needs to step up and take its place in history. The moment is urgent and the opportunities are great. Join us in organizing the Strategic Movement Convening in March 2013.

Make it happen!

## **Peoples' Movement Assembly (PMA) Synthesis 2010 \***

We can build a better world. Working together, we can create a world that respects the human rights of every human, nurtures creativity and health, promotes unity, solidarity and peace, and uses resources in a way that protects the earth and affirms life.

At this historical moment, there is a growing sense of overwhelming crisis. We recognize that the money and other resources that have been swallowed up by militarization must be redirected to solve human needs - to protect the basic human needs of food, shelter, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom from harm, and protection of Mother Earth, which nurtures and sustains all life.

We believe that we can create a new economic system. We can build an economic system that is not based in individual, corporate, or private ownership and does not exploit

people, the planet, natural resources, or living beings but instead is based on principles of collectivity and sustains our communities. We must move aside old systems that have failed and create new ones that serve and are accountable to all people and all living beings.

We must link arms with our sisters and brothers globally. We must commit to a willingness to work together to seek understanding, to coordinate action, and to move forward with a sense of urgency to create a more just world. We acknowledge the need to break down barriers. We must integrate our national struggles for the human rights to dignity, welfare, freedom and justice.

Each one of us has to dig deeper to understand each other's culture and history. We must build respectful relationships across difference. Our struggles and our goals are all connected to each other. Our fronts of struggle and our goals are all on the same continuum. We have the desire and energy to create something different that sustains us. As a people, we must rely on each other. We can realize our dreams to treat each other as equals and to build alliances across our commonalities and differences. We affirm self-determination and self-reliance. We believe that we can build our collective power through participation in popular political education and organizing collective action. We can each realize the power within each one of us and build collective power by participating in the fronts of struggle recognized through the Peoples Movement Assemblies. Let us unite and create a better world for all future living generations.

A better world is possible! Another U.S. is near....

\* This statement represents the work of a Synthesis Assembly to craft a social movement agenda based on the work of over 50 assemblies held at the U.S. Social Forum in 2010. A Synthesis Commission made up of leaders from various movements (Marian Kramer, Rose Brewer, Suzanne Pharr, Manuel Pino, and Jacqui Patterson, facilitation by Dana Wright) wrote and read this declaration at the National Assembly.

## **We Believe Statement (2007, updated 2013)**

We, the organizers of the first United States Social Forum:

- Believe that there is a strategic need to unite the struggles of oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed communities and peoples, classes, and genders within the United States (particularly Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific-Islander and Indigenous communities) to the struggles of marginalized, oppressed, and dispossessed peoples and classes around the world.
- Believe the USSF should place the highest priority on groups that are actually doing grassroots organizing with working-class people and people of color, who are training organizers, building long-term structures of resistance, and who can work well with other groups, seeing their participation in USSF as building the whole, not just their part of it.
- Believe the USSF must be a place where the voices of those who are most marginalized and oppressed from Indigenous communities can be heard--a place that will recognize Indigenous peoples, their issues and struggles.

- Believe the USSF must create space for the full and equal participation of undocumented migrants and their communities.
- Believe the USSF should link US-based youth organizers, activists, and cultural workers to the struggles of their brothers and sisters abroad, drawing common connections and exploring the deeper meanings of solidarity.
- Believe the USSF is important because we must have a clear and unified approach at dealing with social justice issues, and meaningful positions on global issues.
- Believe that a USSF sends a message to other people's movements around the world that there is an active movement in the United States opposing U.S. policies at home and abroad.
- Believe that the USSF will help build national networks that will be better able to collaborate with international networks and movements.
- We believe the USSF is more than an event. It is an ongoing process to contribute to strengthening the entire movement, bringing together the various sectors and issues that work for global justice.

### **World Social Forum Charter of Principles 8.6.02**

The committee of Brazilian organizations that conceived of, and organized, the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre from January 25th to 30th, 2001, after evaluating the results of that Forum and the expectations it raised, consider it necessary and legitimate to draw up a Charter of Principles to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative. While the principles contained in this Charter - to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process and to organize new editions of the World Social Forum - are a consolidation of the decisions that presided over the holding of the Porto Alegre Forum and ensured its success, they extend the reach of those decisions and define orientations that flow from their logic.

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.
2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.
3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have

an international dimension.

4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization

commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society.

6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forums meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and

ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the

diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy,

participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.

Approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001, by the organizations that make up the World Social Forum Organizing Committee, approved with modifications by the World Social Forum International Council on June 10, 2001.

4.22.13

*To Peggy McIntosh  
Who led the way*

# WHITE PRIVILEGE

essential readings on the other side of racism

Third Edition

**Paula S. Rothenberg**  
Senior Fellow, Murphy Institute,  
City University of New York

WORTH PUBLISHERS

## White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

—Peggy McIntosh

Through work to bring materials from Women's Studies into the rest of the curriculum, I have often noticed men's unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged. They may say they will work to improve women's status, in the society, the university, or the curriculum, but they can't or won't support the idea of lessening men's. Denials which amount to taboos surround the subject of advantages which men gain from women's disadvantages. These denials protect male privilege from being fully acknowledged, lessened or ended.

Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege which was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.

Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable. As we in Women's Studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about having white privilege must ask, "Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?"

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of color that white women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow "them" to be more like "us."

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions which I think in my case *attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege* than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographical location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can see, my African American co-workers, friends and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place, and line of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
19. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
20. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
21. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, out-numbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
23. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
24. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
25. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
26. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

I repeatedly forgot each of the realizations on this list until I wrote it down. For me white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own.

In unpacking this invisible knapsack of white privilege, I have listed conditions of daily experience which I once took for granted. Nor did I

think of any of these perquisites as bad for the holder. I now think that we need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege, for some of these varieties are only what one would want for everyone in a just society, and others give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant and destructive.

I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions which were passed on to me as a white person. There was one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those who could control the turf. *My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make.* I could think of myself as belonging in major ways, and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely.

In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and oblivious, other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence, which I was being subtly trained to visit in turn upon people of color.

For this reason, the word "privilege" now seems to me misleading. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the conditions I have described here work to systematically overempower certain groups. Such privilege simply *confers dominance* because of one's race or sex.

I want, then, to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power conferred systemically. Power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate. But not all of the privileges on my list are inevitably damaging. Some, like the expectation that neighbors will be decent to you, or that your race will not count against you in court, should be the norm in a just society. Others, like the privilege to ignore less powerful people, distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups.

We might at least start by distinguishing between positive advantages which we can work to spread, and negative types of advantages which unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies. For example, the feeling that one belongs within the human circle, as Native Americans say, should not be seen as privilege for a few. Ideally it is an *unearned entitlement*. At present, since only a few have it, it is an unearned advantage for them. This paper results from a process of coming to see that some of the power which I originally saw as attendant on being a human being in the U.S. consisted in *unearned advantage* and *conferred dominance*.

I have met very few men who are truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance. And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance and if so, what we will do to lessen them. In any case, we need to do more work in identifying how they actually affect our daily lives. Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the U.S. think

that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see "whiteness" as a racial identity. In addition, since race and sex are not the only advantaging systems at work, we need similarly to examine the daily experience of having age advantage, or ethnic advantage, or physical ability, or advantage related to nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.

Difficulties and dangers surrounding the task of finding parallels are many. Since racism, sexism, and heterosexism are not the same, the advantaging associated with them should not be seen as the same. In addition, it is hard to disentangle aspects of unearned advantage which rest more on social class, economic class, race, religion, sex and ethnic identity than on other factors. Still, all of the oppressions are interlocking, as the Combahee River Collective Statement of 1977 continues to remind us eloquently.

One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms which we can see and embedded forms which as a member of the dominant group one is taught not to see. In my class and place, I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.

Disapproving of the systems won't be enough to change them. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals changed their attitudes. [But] a "white" skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems.

To redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that *systems* of dominance exist.

It seems to me that obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculcated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power, and serves to keep power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already.

Though systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing questions for me and I imagine for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites of being light-skinned. What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching men, it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base.



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# MAPPING THE LEFT

Progressive Politics in the United States

By Ethan Young

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The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is an internationally operating, progressive non-profit institution for civic education. In cooperation with many organizations around the globe, it works on democratic and social participation, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, alternatives for economic and social development, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The New York Office serves two major tasks: to work around issues concerning the United Nations and to engage in dialogue with North American progressives in universities, unions, social movements, and politics.

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## **The U.S. Left on the Eve of Occupy**

Occupy Wall Street arose like a force of nature over the landscape of the U.S. Left. Only a year after its birth, there are hardly any left institutions or tendencies that it has not in some way influenced. The inclination, then, may be to allow its influence to color our memories of the U.S. Left as it stood pre-September 2011.

To be sure, it was a barren landscape. The U.S. Left has no central political vehicle and only a very small and tenuous hold within the Democratic Party. The broader cultural memory of left social movements was obliterated with the rise of the Reagan Republicans in the 1980s, while the fall of the Soviet Union devastatingly reinforced the neoliberal formulation that “There Is No Alternative”, leaving the U.S. Left permanently weakened and seemingly shorn of its past victories. The following decades were characterized largely by fragmentation and low-key public visibility.

But nonetheless, the Left does have a place in U.S. history and society. Its activism has played a crucial part, from the abolitionist movement and the socialist movement to the creation of Roosevelt’s New Deal to a string of civil rights and environmental gains in the 1960s and 1970s. However unsuccessful at times, it most certainly has played a role in exposing and opposing the various contradictions and scandals of American capitalism. And on the eve of Occupy the U.S. Left was present, in all its fragmented and dysfunctional glory, but present nonetheless.

The following text by writer and activist Ethan Young, written in the summer of 2011, depicts with great detail the historical development and state of the U.S. Left before Occupy Wall Street. While his judgments are determined and at times unsparing, his tone conveys belief that the Left’s fragmentation can be overcome. The at least momentary reunification of divergent tendencies under the banner of the Occupy movement proves the timeliness of this message. Its importance is further revealed by the fact that, looking past the bright lights of Occupy, much of the U.S. Left landscape remains essentially the same. A postscript by the author, written more than a year after Occupy Wall Street began, provides readers with final thoughts on what that landscape may look like in years to come.

*Stefanie Ehmsen and Albert Scharenberg  
Co-Directors of New York Office, November 2012*

# Mapping the Left

## Progressive Politics in the United States

By Ethan Young

The Left is hard to find and even harder to define. “In the absence of national organization, the left, decentralized and fragmented, lacks objective definition.” This 1988 verdict by Richard Flacks, a founder of the original SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), still holds. He continues: “For one to become an identified leftist is, therefore, very much a matter of self-construction. The left one identifies with tends to be the left one happens to see—and there is a good chance that one will not see the left at all, or see only a portion of its potentialities.”

The Left has no central political vehicle; it occupies a precarious niche in the Democratic Party but is denied any real power in the party’s leadership. This is in sharp contrast to the Right, which has gained substantial influence and visible presence within the leadership of the Republican Party. In a two-party, winner-take-all electoral system, the Left is the loser taking nothing.

This situation has been developing throughout the last century. In some ways it is unique to the United States. For decades, analysts fell back on a catch-all formula of “American exceptionalism,” and the relatively higher living standard, to explain it. The full circumstances are complicated and very specific to the nature of U.S. politics and the class structure of the society; and within those contexts, the troubled history of the Left.

The incoherence of the Left reflects its fragmentation. Few would deny this, but attempts to for-

mulate a resolution to this problem begin and end in transient proposals for coalitions around issues, electoral campaigns, or vaguely focused, short-lived dialogues involving various tendencies. The belief that a theoretical breakthrough would somehow serve as a new rallying point has proven futile many times over.

