THE UNBEARABLE WHITENESS OF BEING
by Linda Martin Alcoff
p8

THE WORLD WE WANT IS THE WORLD WE NEED
Featuring ANGELA Y. DAVIS
RUTHIE GILMORE
VIJAY PRASHAD
Moderator: LAURA FLANDERS, GRIT TV
The Riverside Church
490 Riverside Drive
(May 20, 7pm)
Tickets: $20/$30/$50/$100
$10 Students and Groups
$100 - $250 for Special Reception with Angela Davis
SUN MAY 1
12pm Free
RALLY INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY. Stand in solidarity with labor activists and community members fighting the city to commemorate International Workers Day and demand economic and political justice for all. The rally will be followed by a march to Foley Square. Union Square 212-633-4646 • may1info

7-11:30pm $10 PARTY: PICTURE THE HOMELESS MAY DAY AFTER-PARTY. After spending the day at May Day protests, enjoy drinks, food, music and dancing with Picture the Homeless and continue to celebrate all workers’ struggles. The Commons Brooklyn, 381 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn 646-314-4243 • thecommonsbrooklyn.org

MAY MON 2
8pm Free
MEETING PLAN THE 19TH ANNUAL DYKE MARCH. Come to the first planning meeting to share your ideas and suggestions for a march promoting decolonization and violence against the LGBTQ community. The meeting is open to all self-identified women. NYC LGBTQ Community Services Center, 208 W 13th St dykes@dykemarchnyc.org

THURS MAY 5
7-9pm $5 • FREE
READING: OUR ONLY WEAPON, OUR SPIRIT. On the 30th anniversary of Bobby Sands’ death as part of the Irish Hunger Strike, a new book of his prison writings will be released. Hear selections of Sands’ poetry, essays and diary entries read by Samuel Conway and Patrick Stanley. Food and drinks will be served. The Commons Brooklyn, 381 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn 347-489-3808 • thecommonsbrooklyn.org

7:30pm • $5/$10/$15
TALK: MARK, MIX, RACE, CLASS AND COLONIALISM: To mark the 50th anniversary of Critical Resistance and the Brecht Forum, a lecture that will examine Marx’s writings on race and slavery in the Civil War. The talk will be given by Kevin B. Anderson, professor of sociology, political science, and feminist studies at UC Santa Barbara. Brecht Forum, 451 West St 212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

SUN MAY 15
4pm Free
RALLY: RIGHT TO RETURN. The Organizing Committee for Ali Nakba Commemoration will invite members of the Palestinian and Arab communities and all allies committed to justice for the Palestinian people to join in front of the U.N. building and demand the right for Palestinian refugees to return to their home. Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 385 Second Ave may4free@gmail.com

THURS MAY 19
6-8pm Free
SCREENING: JEWS AND BASEBALL: AN AMERICAN LOVE STORY. Come learn about the contributions of Jewish major leaguers and discuss the film with director Peter Miller and sports writer Dave Zin after the screening. Co-sponsored by New York Labor History Association and LaborArts.org. NYU/KCC Screening Room 53 Washington Square S 212-989-3074 • newyorklaborhistory.org

FRI MAY 20
7pm $20/$30/$40/$100
FUNDRAISER: THE WORLD WE WANT IS THE WORLD WE NEED: Support Critical Resistance and the Brecht Forum and spend the evening with three profoundly important thinkers: Angela Y. Davis, Ruth Gilmore and Vijay Prashad. The discussion will be moderated by GRTV’s host Laura Flanders. Discounts are available for students and seniors. Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive 212-424-4201 • brechtforum.org

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249 5th Ave
929 Nanuet Av
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Bedford Ave & 5th St
Pillow Cafe
305 Myrtle Ave
Sisters Community
Bloomington
Bloomington Bar
215 W 10th St

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Forum

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BAM
53 Lafayette St
Nellie’s of Brooklyn
248 Dekalb Ave
Tea Lounge
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Sun News
THU MAY 5 • 7:30-9:30 PM
CLASS: HUBERT HARRISON, THEODORE W. ALLEN & THE CONTINUING CENTRALITY OF THE FIGHT AGAINST WHITE SUPREMACY. This six-session class, taught by Jeffrey B. Perry and others, will focus on Harrison and Allen two autobiographies, anti-white supremacist working class intellectuals.
Sliding scale: $55–$85

TUE MAY 10 • 7:30 PM
BOOCHART/REPUBLIC FORUM: TO END ALL WARS: A STORY OF LOYALTY AND REBELLION, 1914-1918. In his new book, Addis presents a child focused on the long-suppressed moral drama of the critics of World War I.
Sliding scale: $5/$10/$15

SAT MAY 21-SUN MAY 22 • 9:00 AM
WORKSHOP: EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AN INTRODUCTION TO PAULO FREIRE’S CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES. This is an introductory hands-on workshop in Freire’s pedagogical concepts and techniques. Co-sponsored by the Institute for Popular Education.
Sliding scale: $55–$85

PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE:
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Meet the New Boss...