Some of the problems related to fragmentation and political incoherence have deep historical roots. No social democratic or labor party has ever come close to challenging power at the federal level. Intense government repression and widespread xenophobia made joining self-identified left groups extremely risky. The most radical groups to gain a mass following, such as the Industrial Workers of the World in the 1910s and 20s and the Black Panther Party in the 1960s and 70s, were targets of murder and torture at the hands of police and vigilantes.

Political understanding of left social movements was nearly obliterated from popular memory at two intervals: the post-World War II Red Scare, and the resurgence of social conservatism that swept the country at the beginning of the neoliberal Reagan/George H.W. Bush era (the 1980s).

Yet the Left is still a part of U.S. society. Its fragmentation can also be viewed in the context of the fragmentation of the broader society. Its decline is part of a critical decline of democracy itself—those bourgeois democratic structures and practices that have endured, and in some

cases deepened (thanks to the Left itself), since the founding of the republic. The fragmentation and democratic decline are, in part, a result of the erosion of the nation's infrastructure and industrial base, which in turn has contributed

to the dissolution of communities and cultures built around traditional workplaces and shared spaces. This trend is accelerating with the ever-increasing turn to privatization, austerity, and social Darwinism.

## The Power of the Right

2000-2001 was the turning point. The voting numbers overall would have handed the 2000 presidential election to the Democratic candidate. The outcome was instead determined by a combination of Electoral College votes, polling chicanery in key states, and the Supreme Court decision in favor of the Republicans in *Bush v. Gore*. Gore won the majority of votes, but the "will of the people," however polarized, was defeated by the Reagan-appointed majority of Supreme Court justices and rightist goon squads in Florida.

Within a year, the 9/11 attack precipitated the anti-terrorism campaign which led to new laws (beginning with the PATRIOT Act) increasing executive and police power as well as secrecy, and reducing civilian rights and privacy. By 2002, Americans were living in a system where the very concept of democracy had been stripped of much of its already limited meaning. The social contract was rewritten, with no quarrel from the Center and Right, and with the Left too weak even to be heard.

The political impact of street demonstrations was blunted in the course of the decade. George W. Bush's military adventures were met with widespread opposition, but centrist politicians were terrified of being labeled "soft on terrorism," and the media belittled the anger and numbers of the largest peace rallies. The exporting of jobs neutralized the ability of strikes and job actions to disrupt the economy.

The Bush era selection of conservatives to the Supreme Court was carefully planned to offset any future change of party power in the executive and legislative branches. The 2010 Supreme Court "Citizens United" ruling removed limits on corporate financial control of political campaigns. Thus, unrestricted corporate power over workers' rights, as well as protection of the private sector from most government regulation, is now federal law. Once again, the center has done little more than mutter disapproval.

Republicans have launched attacks on the voting rights of African American and Latino workers. Rightist think tanks have drafted legislation that would restrict the ability to vote in advance, in person, or via mail or phone, and would require voters to show photo ID at the polling place. These restrictions harken back to the measures used in the pre-civil rights South to harass and stymie African American voters.

The rise of the populist Right accompanied the decline of government services—the very term "welfare state" has been turned into a negative buzzword—and the naked expansion of corporate hegemony. The politicization of Christian fundamentalist congregations, beginning in the 1970s, created a fervent populist right electoral base driven by social conservatism, which pushed hard for Bush in 2000 and 2004.

Today, the purportedly anti-elitist, "big government"-hating far Right's "grassroots" arm, the

Obama-phobic Tea Party, has neutralized the Center-Rightists in the Republican Party. Sections of the stridently populist right movement are openly subsidized by corporate billionaires. Neo-fascist elements have found legitimacy in the movement, which is now accepted as a legitimate political player by the mainstream media, with only minor argument.

In this overwhelming scenario, the struggle of the Left to cohere and reconstruct is intercon-

nected with the renewal and restoration of U.S. democracy itself. The Center and Right offer only pseudo-democratic spectacles to lend legitimacy to the blatantly destructive enormities of capital in power. It is now up to the Left to present to the public the case for democracy as mass, self-interested (in the class sense) political action, in opposition to both the populist Right and the show biz spectacles of the Republican and Democratic national leadership-led campaigns.

## **The Three Lefts and the Ebb of Oppositional Politics**

The terrain of the U.S. Left—in its broader, social definition—appears in three distinct areas: social movements, political formations, and academia. They are, for the most part, isolated from one another and have separate roles in society. They make their influence felt mainly through public discourse, limited campaigns, demonstrations, strikes, and elections.

The extent of that influence was demonstrated by the ability of the Democratic Party's social movement base to make a major contribution to the election of Obama in 2008. This base consciously and effectively worked to turn widespread disillusionment with Bush into a solid voter turnout. They simultaneously broke through deep-rooted racist presumptions about the first black major-party presidential candidate.

But after the election, that left/liberal activist base was quickly reined in by the party and campaign leadership. Since Obama took office, the Left has not moved the administration on any issue (excepting gay rights and some ground gained for immigrants).

These episodes highlight both the surprising strength and fundamental weakness of the U.S. Left. As long as the Left is fragmented

and marginal, as long as it lacks any connecting structure or strategy, its component parts exist in a constant state of demoralization and grossly underestimate their own potential strength.

Each sector must be analyzed individually and in relation to the others to understand the present condition of the U.S. Left as a whole.

### **Social Movements, the Decisive Force in Progressive Politics**

The sector of the Left with the most tangible power consists of progressive social movements that have, at various times, reshaped social relations; pushed through laws, government services and policies to protect workers and specially oppressed groups; and limited U.S. military adventurism.

Social movements are distinguished by their mass character. They manifest nationally and retain an attraction for new generations. They are often stereotyped as reflecting marginal sentiments—"special interests"—a stereotype that is in turn embraced by some in the movements themselves.

Yet various movements' appeal and influence find their way into many social settings. To the extent that movements express themselves culturally, they change that culture. To the extent that they organize and move politically, they challenge power relations, at least in terms of social policy and access to democratic rights.

How can movements that have only rudimentary politics (single issues, group demands) be considered part of the Left—a political phenomenon by definition? Because they come from, and are driven by, the social contradictions that foster politics which clash with the power of capital.

Even so, within each movement an array of political tendencies struggles for dominance. When a movement is threatened and isolated by the Right, it may be isolated and its left leadership weakened—as happened during the 1950s Red Scare.

Left politics can sometimes gain in influence, as recent developments suggest is happening in labor. Some national and local leaders are drawing a sharper line between workers and corporations, the financial sector in particular. At the same time, we see more identification by some labor leaders and unions with social movement demands, immigrant rights, and women's equality. But there is a widespread "culture of concessions" that has still to be overcome.

Obama's 2008 election strategy was aimed at mobilizing the fragmented left social movements, in particular unions, civil rights groups, and electorally-oriented NGOs. However, Obama has taken pains since his election to avoid identification with the social movement Left—not coincidentally, the political sector with the strongest ideological and historical ties to the civil rights movement. (The administration has been particularly concerned about racial fears that Obama would side against whites in any

conflict.) Obama's deliberate snubs have underscored the Left's powerlessness in asserting a political agenda, even as his return to courting its support during the campaign season reflects his continued reliance on the Left, as the Republicans repeatedly point out.

The movements have waned steadily since the 1970s but remain ingrained in many settings: urban centers, college towns, some suburban and exurban towns with educated populations, union strongholds in industrial towns, and among the most impoverished workers in rural areas. Notably, an informal convention of social movement groups and activists, the U.S. Social Forum, was held in Atlanta in 2007 and Detroit in 2010.

A very broad overview of the main social movements follows.

### **Labor**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, industrial organizing swept the U.S., terrifying the centers of power. While the great strikes following World War I had no political banner beyond syndicalism, the Depression-era rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which was energized by hardcore leftists, became more and more identified with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal legacy. FDR sought to encourage union organizing to build a counterweight to the Right. The bond between the labor movement and the Democratic Party was cemented by the wartime demand for national unity.

Hence, while the labor movement retained a class character—it was and is accountable to its members for protecting their financial security, at least—its political stance was susceptible to pressure from the state.

When the New Dealers—the left wing of the FDR administration—were forced out of the

federal power arrangement under Truman with the onset of the Cold War, the Center and Right in labor leadership attacked the Left. During the Red Scare, entire unions were blacklisted, and left leaders were purged locally and nationally. The consequences were major: the CIO and the more conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL) merged. A plan to organize black workers in the South (Operation Dixie) was dropped in order to protect segregationist Democratic office holders. The AFL-CIO lined up with Washington's crusade against Communism, worked to undermine left unions around the world, and backed U.S. wars and sabotage of foreign governments.

A general acceptance of conservatism and conformism went largely unchallenged by the membership. Postwar "business unionism," in a setting of economic boom and rigid social conservatism, prevailed over the prewar drama of nationwide organizing, mass strikes, police attacks, and factory takeovers. Organized labor went into a steady membership decline that has ever since been ongoing and relentless.

When new social movements began to emerge in the postwar period, they were rarely welcomed by union members. Attempts to link labor with the civil rights movement were only minimally successful. In 1968, the powerful, predominantly white teachers' union in New York struck to undercut a community control experiment in an African American ghetto. In the 1970s, some unions opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, a major campaign of the women's movement, as a threat to laws designed to protect women from harsh labor conditions.

Thus, when the postwar "labor-management partnership" was broken under the Reagan administration, labor lacked strong allies besides the Democratic Party. The Nixon-era economic shift from industry to service already weakened the core of blue-collar unions. The grow-

ing assault on taxes and government spending pursued by big and small business sectors undercut government employees' strength. While Democratic administrations slowed the pace of attacks on labor, they did nothing to shore up the movement as the economy declined.

The Democratic Party leadership was shocked when traditionally loyal working-class voters—middle-income and white—deserted them in 1972 and 1980: the dreaded "Reagan Democrats" phenomenon. Democratic campaign organizers fixated on restoring that loyalty, basing their strategy on further distancing the party from left social movements, and adapting to white racial phobias and social conservatism (within limits imposed by key constituencies influenced by previous left social movement successes).

Unions inside and outside the AFL-CIO remained strong enough to help elect Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 and Barack Obama in 2008. But their strength, in numbers and internal cohesion, continues to decline. They are in a proper trap: unable to make any headway without strong allies on the Left and unable to ward off further erosion without bolstering from the Democrats, which does not seem to be forthcoming.

Yet and still, the labor movement has stronger national structure, more money, and closer ties to the working class than any other social movement. Unlike other social movements, they also have the experience of an uninterrupted engagement with national and local politics over nearly a century. If they can consolidate these relative strengths and build closer ties with other movements on a political basis, they can lead in filling the gap in society that has empowered the Right, as well as save themselves from extinction. There are indications that labor leadership is moving in that direction, such as joint action with the NAACP, the largest civil rights group; expanded organizing beyond workplace settings; and increased interaction with environ-

mentalist groups, non-union organizations of informal (domestic, undocumented, *per diem*) workers, and community groups.

### **African American empowerment, civil rights, and racial equality**

The movement of African American people to assert racial equality produced a tectonic shift in U.S. society. But the “color line” remains the fundamental division cutting across all classes and sectors. It characterizes class stratification, employment, housing, the polarization of skilled and unskilled workers, and access to education, health care, as well as civil rights, despite progress—some real and some hyperbolized.

The color line separates more than two racial demographics. The experience of African Americans is unique. The bloody path from chattel slavery to wage exploitation shaped the U.S. as a nation and as the strongest capitalist world power. The civil rights movement was a breakthrough, unleashing the clash of community interests that continue to shape national politics in many and complicated ways.

At the same time, the struggles and transformations of Chicanos, Mexicanos, and established Latino immigrant populations are central to the history of the U.S. working class. The American Indians, various Asian nationalities, and Arabs all have lived under the yoke of systemic racism. These communities mobilize for distinct goals—which are, at the same time, fundamentally interconnected.

Meanwhile, the Right has gained ground by playing to many whites’ fear of being outnumbered and “losing America.” Racist panic is intensified by increased immigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The election of a black president illustrates the continuing impact of the civil rights movement

on the nation’s ideology and mores, for better (very few would have expected a black candidate could win just a few years before) and for worse (with the familiar backlash of overt racism).

The 1960s civil rights movement exposed the continuation of white supremacy and black oppression, from slavery to the violent suppression of Southern Reconstruction to the century-old *de jure* racial caste system of Jim Crow, enforced by the state. In turn, the same system in its Northern, *de facto* form, extralegal but also state-enforced, was confronted, and the mass urban explosions in the mid-to-late 1960s showed in no uncertain terms that there was a price to be paid should U.S. society not reform its power relations regarding race and racism.

In the years following, colleges and businesses were integrated, and African Americans entered the professional world—a few at the highest levels of power. Most of the black population, however, suffered the worst consequences of urban decay and industrial collapse.

The rise of race consciousness and political radicalization among working-class black youth was met with fierce police repression. Beginning in the 1970s, a concerted effort to contest major elections grew rapidly in the politically developing black “inner cities.” This “empowerment” movement spread to other racially oppressed groups, most significantly Mexican-descended and Puerto Rican communities. (A large portion of the Southwest, formerly part of Mexico, is made up of U.S. citizens of many generations’ standing who speak Spanish and identify as Chicanos. Despite their actual national status, they are subject to the same harassment and attacks as undocumented Latin Americans.)

Elected positions long reserved for whites only were filled at city, state, and federal levels by

politicians from black and brown constituencies, whose politics tended to lean left. (The promotion of non-white, rightist figures by the Republican Party is a new phenomenon.)

Successful electoral campaigns led by the empowerment movement sought and won support from unions and other movements. Jesse Jackson's presidential primary campaigns in 1984 and 1988 built off this development, creating the first distinct left presence in national politics since the failed 1972 antiwar candidacy of George McGovern. Jackson's popularity took the political establishment by surprise, both as a black contender in a white domain and as a figure associated with social movements considered obsolete in the Reagan era. However, Jackson's unwillingness (or perhaps inability) to turn his campaign coalition into a continuing political organization after 1988 dealt a blow to the Left, which then fell below the electoral radar for two decades.

Today, Obama claims a fierce loyalty from African Americans of all classes. Yet black oppression is on the rise: wildly disproportionate unemployment, affordable education and health-care under attack, a huge prison system that recalls slavery in its blatant racism, and renewed threats to voting rights. As a result, a renewed politicization around issues rather than figureheads is stirring in civil rights groups, if not yet in the black community in general.

Taken as a whole, the Latino population is growing rapidly; its numbers recently surpassed that of the African American demographic. Pan-Latin identity has won recognition in the broader culture, following the path broken by the black community. At the same time, xenophobic nativism, aimed mostly at Latino immigrants, has been deployed successfully by the far Right and adopted by the Republicans. Civil rights for "illegal aliens" has since become a major mobilizing issue in the complicated constellation of Latino communities. A trend toward solidarity

and politicization among long-established populations, as well as new arrivals from Central and South America, is already affecting election outcomes.

The spread of Islamophobia since the 9/11 disaster has led to government and street-level harassment of Arabs and South Asians. These growing immigrant groups have begun to organize in defense of their own democratic rights. This movement spans religious and secular approaches but is only beginning to have an impact on local political scenes.

### **Peace/Environment**

The peace and environmental movements are distinct in their moral, rather than economic or civic demands. Both challenge powerful state and corporate institutions but speak less directly to living standards. Their success in remolding public opinion has been phenomenal, in a society as invested in military buildup and expansion and in the "free market" as the U.S. was in the last century.

The peace movement in the U.S. reached two high points: during the Vietnam War, and in 1982 with the massive demonstration against the nuclear arms race. Cold War consensus—conspicuous during the Korea War—was effectively reversed. The Johnson administration, which had achieved the biggest electoral majority in history in 1964, was broken by 1968 with the rise of the peace movement. After Reagan's election, highly influential centrist forces seized on public support for peace to challenge the newly empowered Right's revival of the Cold War. The June 1982 nuclear freeze rally in New York was the largest demonstration in U.S. history, with more than one million people.

The peace movement, over the decades, has left a legacy in the form of "Vietnam syn-

drome,” the widespread opposition to extended military interventions. Numerous pretexts for war, from “victories” like the invasion of Grenada to proxy wars, “humanitarian” invasions, and revenge scenarios, have failed to reverse antiwar sentiment. Opinion polls consistently show military adventures meeting public opposition, whether from leftist anti-imperialism, liberal/centrist caution, or rightist isolationism.

Similarly, the environmentalists have steadily raised public awareness about pollution, nuclear energy, and climate destruction over the course of 40 years, despite fierce efforts by corporations and the Right to discredit them. The movement has branched out in all levels of society, from elite foundations to local efforts to challenge social norms in waste disposal, energy use, food policy, transportation, animal rights, and so on. The movement emphasizes social/moral choices rather than economic demands but in the process are thrown into conflict with corporations and their agents in the state.

However, sentiment and awareness without political organization and strategy cannot bring about change. Both the peace and environmental movements are atomized organizationally. They have no national structure beyond loose or short-lived coalitions. Like the unions, they are constantly on the defensive against the ever more rightist Republicans, while their inability to hold Democrats accountable further undercuts their attempts to grow and gain new active support. There is little identification with other social movements, and non-profit groups are in constant competition for disappearing funding sources. The default tactics of demonstrations, petitions, and ad campaigns do not make up for the movements’ current political dead end. However, ongoing discussion among diverse forces has been established, with a stated determination to come up with effective strategy and tactics.

### **Women and gender equality**

The women’s liberation movement opened society to women in uncountable ways. It also developed political vehicles aimed at promoting female candidates and appointments, fundraising for candidates with pro-women policies, and lobbying for women’s rights. As a result, the Democratic Party has held steadfast to support for abortion rights, despite fierce (and often violent) pressure from the Right.

The women’s movement, like the environmental movement, takes a range of forms, with an elite sector of foundations and innumerable local expressions which tend to disdain economic issues and have little direct influence in working-class communities. This stance contrasts strongly with the movement in its early years, which sought to break out of academic/professional settings, drew on the spirit of mass resistance of the civil rights movement, and shared much of the worldview of the left-wing of the antiwar movement.

The main opposition to feminist goals came from social conservatives, mainly the insurgent religious Right, who until the 2001-2008 Bush administration were relatively isolated from federal power centers. Since then, the reassertion of 1950s-style “family values”—heterosexual male-led households, severe curtailment of women’s and children’s rights, and constant use of biblical authority to enforce these “values”—has become a hallmark of Republican policy.

Since the heyday of the early women’s movement, there have been many attempts to portray feminism as puritanical and hidebound. This has at times been accepted by women themselves, many of whom have increasingly assumed that the movement’s achievements are not hard-won rights but social norms. In this setting, the wealthier sectors of the movement have tended to shy away from targeting

corporations and maintained support for political allies who took stands opposed by other social movements. Some feminist groups have chosen to back otherwise conservative Republican candidates who broke ranks over abortion rights, and some have campaigned for Democratic women over male candidates with more progressive politics.

That setting has shifted with the increased power of social conservatives, particularly since the Republican Party's agenda turned to overt opposition to women's rights (along with the rights of organized workers, oppressed groups, immigrants, and advocates of government regulation of corporations in general). The women's movement now finds itself ill-equipped to mobilize supporters and carry on even a defensive fight. However, it still has allies in the Democratic Party who gain no benefit from adapting to the Republicans' social conservatism and who stand firm on abortion rights and against gender discrimination. Centrist Democratic officials have maintained support for Planned Parenthood, a health service provider under siege by the Right for championing abortion rights and birth control.

The early gay movement was heavily influenced by the women's movement and has itself consolidated its forces enough to begin to effectively challenge prevailing homophobia. This is no small accomplishment, given the long-standing, deep-rooted and violent rejection of homosexuality in U.S. society. The gay movement was the first social movement to bring grievances directly to Obama. It has made headway against the military's "don't ask/don't tell" policy, and in favor of same-sex marriage. Openly gay men in particular have moved into some positions of power and influence. However, despite a growing cultural questioning of homophobia, gains in acquiring legal rights have been consistently obstructed by both Right and Center.

The radical contingent of the gay movement is alive and well, having been tested in the life-or-death stakes of the AIDS epidemic. The presence of radical politics creates a tension within the movement that pushes it out of a purely defensive posture. Despite this, the radical trend is not strong enough to broaden the scope of the movement as a whole toward building strategic ties to other movements.

### **Healthcare, consumers, and media**

The movement for healthcare reform has spread into unions, professional groups, and community organizations. The main focus has been advocacy for a national single-payer plan to provide universal health care. A secondary branch of the movement emphasizes a government-run health insurance plan in competition with private insurers (the "public option," which Obama promoted and then abandoned in the face of opposition from Republicans and the insurance industry). The movement has shifted from the national arena to local and state-level proposals, with a recent first legislative victory for single-payer in Vermont.

The movement continues to grow despite enormous pressure and massively expensive public relations efforts to bolster a failed private insurance system. The spiraling costs of healthcare in the midst of increased unemployment have weakened the free-market faith at the heart of the Right's program. The contradictory arguments of the right populist Tea Party (which is heavily bankrolled by the insurance industry) have had little adverse effect on the universal health care movement, but there is recognition of the need to move forward without hoped-for support from the White House.

Similarly, the consumer movement's demand for stricter government oversight of the marketplace for goods, property, and services chal-

lenges the political mantra of neoliberalism: “an unregulated market will provide.” The very notion of public safety and regulation of commercial goods was made controversial only recently, when purist free-market libertarianism came to dominate the Republican Party. The Right has shifted the center of gravity on this issue at a time when commercial corruption and cheating have become even more commonplace in this wonderland of fraud. Any hint of regulation of business now suggests “government interference” in the market. Again, opinion polls show the public favors solutions advocated by the Left, but this is rarely discussed in the mainstream media, which live on advertising revenues.

The fight against misleading advertising has brought consumer groups into the movement for media democracy. There are hundreds of local media activist groups involving thousands of staff and volunteers in every region of the country. They work in local media and computer centers, broadcasting and video production, broadband deployment, media literacy, cable television and digital access, media consolidation, news reporting and content-production, and related issues like software access, copyright, privacy, and culture. The movement has grown more political as the Right has increased its hegemony in mainstream media, and as excluded groups—particularly youth—develop their own projects.

### **The religious component**

The U.S. is a stronghold of every religion, and the intersection of religion and politics is a constant feature. The influence of various religious groups is tangible in social movements of every political stripe. In turn, the major religious groups or movements are subject to polarization over social issues, leading to internal power struggles.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, marginal Protestant denominations, liberal Catholics, and Reform Jews were most identified with left social movements around particular issues—rarely with the Left as a whole. In major denominations—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.—the mainline churches have quietly identified with causes aimed at ameliorating suffering and inequality. Institutions like the National Council of Churches and denominations like the United Church of Christ have been important funders of, and actors in, social movement campaigns.

Black churches have been divided on social action, as have Muslim mosques, but the congregations and leaders who have taken political stands have influenced many in their broader communities. This is a legacy continued from the civil rights movement.

Over the last decades, rightist forces have organized within large church communities to wrest power and redirect the faith to more conservative interpretations of religion, particularly toward male supremacy and homophobia. The question of control of church funds has serious implications for social movements.

The mainline churches have sought to settle these disputes by keeping the Right at bay without making a strong counter-challenge. However, the general political polarization in the U.S. will continue to force political differences to the forefront. The extent to which the main religious groups identify with and openly support left social movements is likely to have a big impact on the direction of national politics.

### **The Political Left**

The section of the Left organized around political program and ideology covers a broad, intricate spectrum but is thoroughly fragmented and marginalized. Sectarianism is normal in politics but

in the U.S. it is more pronounced because no historical left tendency—social democracy, Greens, post-1989 communism, Trotskyism, Maoism, anarchism—has an organized expression that amounts to more than a sect.