By John Tarleton

Incoming Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott has been described as everything—courteous, savvy, a consensus builder, a regular man of the people—that his predecessor Cathie Black was not before she was unceremoniously dumped by Mayor Michael Bloomberg on April 7. The rush to embrace Walcott as the anti-Black was embodied in a New York Times puff piece in which the paper of record reached back to an ancient anecdote from Walcott’s time in a recreational football league that shows him as both a scrappy competitor and a man of almost Ghandian forbearance.

However, Walcott, 59, who has served as a deputy mayor for education and community development since 2002, will not have any more of a say over the next steps for education in the city than Bloomberg’s hand-picked school board. Instead, he will be tasked with advancing the mayor’s top-down, business-oriented restructuring of the city’s 1.1 million student public school system during the final two-and-a-half years of Bloomberg’s administration.

Here are some flashpoints to watch for as Bloomberg and Walcott push forward:

• More school closings and co-locations: Under Bloomberg’s watch, the Department of Education (DOE) has closed more than 100 public schools and subsequently carved them up for use by smaller, more selective schools, many of them privately run charter schools. Dozens of other public schools have had charters co-locate inside their buildings and take valuable space, a process that has also roiled neighborhoods across the city. Expect Walcott to offer conciliatory words, but with the more than doubling of the state limit on the number of charter schools last year, school closures and co-locations are likely to continue.

• Increasing class size: Lower class size is one of the few reforms that have been shown to consistently improve student performance. This is especially true in the formative early years of a child’s education. Yet, class size in city schools has steadily increased in the past three years, including in grades K–3. At an April 7 meeting with parents at a Park Slope elementary school, DOE officials were showered with boos when they disclosed that class size limits were being boosted to 25 students for kindergarten and 32 for first grade. “What makes [P.S. 107] unique is the intimacy of it,” one parent told the Park Slope Patch. “It’s being ripped out from under us.”

• Teacher layoffs: Crowded classrooms may be a pressing concern for parents, but not the mayor. Instead, he has threatened to cut as many as 6,000 teacher positions in the hopes of forcing concessions on teacher seniority rules that would make it easier to get rid of higher-salaried veteran teachers in favor of cheaper new hires. It appears as if the Democratic-controlled State Assembly won’t give Bloomberg what he wants this year but look for him and Walcott to continue pushing the issue.

• School construction: Thirty percent fewer new school seats were created in the first six years of the Bloomberg administration than in the last six years under his predecessor Rudy Giuliani. Now, one-fourth of elementary schools have kindergarten waiting lists. When a group of Lower Manhattan parents complained to Catholic Black about school overcrowding, she joked that they should use birth control. Walcott won’t make those kinds of gaffes, but after years of underinvestment a sustained period of new school construction will be needed to address the overcrowding crisis.

• Clicks not bricks: Last November the DOE announced it would create 50,000 new school seats by 2014. By April, the goal had been scaled down to 29,000 seats though there was no change in enrollment. Meanwhile, the latest 2010–2014 Capital Plan calls for $937 million to be spent on establishing online learning courses at 100 schools over the next two to three years (including $340 million in Fiscal Year 2012) as the Bloomberg administration pursues its vision of entire classrooms of students taking courses (and standardized tests) online. To date, there has been no independent research done that shows this form of learning is more effective for schoolchildren.

MONEY FOR JOBS, NOT WAR: Protesters march down Broadway from Union Square to Foley Square during an April 9 demonstration organized by the United National Antiwar Committee. An estimated 5,000 people protested against the wars in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq, the Guantanamo prison camp and the harsh punishment meted out to accused WikiLeaks Bradley Manning.