It has become commonplace when discussing American political history to note the absence of a mass social democratic party. Historic attempts to break the duopolistic party system are scarcely remembered, and current ones get virtually no media attention. Political campaigns are dismissed merely on the basis of lack of financial resources, regardless of their actual influence or the pertinence of the issues they raise.

Today the situation is worse than ever. Public identification as “left” is anathema in mainstream politics. Even the most moderate left groups that focus on working inside the Democratic Party have memberships that number in the low thousands at best. Open socialists and revolutionaries are generally considered too controversial to associate with. For example, when the Right exaggerated Obama’s fleeting association with a forgotten leader of the long-dead Weather Underground, they essentially tainted every figure in the political expanse between the two.

The current left political spectrum runs from Democrats who identify strongly with social movement goals to anarchists who dismiss reform of any kind. The groups in between, mostly socialists, are successors to the tendencies that dominated the Left in the heyday of the Socialist (SP) and Communist (CP) Parties, from the beginning of the last century to the post-World War II period.

At the start of the Cold War, the number of former members of the SP and CP rose higher than that of the parties’ memberships. The “party Left” dwindled, to be eclipsed by the informal “independent Left.” The postwar criminalization

of the CP and rightward drift of the SP left both groups unable to establish a lasting presence in the civil rights movement and the New Left, although they did play important, distinct roles in the peace movement.

There was a brief resurgence of far left political formations during the decline and after the fall of the largest New Left group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Some rallied to the CP. Maoist groups proliferated in the 1970s, and Trotskyist splinters attracted radicalized students. But the international crisis of the Left laid these efforts to waste. Today, there are various divisions within, and cutting across, surviving socialist tendencies, forced to operate (and sometimes determinedly rooted) in the margins.

A number of left national and local third party groups are actively involved in electoral politics. The largest, the Green Party of the United States, is left of the Democrats but not socialist. The labor-linked Working Families Party works in several states, more as a ballot line than an independent party. They mainly cross-endorse Democrats running with union support but have elected a few officials on their own.

Finally, there are groups that build support for Democratic campaigns on an explicitly left platform, such as the netroots group MoveOn.org and the membership/chapter-based Progressive Democrats of America.

The political Left, for all its weaknesses, is crucial to the revitalization of the Left as a whole. If it can come to grips with the realities of U.S. politics, it can cohere as a force for training, educating, and developing the political capacities of social movement activists. It can give Left intellectuals the political grounding needed to make their work a material force in giving focus to mass action, especially in the electoral arena. But the obstacles it faces are severe, beginning with its own fragmentation.

## The Academic Left

One of the lasting legacies of the New Left student movement is the growth of freedom of expression in academia. Leftist educators faced purges at various times, most fiercely during the 1950s Red Scare. But the campaign against the Left in education, though sweeping, was more limited in its effectiveness than the purge in labor. The Left retained influence in various departments and found refuge in various fields and campuses.

Starting during the brief Kennedy administration, the new student movement brought radicalism back, challenging faculty and a new generation of scholars in the humanities. The radicalization brought on by the Vietnam War and political repression against the civil rights movement reshaped social policy and cultural expression in an unprecedented sweep, despite a significant rightist backlash in such crucial areas as economics and law.

This relative freedom was partly maintained thanks to left intellectuals' growing numbers and organization at the professional level. Political economists, political scientists, historians, sociologists, scientists, and regional specialists came out in the open with their politics. They effectively challenged the Right and organized groups such as the Union of Radical Political Economists and the Union of Concerned Asian Scholars, as well as in left caucuses in the major professional associations.

This new, energized left intelligentsia made a big difference through the Reagan era. In society at large, the "liberal" label became as

tainted as "red" had been in the 1950s. Only in academia could one openly identify with left politics, socialism, or Marxism. The relative freedom that left intellectuals enjoyed attracted social movement and political leftists to scholarly gatherings like the Left Forum, where they can meet and discuss radical politics openly and freely.

But the academic setting has not provided a vehicle for political discussion leading to concrete results. Much left intellectual discourse has foundered in various intellectual strains that reject politics, except in abstract forms or *a priori* arguments. The influence of the ideas emerging from social movements is real and pervasive, but in academic left discourse the problems presented by these ideas tend to be removed from historical context. In many cases, context is even disdained altogether, and the experiences of those movements are left unanalyzed. The turn of cultural studies away from concrete political analysis, for example, made its intellectual output worthless for social movements' political purposes.

Today, educators are facing direct threats that require them to abandon the fashions of the past few decades. The Right is organizing against "left bias" in higher education; education funding is shrinking drastically; and the work hierarchy is developing more exploitative roles for aides and adjuncts. The future of the left academy will depend on educators' willingness to organize politically, in coordination with social movements both on and far, far off campus. The rise of union organizing on campuses has become an important vehicle for this transition away from elite professionalism.

## Left Rethinking After 1989

The political Left in the U.S., like the Left everywhere, was rocked on its heels by the collapse

of the Soviet bloc and the Chinese state attack on a mass student protest. It is still a long way

from recovering its bearings. Two decades later, “existing” socialism, which was a defining reality for the Left, has become a “specter” once again.

1989 marked the end of the state socialist experiment begun by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution of 1917. The existence of the Soviet state redefined the Left’s self-definition and mission—for would-be Leninists of various stripes, as well as for those drawing from pre-WWI socialist tendencies and movements. Even anti-Soviet groups were deeply affected. The once-great Red Locomotive was run off the rails, and those who rode it were confronted by a world where 20<sup>th</sup> century analyses no longer seemed to work.

The events of 1989-91 were all the more devastating, coming in the midst of an already prolonged period of decline. The relative weakness of the U.S. Left comes in part from its lack of continuity with its own history—aggravating its marginality from political processes—and its alienation from the broader culture, for better or worse. A concerted campaign of suppression swept the U.S. in the 1950s, when such important historical figures as Frederick Douglass and Eugene V. Debs were nearly erased from the national memory. An attempt to re-appropriate that history in the context of a left movement came in the 1970s and 80s, but the decline of that wave of activism and the rise of the Right broke the link once again.

Now the Left is forced to find its way without a red “North Star.” Its weaknesses are often mocked but are really no joke. Differences in political orientation and notions of strategy and tactics are generally not confronted directly, in part as a backlash against the crippling sectarian battles of the 1970s and 80s, which coincided with the decline of the Left internationally. Internet debates, though superficial, have become more pronounced (and sometimes hysterical) in the 2010s, with the spread

of anguish over austerity and disappointment with Obama.

What follows is an attempt to sum up the divisions that frame current left politics.

### **Broad coalitions versus anti-authoritarian action**

The main way the Left has maintained a public presence is through mass demonstrations. These have been most effective when built by broad coalitions reflecting diversity of politics and constituencies. With no political party or ongoing national vehicles for consultation or coordination, social movement rallies in Washington, New York, and San Francisco are the closest thing to assemblies of the Left *in toto*.

The crash of “existing” socialism made Marxism in its various forms much less attractive to newly radicalized young people. Anarchism became the new magnet for the rebellious. This turned out to be less a new lease on life than a period of repeated attempts to reinvent the wheel. The vanguard party model lost its appeal, but anarchism could also lay claim to multiple variations on the theme. The authoritarian cadre party was replaced by consensus decision-making, utopianism, mutual aid experiments, and maximalism in different forms. This coincided with a new explosion of information technology that transformed interpersonal and mass communication.

The “Battle of Seattle” in 1999 was the first major demonstration mobilized on-line, with alliances formed in the course of the action itself. It was a breakthrough in several other respects. It was both broad and militant but did not come in response to a particular controversial government move or act of violence. It started with youth but picked up support from community people and unions. Its politics were anti-capitalist, in the *altermondialiste* (“another world is possible”) rather than the Marxist sense.

While Seattle was a success in execution (if not in concrete gains), the anti-capitalist movement came and went within a decade. The older coalition model—a long list of groups rallying around a single issue or theme—returned in response to George W. Bush’s war moves. But this too did not last, as the inability of the peace movement to affect policy raised questions about the effectiveness of nonviolent mass mobilizations. In the intersection of the anarchist and the anti-capitalist movements, an anti-authoritarian “direct action” trend—attacking property and police, sometimes in mass nonviolent settings—has reappeared for the first time since the 1970s. And as in the 70s, confrontationism was bred by the widespread despair of affecting policy through peaceful protest.

Seattle showed how social media can generate interest and mobilize diverse forces in particular situations. It demonstrated that imagination and multiplicity of tactics can affect mass consciousness and challenge authority. But Seattle came up short as a model for developing a coherent, continuing political movement, with internal democracy and the capacity to turn ferment into organized opposition. Suspicion of political thought and organization is rampant in the U.S., including among radicalized youth.

### **Self-marginalization vs. political refocus**

The prevalence of subcultural marginalization in the Left is a debilitating symptom of fragmentation. This phenomenon has been derided as “political correctness,” but it is more complex than either a political standpoint (what the Right characterizes as “left-wing bias”) or a dismissive label for a form of rhetoric. Essentially, people who have been active for many years, and people who were attracted to radical politics only recently and have had no experience with mass movements, embrace and defend

their marginality. The result is a habitual projection of small subcultural in-groups as social or political movements.

In one sense, this is an understandable byproduct of decades of fragmentation and stagnation on the Left. There is comfort in this arrangement, in which outsiders are pitied or scorned, loyalty is measured by acceptance of rules of speech and behavior, and shared commitment to a set of values. It becomes destructive for the Left in that it fights to “protect” movements from the taint of outside influences, i.e., ordinary people—“Us” vs. the dreaded, unenlightened “Them.” The self-marginalized activists fear anything that might threaten their conception of the Left as an inward-directed, martyrized “progressive community” that views politics as a struggle against “false consciousness” and its purveyors.

The lack of any conception of politics rooted in the increased class-interested political activity of the majority of the population—democracy—is a recurring problem in the U.S. Left. The influence of racism among whites and social conservatism in the whole working class make defining the democratic aspect of left politics particularly difficult. But the beginnings of mass opposition, as demonstrated in the Wisconsin upheaval of spring 2011, have pulled that task into sharper focus.

Reframing democracy for the Left is part of a process of reevaluating political premises in light of the lessons and changed conditions facing activists in the new century. This process seeks to break the Left out of isolation and to establish connections with new forces emerging in response to the crises on the basis of mutual respect, serious dialogue, and democratic interaction. The level of maturity required in this process is not strongly in evidence in the Left’s public discourse, but it will need to be achieved if the Left is to become a serious political force again.

## **The Left and the Democratic Party**

Choosing how to approach work inside, through, or with the Democratic Party has been a perennial debate. For some on the Left, progressive electoral action really begins only when the Democratic Party is recognized as a capitalist party and rejected. Other leftists work with Democratic campaigns, though they are aware, and critical, of the Party's failures as a progressive force—that's what distinguishes them from party Centrists. The problem is that the two-party system makes it nearly impossible for any third party even to get recognition in any contest.

The Democratic Party is neither particularly democratic nor a party in the traditional sense. From one perspective, it is a "big tent" encompassing hundreds of sectors and subsectors of society. But it also functions as a grid of federal and local political blocs vying for the reins of power and the favor of the corporate sector, without a clear-cut program or strategy beyond the broadest outlines of difference from its only rival.

The cornerstone of the two-party system is the Electoral College, composed of delegates from each state and the District of Columbia. The number of delegates from each state is equal to the sum of that state's Senators (two in every case) and Representatives (based on number of Congressional districts, determined by state population numbers). The electors, chosen by popular vote, assemble in their respective state capitals on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December and vote for president. Electors are supposed to vote for the candidate who received a plurality of votes in the state or area they represent. To become president, a candidate must get more than half of the Electoral College votes (270 out of 538 votes). These electors are thus the direct voters on presidential candidates.

While the election process appears to voters as a direct one, in fact, when casting ballots for

avored presidential and vice presidential candidates, they are actually voting for correspondingly pledged electors, who are free to vote for anyone eligible to be President. The process is weighted against larger states with dense urban populations, and contending parties automatically are eliminated from representation under a system of winner-take-all. The resulting underrepresentation of progressive constituencies and effective strangling of "third parties" have brought continual calls for reform. But the Electoral College system has deep roots in class and racial politics, and change is not on the horizon.

Another roadblock to independent politics is the power of state law over federal and local elections. The federal government's power is restricted, but national parties can use executive and legislative power at the state level to intervene in federal election procedures. Each state sets its own rules for its own electoral college, primaries, and state and local races. They also manage the terms of voter eligibility, a wrinkle which the Right seized upon to suppress votes from left-leaning constituencies.

The biggest "third parties" act as spoilers in the two-party races, not political forces with independent strength. The Tea Party functions mainly as a rump pressure group in the business-dominated Republican Party. The Tea Party's ability to shape policy is fueled by the threat of secession from the Republicans. That would strip the Republicans of much of its active base—and send the movement to the same political oblivion as previous rightist breakaway campaigns, such as George Wallace (1968) and Pat Buchanan (2000).

Access to campaign funds is another obstacle for third parties. Electoral campaigns are media spectacles, driven by huge amounts of money—which is the primary way the relationship between capital and the two parties is secured. Real competition is impossible, even when a

billionaire like Ross Perot enters the fray as an Independent (1992).

Building a voter base beyond the centrism of the Democratic Party leadership, therefore, requires agitating among non-voters and nonpartisans (“swing voters”), while winning Democratic voters over to politics to the left of the party leadership. The funding of such projects alone takes a huge effort.

Organizing within Democratic campaigns involves fighting established figures inside the party at both local and national levels. Party apparatchiks routinely work to isolate candidates they deem too far to the left to be “winnable.” Successful challengers are bought off as often as not. Another common strategy to hold the Left in check has been “triangulation,” executed with great success by Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996, meaning that he borrowed neoliberal Republican ideas while taking progressive base support for granted. As a result of these strategies, to the extent that there is a public, unequivocal left voice on any issue, it is generally perceived as coming from inside the Democratic Party—even if that voice is usually not heard from the national leadership level.

Breaking from the Democrats cuts through that predicament but assumes that a new political force could grow and challenge the Democrats from the outside and split the party’s base, without automatically giving an advantage to the Right, who use their every day in office to further isolate the Left. There is no historical case of the breakaway strategy strengthening the Left, but hope is constantly refueled by every new Democratic shift or concession to the Right. Third party campaigns try to grow before, and stabilize in between elections but are perpetually stymied by the fear of aiding the Republicans.

There is a strain of electoral abstentionism among activists, but its influence, too, ebbs in the face of the direct threat posed by the Right.

Despite disillusionment with the Democratic leadership’s default mode of triangulation—as well as a broader demoralization that responds to and reinforces the Left’s marginality—most progressives see too much at stake to stay neutral in electoral races, particularly those for the presidency.

### **Rightist domination of the media and judiciary**

The dilemma of the Left cannot be fully understood without recognizing the successes of the Right. The insurgent populist Right has occupied the ideological and political vacuum created by the inability of an incoherent Left to respond to the failure of capitalism and the state to maintain a relatively high living standard for working-class Americans.

The Right has scored a long string of victories against the Left, from the decertification of the air traffic controllers union in 1981 to the break-up of the largest network of community groups, the electorally active ACORN, in 2010. ACORN became the bogeyman in the racist hysteria that gripped many white citizens unable to account for the election of a black president.

The resurfacing of the populist Right in the form of the Tea Party movement came after the waning of the last mass populist movement, the Christian fundamentalist Right. The Tea Party coalition combines the religious Right, the nativist/racist Minutemen (demonizing Latino and Arab immigrants), the Ayn Rand School libertarians (railing against government services, public sector workers, unions, and regulation of businesses), and terrified small businesspeople and white workers (whose social status is increasingly undermined by economic polarization).

The focus of the populist Right, in classical proto-fascist style, is on blaming economic decline on the poorest, most defenseless members of

society and on conspiracies by “elitist” tastemakers, money-changers, and profligate politicians squandering tax revenues.

Even before the Cold War ended, the Right has more and more defined itself in its opposition to social movements, using coded catch phrases like “special interests” (unions and inner city communities); “law and order” (imposed on lower income blacks and Latinos), and “protecting family values” (from feminists and gays). They demonize “the 60s” as a time of aberration when conservative views began to be broadly questioned—and in many cases rejected—by the majority. The Right is constantly asserting itself to regain the ideological hegemony it lost in the 1970s: renewed xenophobic patriotism; belief in personal enrichment as the “American dream;” and distrust of government, combined with obeisance in dealing with the overwhelming power of the corporate sector.

These advances for the Right did not come spontaneously. The emergence of the Tea Party as a political force is testimony to the influence of right-dominated talk radio and television, particularly Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News cable channel. Beyond the substantial audience for blatant propaganda, other more “neutral, objective” venues in mass media have adopted the “Right as Center” ideology. It would be impossible, relying on U.S. television, to tell that the White House and the Senate—i.e., the greater part of the elected federal government—is in the hands of the Democratic Party. The Repub-

lican agenda took the major media focus during the 2001-2008 Bush administration and has held on to it in Obama’s.

There is simply no left counterpart to Fox News or the right influence in the rest of the major media. Another cable channel offers a few liberal voices speaking more or less for the Democratic side, but MSNBC (owned by Comcast and General Electric) tries to keep a tight leash on their employees moving too far from the “Center,” unlike Fox News, where blatant demagoguery and lies are aired nonstop. The Left has established itself on the Web, and most left publications have sites, but radio and television—completely controlled by corporate owners and advertisers and used by many millions daily—are off limits.

The Right also has organized successfully in the judiciary through the meteoric rise of the Federalist Society. This group of conservative legal figures, some from the highest levels of the courts and government, has come to equal or surpass the firmly centrist American Bar Association as the dominant political force in the judiciary. The Society trained and promoted young conservatives who have moved into important appointed positions in the court system, locally and federally. This undercut left influence in making and interpreting laws. Influential groups, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and American Legislative Executive Council, supply sweeping pro-corporate, repressive legal decisions dutifully passed by Center-Right legislators.

## **The Current Situation**

The obstacles facing even a re-energized Left are formidable. Obama’s first term has been a period of profound political instability for the U.S. The nation has lost considerable stat-

ure economically, and it has still not recovered from the unexpected end of the Cold War. If Indochina was a swamp, West Asia is quicksand. Yet Washington seems unable to

function without the engine of war, even as its explanations for its endless military engagements are dismissed as fallacious by the majority of the public, domestically and worldwide.

The Republicans promote a metanarrative that blames decline completely on taxes and government spending. The Tea Party has declared open war (with violent rhetoric) on incumbent Democrats in Congress and state and local offices, including center-right Republicans. The populist Right's surprising success in 2010 laid the groundwork for major changes in the political scene, and the public response has only begun to unfold.

The populist far Right now holds enough power in the Republican Party to pressure (though not outweigh) the historically fixed hegemony of the corporate sector. This also indicates a political turn to the far Right within the corporate sector, which was once viewed as welfare state appeasers (or part of the international Communist conspiracy itself) by the traditional Right—from the small-business tax-haters of the John Birch Society to the Ivy League Cold Warriors of the National Review circle.

Centrist Democrats would ordinarily consider this a signal to find a new "middle ground" that would overlap with the Right. Obama's stance on healthcare and the national debt are good examples at the executive/federal level. Such moves further isolate, marginalize, and polarize the Left as a whole—which is part of the Democratic leadership's campaign strategy.

The popular response to the 2010 elections also offered some surprises, however, and the scenario has not gone according to the usual script. This was demonstrated most forcefully in early 2011 by the union-based wave of mass protest from traditionally docile sectors of the working class, in the Midwestern industrial states of Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

The mass upsurge in Madison, the Wisconsin state capital, gives an indication of what may ensue as the empowered Right enacts its program. The protest came in response to ending collective bargaining rights for public employees, by a bill pushed through by the new majority Republican state legislature and Tea Party-backed governor. The Republicans had the state judiciary on their side, along with the supposedly large, energized Tea Party base.

The public-sector unions made their stand, winning unexpectedly broad support from the Democratic minority of the legislature, the conservative police and firefighters unions, and tens of thousands of ordinary civilians. They rallied with vocal militancy usually heard only from the political Left. The protests also demonstrated a new level of the Left's capacity to mobilize and connect through social networking.

The attempt to recall the rightist governor fell short of votes, but the Democrats regained a majority in the state legislature. The Right's win in the recall campaign was short-lived, as court action cut the legs out from under their crack-down on state workers' bargaining rights. The center of political gravity, it seems, has shifted, and the mass outpourings in support of workers' rights in the Midwest undoubtedly had a big impact.

The Right misread their 2010 electoral victory as a decisive ideological shift in their favor throughout society. They advanced with a direct attack on social movements, with democracy itself the overall target: labor rights, abortion rights, immigrant rights, and voting rights of racially targeted constituencies. They also pushed through disproportionate payoffs to rightist groups by deeply cutting progressive taxes and gun control laws and by freeing corporations to despoil the environment.

The Democratic Party's left social movement base and its periphery were not inspired to

campaign in 2010, both overestimating the support they could expect from Obama and underestimating the Right's political capacities. But in the non-electoral year 2011, they came out in force when faced with the consequences of the Tea Party sweep. The Democrats have been handed an energized base through no great effort of their own. It remains to be seen if they will respond to the base's demands or back away for fear of alienating "swing votes."

It is also not certain that left social movements will recognize their real strength in this situation and will start to build ties and work out joint strategy and tactics: to politicize and de-fragmentize.

Fear of jeopardizing individual groups' ties to the White House and Democratic Party leadership has had a potent conservatizing effect for decades. These ties involve money, access to chambers of power (if not always actual policy-making influence), and the coveted mantle of "legitimacy" and "respectability" for the organizations' leaders. Some measure of protection from harassment by the Right and the state is implicit in this arrangement.

The 2010 far-right electoral sweep puts this whole contract in doubt. This is understood by the base, if not by the leadership. The continuation of the Clinton-era strategy of triangulation, courting "Reagan Democrats" while shunning the left social movement-identified base, would overlook the evidence that increasing numbers of "swing voters," faced with joblessness, irrational and interminable wars, and unbridled attacks from the Right, are trending to the left of the administration.

The situation on the Right is unstable as well. Polling indicates that the far Right is losing the ideological war. Humiliated centrist and soft-right Republicans are furious. The ties that bind the multiple tendencies of the Tea Party coalition are tenuous. With no one recognized leader, their fundamental unity is racially-based

Obamaphobia, which has not proven as widespread as the Right had expected. Libertarians are uncomfortable with social conservatism's assault on individual rights through opposition to abortion rights, gay marriage, and church-state separation. Christian fundamentalists are finding that some in their younger generation are more resistant to bigotry.

The direction of the country may be up to groups and individuals in the left social movement base, acting politically to meet the Right head-on. In this situation, the political Left and the academic Left have crucial roles to play: organizational training, political education, generating proposals, and developing a nationwide political discourse.

After the 2012 election, the U.S. Left will have to overcome and reverse fragmentation, find its own political trajectory, and develop its own capacities as a national political force. Any measure of success in this direction will reconfigure the alignment of forces in the two-party system and transform the nation's political imagination.

The panic on the far Right poses a serious danger. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, are convinced that their birthright has been usurped. Many are armed and bitter, and they have been listening to cynical, world-class liars for a long time. This unstable tendency could even lead to violence in the years to come if the Left is unable to find a coherent, clear, empathic voice and make it heard.