Photo: Sophie Forbes

May Day Solidarity

By Elizabeth Henderson

In the wake of collective bargaining attacks in the Midwest, anti-immigrant state legislation throughout the country and a real unemployment rate of nearly 16 percent, a broad coalition of labor and immigrant rights groups will be holding rallies in New York City on May Day.

While the two demonstrations will start out at separate locations—Foley Square and Union Square—they will converge for a final rally at Foley Square later in the afternoon.

The main groups involved in organizing the May Day Our Day demonstration—the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights and the Labor Rights, Immigrant Rights, Jobs for All Coalition—say they want to present a broad opposition to the current attacks on labor unions and immigrant workers.

“I think that all of the organizers for both rallies recognized that our survival depends on our unity and solidarity,” said Teresa Gutierrez, co-chair of the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights.

While the May 1st Coalition has been holding rallies at Union Square since 2005, the Foley Square May Day event started last year, with labor groups primarily spearheading the efforts.

“We call on all people of good will to join in denouncing the ongoing attacks on labor, bargaining rights, wages, benefits and the indelible right of all workers to join unions throughout this nation,” said Sonia Ivany, co-chair of the Foley Square Rally and president of the NYC Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

A broad cross-section of immigrant rights, labor, antiwar and religious groups will attend both rallies.

Plans are already in the works for the two groups to work together on May Day 2012.

Gutierrez says the May 1st Coalition’s next step after the rally will be to launch a campaign against mass deportations of immigrants. Hundreds of thousands of people have been deported through the Secure Communities program, which enables local police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to share information about immigrants’ legal status.

“[This] is a tsunami of injustice,” Gutierrez said.

———JOHN TARLETON
Ravi Ragbir is a fixture in New York City’s immigrant rights community, but until recently few people realized he is at risk of deportation. The 15-year legal resident has helped hundreds of people as a paid organizer with the New Sanctuary Movement and “Deportation 101” instructor with Families for Freedom. He faces removal to Trinidad — without a single meaningful hearing in immigration court — because of a conviction for wire fraud a decade ago. Now he has marshaled a grassroots team of activists and lawyers to take his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

‘THERE’S ALWAYS IMMINENT DANGER’: Every Monday at 8:30 a.m. Ravi checks in at the Brooklyn office of the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP), run by a private company that contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ‘You never know what could happen,’ says Ravi, noting that ISAP employees can take him back into custody at each visit. ‘When I hand in my card and I leave, I feel relieved. I know this week it’s done.’ His wife, Amy Gottlieb, and Catherine Stetts, a member of his support team from Judson Memorial Church, come along on each visit. ‘I want people at ICE to know that he is part of community that supports him,’ says Stetts.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WITH A FACADE OF NORMALCY: After each check-in at the ISAP office Ravi and Catherine have breakfast at a diner around the corner. He types a quick text to his supporters to let them know how the meeting went. ‘Left ISAP. All is good.’ They text back messages such as ‘Thank God, Thank God.’

‘I CAN RELATE TO THEM’: Ravi networked with Haitian immigrants at a rally marking the one-year anniversary of the earthquake that devastated their country. Many take notes about a program he helps coordinate that accompanies people facing deportation. ‘The Obama administration halted deportations to Haiti after the earthquake, but in December they started picking people back up,’ says Ravi. ‘If Haitian immigrants are freed pending their deportation, they must check-in with ISAP just like him. I tell them we can help with witnessing. We cannot do anything if they get taken in, but we can document what is going on.’
Ravi prepares to have friends over for a potluck dinner to discuss updates in his case. ‘To the outside person who doesn’t have to live through this, they are not hearing what I hear in my head. “Is this the day I’ll be deported? Where will I live?”’ Ravi says he tries to think instead about all the things he wants to do, should do, need to do. It is not just about himself. Until we change the system, hundreds of thousands of people are in the same situation as me every day.’

‘RAVI IS THE BEST ADVOCATE FOR HIMSELF OUT OF ALL OF US’: Ravi and his defense committee meet with the Yale Supreme Court Advocacy Clinic to discuss how to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to grant him a new hearing in immigration court to decide whether his conviction requires deportation under the law. ‘Most people think that when a person is facing deportation they’ll get to go before a judge and explain the positive things in their life that might balance out any sort of negative mark a past conviction might leave or present evidence about the nature of that conviction,’ says Alina Das, who represents Ravi and works at NYU’s Immigrant Rights Clinic. ‘If Ravi wins his case this could open the door for others to have their day in court as well.’

CIRCLE OF HOPE: Ravi prays at Riverside Church with members of his support committee. ‘This past summer we were very scared when we learned the federal court had denied his petition — often the government will deport people at that stage,’ says Das, Ravi’s attorney. Ravi pushed through that moment with us, and brought in a whole group of people dedicated to his case. That was a huge moment personally to me.’ The defense committee, a group including friends, clergy and organizers, ‘stemmed from this idea that we can look at different legal options and also add pressure from media attention and community and faith organizations,’ adds Manisha Vaze of Families for Freedom.

‘WE GOT MARRIED BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE TOGETHER’: Last summer Ravi married Gottlieb, director of the American Friends Service Committee’s Immigrant Rights Program, who holds their wedding-day picture (above). ‘At the time of their marriage, he was wearing an ankle bracelet that allowed ICE to monitor whether he was inside New York City limits. On the first night of their honeymoon, they accidentally ventured into Long Island. “Suddenly the ankle monitor started beeping, like an alarm going off,” recalls Gottlieb. “Then you hear a voice saying, “Exiting master zone, exiting master zone.” It was terrifying. It was a reality check of what the time with Ravi was going to be like.” Since their marriage, ICE has allowed Ravi to exchange his ankle monitor for weekly check-ins.

HOLDING ON: Ravi and Amy prepare to have friends over for a potluck dinner to discuss updates in his case. ‘To the outside person who doesn’t have to live through this, they are not hearing what I hear in my head. “Is this the day I’ll be deported? Where will I live?”’ Ravi says he tries to think instead about all the things he wants to do, should do, need to do. It is not just about myself. Until we change the system, hundreds of thousands of people are in the same situation as me every day.’
On April 19, China’s Foreign Ministry urged the U.S. government to be “responsible” by reducing its huge budget deficits to “safeguard investors’ interests.” This came one day after Standard & Poor’s issued a “negative” outlook for U.S. government debt since its debts were rising faster than which was tax, buds and services — the national wealth that ultimately backs the nation’s debts.

China’s statement was noteworthy because it is the largest foreign creditor of the United States, which is now the world’s largest debtor country. It is estimated that China has invested two-thirds of its $3 trillion in foreign currency reserves in U.S. dollar-denominated securities (chiefly U.S. Treasury obligations).

What worries both China and Standard & Poor’s is huge U.S. budget deficits resulting from the crisis that began in 2007. The deficit exploded for two reasons: the decision to borrow trillions of dollars for corporate bailouts and a persistently weak economy that has crippled tax revenues. The U.S. government’s budget is also stretched by historically low taxes on the wealthy and corporations, outlays for wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Pakistan, and the steadily rising cost of providing expensive private medical care to the elderly and poor.

Does the United States have the means to pay the interest on its $14.3 trillion national debt? Will politicians be able to tax more or cut government programs enough to pay the fast-rising interest costs?

RISING INTEREST RATES

If little or nothing is done about the deficit — and that is precisely what Washington’s politicians seem determined to do — then lenders will likely demand rising interest rates on rising debt levels to offset the rising risk of lending to the United States. That will make the problem worse, slowly but steadily, as the United States replicates the debt crises that have brought countries like Greece and Portugal to their knees.

The recent highly publicized debate over the federal budget was hardly encouraging. To maximize public attention, Republicans and Democrats threatened a government shutdown. Both parties said large annual budget deficits and accumulated debt were “serious problems.” They agreed the solutions required only spending cuts, not revenue increases. In unison, they repeated, “We must learn to live within our means.” No more will this be true.

In January, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated the U.S. budget at $3.71 trillion for fiscal year 2011 and tax revenues around $2.23 trillion. The difference of $1.48 trillion is the projected deficit. The “historic compromise” struck by Republicans and Democrats in April tipped spending by $38 billion. Even if those savings come to pass — the CBO estimates the final budget will trim just $20 billion to $29 billion and virtually none of that in 2011 — it leaves about 98 percent of the deficit untouched. The sound and fury of Washington’s debates signified nothing was to be done about the actual deficit.

Republicans act deeply troubled by huge deficits but they conveniently forget why deficits soared: Increased unemployment and underemployment pinched income tax receipts, and Washington borrowed trillions of dollars to bail out banks and credit and stock markets and to fund stimulus programs (much of which was tax, buds). To address the crisis, Republicans have revived their old mantra: cut “wasteful spending” and “government mismanagement,” which means axing social programs they don’t like. Republicans hope to capitalize on popular anger over the bailout and stimulus costs and the government’s unfair and ineffectual response.