Many on the bottom and in the middle have defined this country's national identity as "whites on top." The rapid decline of the middle class will confront many Americans with choices they never thought they would have to make: to join with have-nots, to identify with racial and gender equality; or rather, to become politically engaged in order to empower the powerless, sweep aside spectacle and actually take a hand in making history.

The myth of gated, privileged enclaves in an impregnable empire is shattering before our eyes. There is real potential for an egalitarian, socialist opposition movement grounded in expanded, class-conscious democracy. The

Left's response to this new chapter can take it from marginality and fragmentation to coordinated action, a culture of dialogue and solidarity, and effective political power for millions.

## **Afterword (November 2012)**

The Occupy Wall Street movement burst on the scene just weeks after this paper was written. A year later, it may be safe to consider some of the changes in the political scene and what caused them.

In the Wisconsin drama, following the 2010 midterm elections, neoliberalism took its most open political form in the newly empowered Tea Party-backed officials. Governors like Scott Walker (R-WI) and John Kasich (R-OH) and their legislative supporters pushed austerity, government service cuts, and attacks on public sector workers and their unions. They did not expect a mass backlash of angry working-class sectors. It proved that unrest and willingness to make a left political stand was closer to the surface than even observers on the Left could see.

The spread of Occupy, beginning in September 2011, reflected some of the same social ferment, minus the class aspect of a focus on workers' rights—initially. Yet the slogan “We are the 99%” brilliantly captured the moment and changed the national conversation. Occupy neatly deflected the Tea Party's “shrink the government” libertarianism—which was easily co-opted by a corporate sector lurching right—and redirected the thrust of populism for millions.

In the space of a few months, a wide range of possibilities for the Left appeared in Occupy's culture of horizontalism, DIY (Do It Yourself), and ad hoc activism. In a period in which the Left is denied political space, Occupy seized

physical space. The occupations were broken up by police in short order, but in the wake of the Zuccotti Park occupation and literally scores of local counterparts, the number of new radicals has multiplied. This is a reawakening for the isolated, unfocused Left. Occupy as a movement is finding its way forward, in some cases groping along, in others exploding. Its strongest footing is its identification with the 99%, of which it is only an infinitesimal part. Its weak point is a tendency to forget that fact, to raise the slogan “We are the 99%” as literal fact. But Occupy has played a political role by shining a light on the power of Wall Street. This has given other movements, in particular labor, a needed spotlight to break out of the gloom of corporate hegemony. When Occupy and other social movements have worked together the results have been impressive. There have also been disasters when they work at odds.

The Left seemed to take a hit when the recall campaign against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker failed at the polls in June 2012. The demoralization was real. But the campaign accomplished quite a bit. Wisconsin's mobilized union and community forces joined together in a political campaign that became a national event. Discontent with Walker's anti-labor offensive went directly to the public. The tepid opposing candidate pushed through by Chicago mayor and national Democratic power broker Rahm Emanuel performed as if it were just another election. The race failed to win over the ma-

majority of rural Wisconsinites and private sector workers. But many were reached, and several Republican legislators were removed.

How (or whether) the state's political terrain has changed remains to be seen. But the historical importance of the taking of the state Capitol building in Madison is real and lasting. It was an uprising—interracial, but mostly white; working class, but more middle than poor. Yet the stance of those involved was unwaveringly progressive—no capitulation to racism or condescension toward blue collar or low-income workers. The movement had the potential to create a broader alliance than any in recent memory. That, in itself, is a turning point in class consciousness, broadly defined.

Then the 2012 Chicago teachers' strike took developments a step further. The strike was no ordinary job action. After years of work, a radical caucus organized its way into leadership of a compromised, broken union facing a vicious onslaught against the city's public school system. The CTU recognized the inseparability of economic demands and the degrading of inner city public education. They understood that the support of other unions, community groups, and parents was crucial to the strike's success. An Occupy group became a full-time solidarity outreach campaign. Preparation among the members took years. Communities responded: mass rallies and demonstrations attracted tens of thousands. In September, after a week out, the teachers won. They held their own against a

powerful, intransigent (and Democratic) mayor and a full-blown anti-union campaign aided by the wealthy, pro-privatization charter schools campaign.

The strike and its victory illuminates the potential of the U.S. Left—in particular, the growing importance of “small-d” democratic demands, goals, structure, practice, and front-building. The unifying efforts of the CTU, partnered with community groups and other unions, were a breakthrough in conscious de-fragmentation. The impact of the strike on the broader labor movement—starting with the two giant national teachers' unions—remains to be seen. But victory for public workers, at a time when they are the target of demonization and fierce cut-backs, has already prompted rethinking in labor and other social movements, the political Left and the left intelligentsia.

As in Wisconsin, the Chicago teachers' strike was an occasion for mass interracial expressions of solidarity. Significantly, unlike Wisconsin, the African American and Latino communities were at the heart of the solidarity movement. This development, in a city that has been shaped by racist violence by police and whites against blacks—side-by-side with sweeping union growth and mass strikes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—is extraordinary.

It indicates that conditions for the reemergence of the Left as a national political force are ripening fast. Partisans are needed to make it happen.

## **Related Studies**

### **To Begin the World Over Again: A Politics of Wisconsin, Occupy, and the Next Left**

By John Nichols, October 2012

### **A Brief History of Occupy**

By Ethan Earle, November 2012 (forthcoming)

# SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

## ELEMENTS THAT LEAD TO A DEVELOPMENT MODEL

BY: JUAN DOMINGUEZ GERARDO CARRASCO CO CHAIR, MF/PL

### INTRODUCTION

Development models that have existed in the South after the Industrial and Cultural Revolution during the past XIX century show that the future is marked by the economically destructive struggle between the powerful countries and the weak and poor countries, this is aggravated with the ethnic or religious minorities struggles and an increasing depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation. We are still far from the construction of an inclusive human development with peace, liberty, justice and dignity.

The result of these experiences of development has been the exclusion of minorities in highly industrialized societies and majorities in poor countries of the South.

Hence, over the past decades men and women from various continents are in search of an alternative model that includes all human groups: A Third Way.

As for the origin of the concept of the solidarity economy it is clear that it has its philosophical basis in the humanists of previous centuries. Today, the current literature includes contributions from several countries in Latin America and Europe.

### PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS

This essay aims to provide ideas and concepts on economic, political and social development in simple language that allows for the understanding of the largest number possible of development actors, all within the framework of the "popular education." Surely the essay lacks, in some cases, the methodological strictness of academic work because at this stage of the diffusion of Solidarity Economy I think that the concepts should be seen in black and white, schematically, for their broad understanding and in the most inclusive way possible.

From the above, I intend to explain the characteristics of the development models (Market Economy vs. Solidarity Economy), in the simplest way possible, comparing the values, principles, objectives and strategies that each model applies.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR A CHANGE OF DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The "economic horror" came to Mexico and other countries of the South, they brought the technocrats, but as in other southern countries, we did not have time to protect our societies with some sort of shield or timely exorcism; What options were left? To project the XXI as a period of struggle between the "neoliberal market economy" and a new development model that is sure to be that of "solidarity economy".

Some activists propose radical changes in our development process, and others believe that limited reforms to the current model is enough. The truth is that the poverty and exclusion of the majority of the population leads us to reflect on replacing the current development model and question their permanence. In any case, we can summarize some more specific reasons behind the change from the point of view of "the excluded".

- The current model does not provide integral human development.
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- For the twenty-first century there will only be more concentration of wealth, technology and political power.
- The current model does not provide quality of life for all.

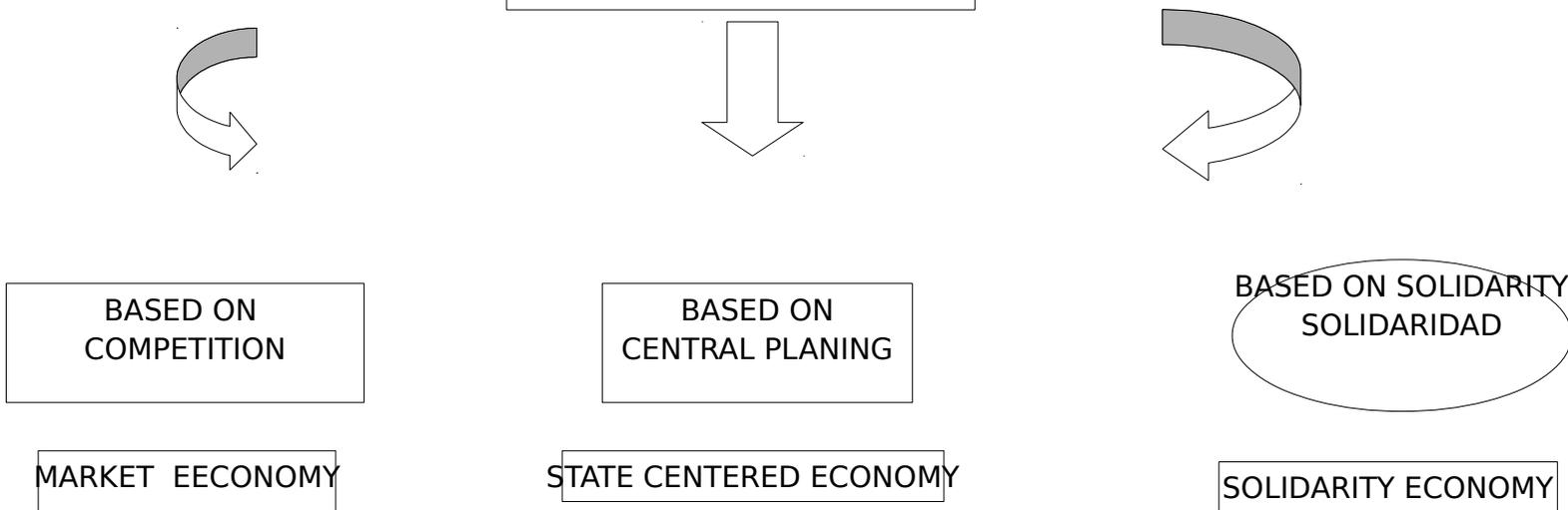
- The current governments abandon their responsibility to guarantee the right of the population to health, education, housing and social infrastructure, instead they favor private companies, leaving these basic rights dependent on the purchasing capacity of the poor people.
- Insecurity and violence have grown, especially with the growing drug economy which has increased corruption.
- The big capitalists (with the power of their money are trying to eliminate cooperatives, indigenous organizations and labor unions.
- The international corporations try to destroy the country's identity and culture thru economic globalization promoting all over the world the western culture as an image of the industrialized countries.
- For large companies poverty is a necessity to have cheap labor.
- The big capitalists tend to minimize democracy in Latin America and reduce it to the celebration of elections.
- The army and the local police are what sustains many of our governments, minimizing their commitment to provide security for the population.
- The media increasingly specialize on manipulating and controlling public opinion on the major political and economic needs and interests of the population.
- Last, but no least, internet and communication is threatened by government control and private market interests so that privacy and security of our information is no longer feasible.

If we agree with this, now more than ever it is urgent to initiate a world-wide deliberation on the development model at grass root level. Mexico and practically all the Third World is facing a situation of racism, dramatic exclusion and progressive loss of quality of life in all social groups, and more dramatically among Indian and Africa.

Therefore, movements oriented towards social humanism must promote forums to analyze the kind of society we want to build for the XXI century. Striving for material growth is not enough; we must prioritize other criteria, such as culture, human rights and solidarity with others. In other words, do we want a country with "quantity" of life or one with "quality" of life?

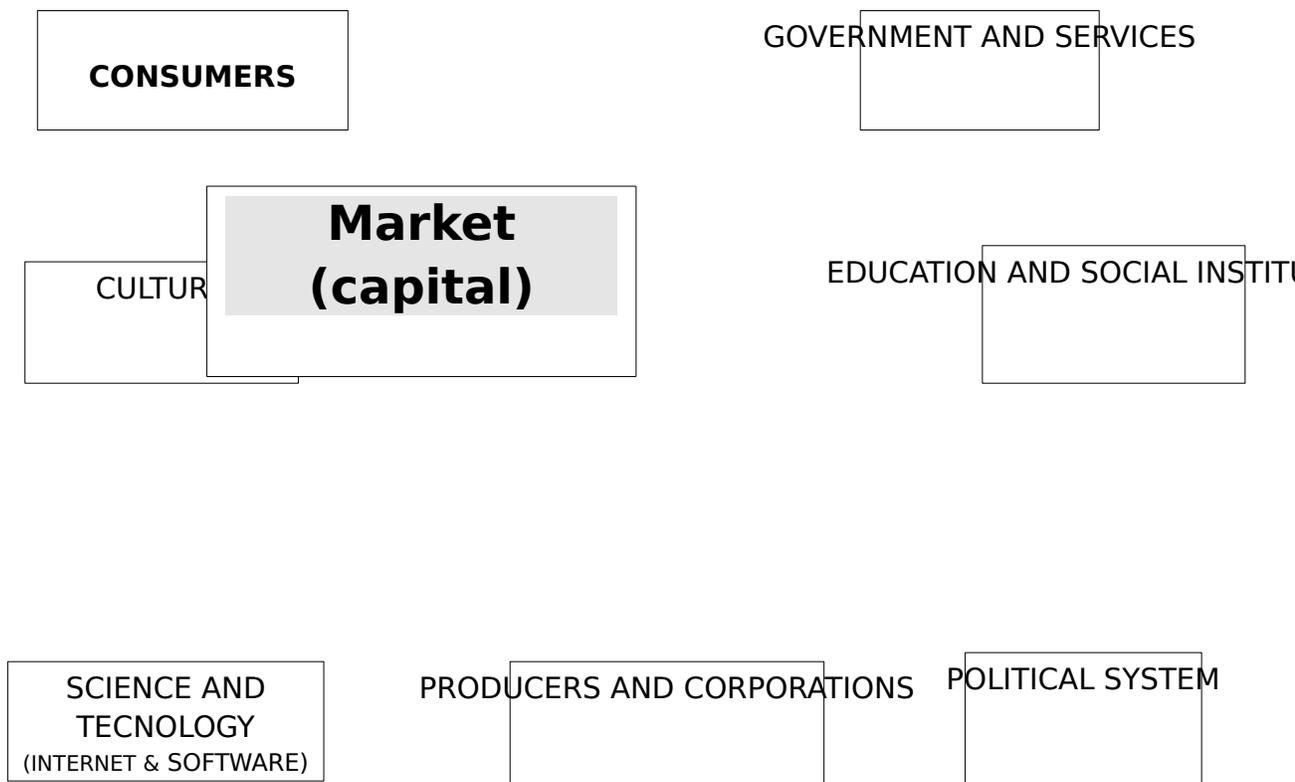
Such reflections have brought us to reviewing the differences between the development models known to have elements of analysis and compare it with the alternative model of "solidarity economy" again. Let us then we can speak of at least three kinds of models.

### TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT MODELS



Projecting the Market Economy?

The market economy known as "neoliberal" (because it is considered a new liberalism) aims to develop the market at any social, political, cultural, or religious cost. It favors the owners of the market increasing the gap between the rich and the poor; gives more importance to the material growth than to increase the quality of life. It is a model that has been directed to concentrate income in a small group of billionaires, while most of the population lives in poverty and poverty extreme. Today one percent of the world population own 50% of total wealth. The diagram below shows that THE MARKET IS THE CENTER OF DEVELOPMENT, all other factors serve its development.



How about the Mixed

And why not the State Economy?

This model flourished dramatically during the first half of the twentieth century, under the direction of political cadres known as "vanguards" within the socialist system. It was characterized by boosting economic and social development, but eventually gave in to the enormous weight of the state bureaucracy, which ended up making the central planning tool fatal to society. With the collapse of the economic, social and political system that articulated the socialist countries, the tree that protected small and poor countries ceased to exist. The few countries that remain standing after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Perestroika, any socialist society can only strive to survive in an extremely hostile environment, where powerful corporations are attempting against the independence of these weak countries through extraterritorial legislation, military actions and contributing to social and political instability, in short, thinking of promoting a state economy model, today, is a serious suicide attempt.

From this we can conclude that we can only consider "solidarity economy" as an alternative model to the neoliberal market economy, which has managed to deepen its roots in most countries of the world. It is therefore important to make a comparison between the two models; "Solidarity economy" and the "market economy".

Despite the attempt of the capitalists in power and their army of intellectual mercenaries, seeking to minimize the political analysis and reflection are far from reaching their goal; ideology is not dead and is still the basis of our consciousness ... and unfortunately also for our unconsciousness. Therefore analyzing the "solidarity economy" means using concepts of ideology, political economics and sociology, to say the least.

#### **CRITERIA FOR COMPARING MODELS:**

For purposes of this paper, we define a development model as a set of principles, objectives and general strategies proposed around the best known developmental factors. Obviously, this is only enough to define the basic structure of each model. From this structure follows the legal and operational levels, such as: the constitution, the laws that regulate it, plans, policies and programs. I WANT TO UNDERLINE: THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE EACH DEVELOPMENT FACTOR ARE WHAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE MODEL AND THE OTHER.

Choosing a position in the struggle between the market economy and solidarity economy should not be an act of faith, or something intuitive; it must be first the result of a rational and deep analysis of the two alternatives, and then the decision ... but very well aware.

What concepts are useful to compare the two models?

The main factors taken into account for economic and social planning include:

#### **1 Definition of development**

The definition of development varies from geographic regions and its culture. In the case of many western countries with an advanced economy they have prioritized the material growth as the main criteria; some communities in eastern regions of the world with dependent economies, the definition has to do with spiritual growth. Some societies emphasize "quantity of life" and others in "quality of life". In Latin America our colonial past leads us to imitate industrialized societies like the United States.

#### **2 General development strategy**

Each model can be attributed a strategic backbone to distinguish it from others. This axis must tell us as how to achieve most of the objectives and goals that are derived from the development factors defined in the economic, social and political spheres. Some suggest that development is best achieved by applying a strategy "competition" and many of us say that the strategy is "solidarity" with conscious actions. So in each development model different ways to achieve the goals are proposed.

#### **3 The market**

It is important to define its role in development, especially in their relationship with humans. While recognizing that the division of labor and exchange, in the evolution of society the existence of the market, the design and method of operation must be closely linked to development planning and overall strategy has become necessary. Is the human being to serve the development of the market, or the market development serve the the human being? Should development be national, regional or global?

#### 4 Production

The analysis of production has various aspects, but for purposes of comparing development models, the central questions are: what should be the dominant form of production and how to organize the management and operation of production units? Is it through large national and multinational companies that social progress is best achieved, or through the micro, small and medium enterprises? Is it via the collective and self-managed enterprises or via the private enterprise with its vertical authority?

#### 5. Technology and Financing

As tools for development, their roles have been decisive in the material world but especially in the social one. For some, technology and financing are final objectives in themselves, while for others they are instruments for market development. They are not related to an integral human development, though. (Appropriate and traditional technologies, and microcredit models as well, subsist due to special efforts taken by a short number of communities and civil society organizations). Today, both instruments are being rapidly left behind by internet and digital communication.

#### 6 The conservation of natural resources and the environment (Ecology)

Increasingly, conservation of natural resources and of the environment are the subject of discussion when we talk about development. Most governments around the world recognize its importance, but there are still too many cases where the ecology is seen as a set of restrictive standards for the production and consumption processes or as a simple business fashion. Others wanted it to be part of the world's culture.

#### 7 The Human Being and Society

How does each model solve the contradiction between individual and collective interest? How is development better achieved, through individual creativity, or by the collective way? These questions should also be answered by each proposed model.

#### 8 Labor Rights and Social Security

Work, education, health, housing, food and recreation are social obligations in the market economy model, and are the primary costs that must be rationalized. For others they are not operation costs, they are basic human rights.

#### 9 Culture

In poor countries many people have come to the need of marketing their culture, especially in the case of indigenous artisans, painters, dancers and singers—sacrificing their identity. In northern countries culture is not source of identity, but the object of marketing for consumption.

#### 10 Democracy

In northern countries with advanced economies, democracy is limited to elections as a mechanism for public participation in politics. The humanists understand that democracy is a much broader concept that must start with equitable relationships within the family, and provide equal development opportunities to all sectors of society in economic, political, social and cultural fields. The definition of democracy is fundamental to determine the role of government in society.

These ten factors allow us to define the characteristics of a development model. From these basic elements of the model, the next part of this essay will be a comparison between the market economy and the proposed model Solidarity Economy.

### **NEOLIBERAL MARKET ECONOMY**

#### Principles of Market Economy

- The Market Economy defines modern development and the adoption of "Western" political, social and cultural structures, along with their technological and economic complex, all

aimed at a constant material growth. Social and political economic principles that guide its development were:

- The material growth should result from increased productivity and capital, applying technological innovation to regulate fluctuations and ensure a growing market trends ..
- The compatibility between the individual interest and the general interests are guaranteed in the market and free competition. In this sense, freedom for the market is the best way to equality.
- The human being (consumer) should be the main object of the economy and must be permanently motivated to consume.
- The creative trend of individualism, based on the law of the strongest, will always be a source of social progress.
- Rationality should predominate in economy and in the future must also be nourished by the existence of individual and group decisions (social, political and cultural). This tendency of individual, whose nature is to behave in all circumstances in a fully rational way, must always have sufficient objectivity in order to evaluate the information around advantages and disadvantages of the economy.
- Another belief is that there must be sacrifices of the economically weak on the road to, because the laws of the market are often hard, but these sacrifices are provisional because in the end, there will be progress for everyone.
- The market must be composed with a variety of cells with economic interests, permanently interrelated via a network of free trade, based on the law of supply and demand, and the law of large scale economics.
- Production should be based on private property, aiming at the never ending generation of goods and services. Its continuity requires the maximization of profits for businessmen who dominate the market.
- Science and technology should generate innovation that constantly drives market development.
- The mass media institutions must contribute to encourage basic production centers that can only grow when they are tied to the corresponding consumption centers.
- The electoral process is the only means for political accountability and democracy.
- The role of government in the economy is: to maintain competition, assure the organization of a free market, and defend the small entrepreneurs from the bullying of large companies and eventually contributing to some degree of equality.
- The government must intervene to maintain investments over savings, with controlled wages, in order to promote constant people's consumption.

### **General Market Economy Objectives**

a) Economics:

\*To globalize the economy from the comparative advantages of each country.

\*To maintain the steady growth of the goods and services markets, increasing capitalization rates and productivity.

\*Achieve optimal economic freedom for business, promoting specialization in production and trade, with stronger leadership, organized in global enterprises.

\*Introduce robots in industrial process to reduce costs, eliminate unskilled work and so that workers have rising incomes and greater purchasing power.

\*Promote scientific research and technology in order to consistently generate marketable innovations to prevent excessive fluctuations in supply and demand in the markets.

#### b) Social Welfare

\*Promote the development of a large and productive middle class, where individual effort is permanently stimulated, both for production and consumption.

\*Establish economic mechanisms that minimize social oriented institutions, allowing "private enterprise" to control and profit from needs in education, health, food, sport and recreation.

#### c) Culture

\*Adopt the values of Western culture present in art, daily life, economy and politics. A rational culture that would put the spiritual and sentimental aspects in the field of consumption of services.

#### d) Politics

\*Support the economy on "Western democracy" based on multiparty elections.

\*Open privileged spaces in the mass media agencies for the official political parties, in such a way that the distribution and marketing infrastructure also serves in guiding popular political participation in a controlled and predictable manner.

\*Bring to power governments that facilitate the development of private enterprise in the context of freedom of opportunity, order and competitiveness.

### Strategies of Market Economy

#### a) Economics

\*Establishing as a key strategy free competition and free trade, with minimal state intervention.

\*Prioritizing macro economics through national and transnational corporations.

\*Supporting market development with science and technology via specialization and excellence; and in a rational society where individuals act as spearheads in all market processes.

#### b) Social Welfare

\*Motivating individuals to follow the example of the "winners" to achieve competitive ability to concentrate power and wealth, as symbols of progress, derived from the principle of freedom.

\*Base social development on the ability of the individual and the company to meet their own social needs, without adequate subsidies and costs to the open economy.

\*Leading educational processes to train technicians for the market where possible eliminating curricula that encourage political or philosophical reflection, thus developing elite thinkers and strategists with more and more isolation from the common people.

\*Making social rights to education, health, housing, recreation, sport, food depend on the income of every citizen.

\*Transforming small and medium community life to metropolitan life to optimize the cost/ benefit for the benefit of employers.

c) Culture

\*Establishing barriers against inter cultural growth or multicultural practices, using the mass media institutions to discredit other cultures.

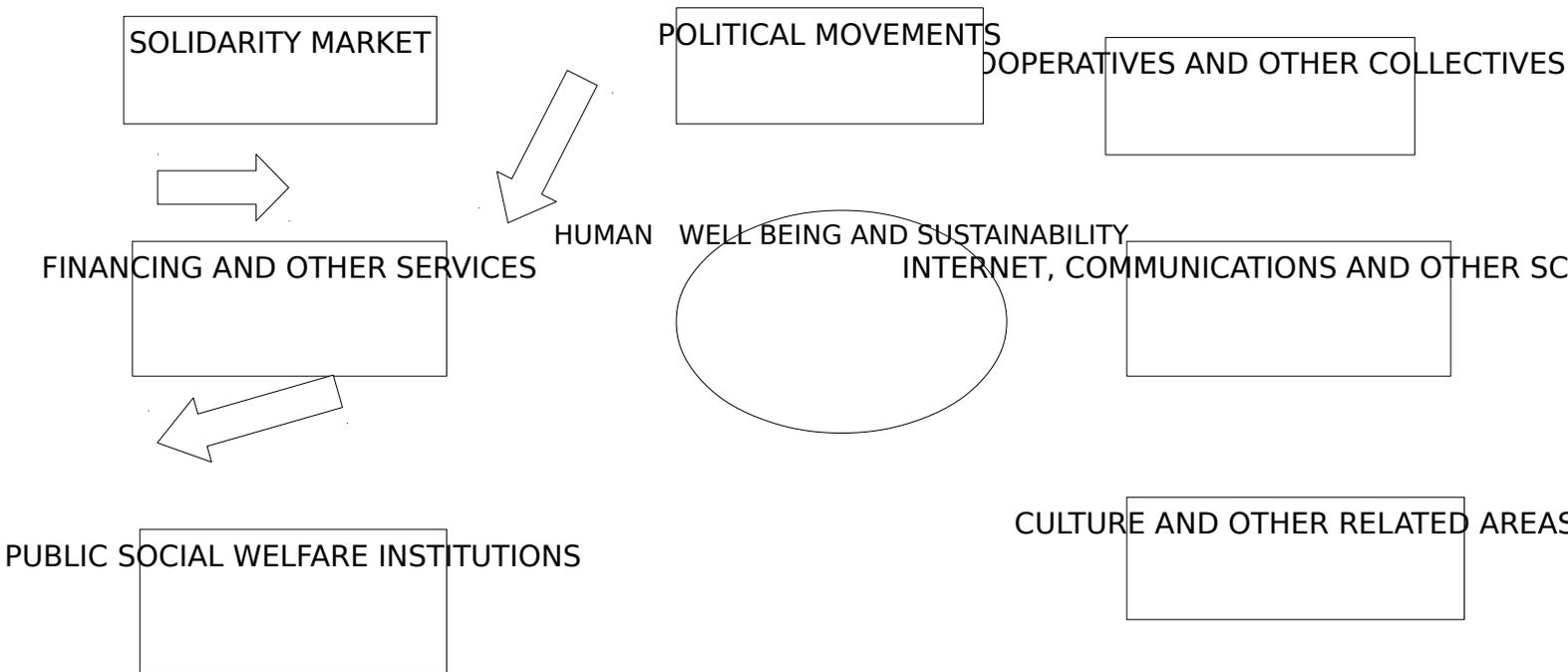
d) In the political sector

\*Making politics more and more technical and marketing oriented, and promoting individual participation in elections as the main form of exercising democracy.

\*Delegating tasks to the government structure in order to reduce political participation and over dimension the official responsibilities to: governance, protection of sovereignty and individual rights.

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AS ALTERNATIVE MODEL

The diagram below graphically simplified, describes the model:



**PRINCIPLES OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMY**

The solidarity economy is theoretically developed in several countries and has been applied only in some regions. The general principles on which it is based are:

- 1) Development exists only when the potentiality of persons, families and their community are released. (Every human being is able to live his vocations)
- 2) Development of the individual must be a consequence of the development of his community, and not vice versa.

- 3) Development and intrinsic growth of the human being must always be above the market development and profit. The market should be at the service of human development, family and community.
- 4) Development must be lived daily by everyone and not just be described in statistics.
- 5) The predominant form of production must be through micro, small and medium size enterprises organized as member run cooperatives, social solidarity societies and others that make up what is called "social enterprise."
- 6) Natural resources and the environment must be considered in any production or consumption activity, with a view to "sustainable development."
- 7) Science and technology must serve the social equity and human development and the community, without affecting their basic rights such as work and health.
- 8) Culture should be a source of identity for human beings and their community, and not become a form of entertainment or business. This implies respect and tolerance for diversity of gender, cultural, ethnic and religious.(multicultural approach)
- 9) Food, education, health, housing and employment, are universal human rights and should be a central part of development programs. They should not be seen as bureaucratic expense or c production costs.
- 10) The economic, social and political democracy should be the general framework of development.

**GENERAL GOALS OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN RELATION TO:**

**ECONOMICS**

- 1) Achieving a national system of production and consumption, in which all the economically active population has work in quantity and quality that allows sustainability and growth for the individual, his family and community.
- 2) Achieving a sustainable balance among production, marketing and consumption of goods and quality services, which meet the needs of individual and collective development, taking into account the balance with nature and the environment.
- 3) Converting the present economic structures so that the predominant form of production be via the micro, small and medium social enterprise, allowing a rich and effective local development that can lead to regional and world development.
- 4) Democratizing the Economy via the equitable distribution of wealth and the globalization of labor.

**SOCIAL WELFARE**

- 5) Having spaces and means for all sectors of the population to actively participate in policy decisions for integral human development.
- 6) Achieving an inclusive social equity on the basic rights of human beings: work, health, education, food, recreation, housing, etc.
- 7) Promoting via all educational levels, respect for democratic and equitable gender relations, from the family level to broader social spheres.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 8) Developing physical infrastructure and training of human resources in science and technology to support economic development and solidarity organizations committed to human development.

9) Having a system of information and popular communication that allows solidarity enterprises and the community where they belong to clearly identify the progress in both economic and social development.

10) Directing investigations in science and technology, specially that related to free internet and software, that contribute to the solution of problems which today hinder reaching a dignified and constructive life for all.

#### CULTURE

11) Achieving a cultural dynamic structure with a permanent rescue and preservation of ethnic, social and national identity.

12) Redirecting youth identity to an identity of being instead of an identity of consuming.

#### POLITICS

13) Implementing a citizenship policy providing sufficient training for young people to consciously empower their governments, under the principle of "ruling but obeying".

14) Promoting development with a broader scope of democratic participation of citizens in the social, economic, cultural and political processes of society.

#### SOLIDARITY ECONOMY STRATEGIES

##### ECONOMICS:

a) Transforming the metropolitan centers of development to local community development models.

Creating work for all economic and social sectors, with emphasis on solidarity enterprises (cooperatives and other collective forms) based on self-managed, sustainable exploitation of resources, loans without usury, and integrated regional development.

Giving solidarity enterprises, preference in assigning, the public concessions necessary for the exploitation of natural resources, protection of the environment and the providing of strategic public services.

Organizing the community to monitor the quality and prices of goods and services for general consumption.

##### IN THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL FIELD

Establishing the necessary legislation to eliminate the character of private property for scientific and technological research, in such a way that they become social property ..and for social development.

Converting internet, software, data management and digital communication into a free public service, without government interference and censorship, and with due respect to the privacy of people.

Refocusing research towards development needs from local development, strengthening the real production and consumption economy, free from speculation and oligopolic practices.

c) In social Development:

- Recognizing socially and legally the right of everyone to receive social welfare in an equitable way (in quantity and quality) aimed at improving quality of life.
- Promoting the active participation of NGO's that provide community services, in planning, monitoring and evaluation of social services.
- Promoting legislation that allows individuals and solidarity enterprises to substitute tax payments with social activities that bring well being to others.

d) In Cultural Growth

- Facilitating civil and socially oriented organizations to assume the task of education and training in the areas of: citizen participation, solidarity, cultural identity in the context of multiculturalism as well as the understanding and scope of autonomy for ethnic groups.
- Stimulating with tax exemptions, productive organizations that develop rescue programs seeking preservation and promotion of its culture, as a way building heritage and identity.
- Inculcating in new generations, at the primary level of education, respect for diversity of race, gender, religion and customs and the perspectives this offers for social enrichment.

d) In the political field

- Encouraging widespread mobilization of people around common goals related to their democratic development, in the broadest sense of democracy.
- Opening spaces so that the political mobilization and the corresponding training leads to a clear and long-term perspective of revolution with a progressive and increasing awareness.
- Creating legislation that allows free and direct citizen participation, exercising a conscious vote, with popular legislative initiatives, referendums, plebiscites, and accountability of politicians, all aimed at the appropriation of public policy and its instruments.
- Making political activity an integral part of our culture and never a way of livelihood or way of manipulation of people.

Conclusion

If we summarize the characteristics of the "market economy" and "Solidarity Economy", in most of its components are contrasting positions, as shown below:

<b>PARAMETERS IN DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>MARKET ECONOMY</b>	<b>SOLIDARITY ECONOMY</b>
<b>1. DEFINES AS DEVELOPMENT:</b>	<b>Material GROWTH</b>	<b>Liberation Of Human Potential</b>
<b>2. ITS MAIN STRATEGY IS:</b>	<b>Competition</b>	<b>Solidarity</b>
<b>3. THE MARKET IS:</b>	<b>It's Central Target, the priority</b>	<b>A means for development of society</b>
<b>4. PRODUCTION:</b>	<b>Is supported by large corporations</b>	<b>Is derived from small and medium size coops and enterprises.</b>
<b>5. TECHNOLOGY, SOFTWARE AND INTERNET ARE:</b>	<b>Support for corporations, a growing business, and government surveillance tools.</b>	<b>Support for achieving human well being, specially for free access to education and information.</b>
<b>6. ECOLOGY IS:</b>	<b>A government restrictive standard or a good business opportunity.</b>	<b>Integral part Of human culture and important part of the continuity of man.</b>
<b>7. THE INDIVIDUAL vs SOCIETY:</b>	<b>Solve their contradictions by means of the market.</b>	<b>Harmonize interests via Community Development</b>
<b>8.: WORK, HEALTH AND EDUCATION</b>	<b>Production costs or government</b>	<b>Basic human rights</b>

<b>ARE:</b>	<b>expenses.</b>	
<b>9. CULTURE IS:</b>	<b>Another merchandise</b>	<b>Source of identity for people.</b>
<b>10. DEMOCRACY IS:</b>	<b>Centered on elections</b>	<b>Economic, political, social and multicultural.</b>

Knowing the essence of the market model and its results, are we willing to continue living more and more of the same model with different faces and promises? or is it time to review seriously the alternative offered by the Solidarity Economy as a new way for the development

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