Democrats also pretend to be troubled by deficits, parroting Republicans in denouncing government waste and mismanagement. However, they champion fewer cuts, hoping to benefit politically from popular support for social welfare programs. Democrats also loudly oppose measures, such as terminating federal funding for Planned Parenthood, that motivate their base.

Democrats and Republicans did not even discuss, let alone agree on, tax increases on the wealthy or on corporations as ways to cut deficits. At the same time, Republicans limited themselves to economically symbolic cuts while Democrats posed as defenders of social spending. Aiming at the 2012 election, both parties used the deficit and budget debates purely to impress their voters. In short, the two parties’ deficit-reduction campaigns were smoke and mirrors.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Deficits matter because when the government’s tax revenues fall short of expenditures, it must borrow the difference. That borrowing adds to the national debt. As a result, more and more tax revenues must now be used for interest payments on the bulging debt. Instead of funding public services and programs that help people, tax revenues will enrich Washington’s creditors.

Conservatives in both parties fear and oppose government economic intervention apart from aiding business interests. Generally in a recession, conservatives support tax cuts for businesses and little else. When major recessions hit, they back massive bailouts of businesses. If those require deficits, the conservatives support them as most did with the Bush and Obama bailouts from 2008 to 2010. They turn against deficits only after corporate profits recover, and then demand government curtail any intervention in the economy other than what benefits business interests.

Usually favoring deficits during a recession, liberals and Keynesians want government to soften hardships and compensate for businesses’ hesitancy to invest in poor economic conditions. Liberals fear that crises may turn people against capitalism or toward extremism. Thus Paul Krugman angrily urges Obama to increase spending and
not worry about deficits. Such enthusiasm makes liberals and Keynesians underestimate the real impact of deficits and who will likely have to pay for them.

There are other problems with the liberals’ logic. First, government could maintain high spending and keep deficits manageable if it taxed corporations and the wealthy more. One recent calculation showed that if corporations and anyone earning over $1 million a year were taxed based on the rates in 1961, the U.S. Treasury would collect an additional $716 billion per year. This would lop in half the 2011 deficit and subsequent interest costs. Second, the greater our deficits, the more of our taxes go to pay Uncle Sam’s major creditors: China, Japan and large corporations and wealthy individuals around the world. Third, tax rates for corporations and the rich have been reduced dramatically for decades, causing deficits to balloon. To plug the fiscal hole, Washington turned around and borrowed from the corporations and the rich the money it granted them in tax breaks.

The bottom line: U.S. capitalism collapsed in 2008 and required trillions of dollars in ongoing government life support. It chooses to fund the bailouts through massive borrowing rather than by raising taxes on corporations and the rich — not even those corporations saved from certain bankruptcy.

On April 13, Obama suggested raising the top tax bracket from 35 to 39 percent (compared to the 91 percent it was in the 1930s). He resurrected the same increase he abandoned in his December 2010 deal with the Republicans. If enacted, this tax increase would yield less than $100 billion per year. That would cut this year’s deficit by a mere 7 percent.

For fiscal year 2012, the Obama administration is requesting $1.034 trillion in military expenditures, according to the National Priorities Project. Cutting funds for wars, the Pentagon, CIA, homeland security and related programs could achieve major deficit reductions in combination with raised taxes on the rich and corporations. As with all large cuts, they would need to be planned. For example, eliminating weapons programs could be partially offset by increased spending on new “green” mass transportation systems in and around cities. Such planning could generate more and better secondary benefits for the U.S. economy than military spending.

Both parties in Washington have sustained massive ongoing deficits to support a crippled, state-dependent capitalism. Fake political debates around deficits should not distract us from the subservience capitalism has demanded and obtained from both of its parties nor from the urgent need to build a real opposition to them both.

Richard D. Wolff is Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and a visiting professor at The New School. He is the author most recently of Capitalism Hits the Fan: The Global Economic Melt-down and What to Do about It.
A historian of whiteness, Neil Flinders recently put, “being white doesn’t just happen to you. It’s a meaningful choice about who you are and how you live your life.” This is the realization that the United States is a society of whiteness.

White Americans will lose their majority status by 2050. But will this mean real change is on the horizon?

**RACE AND CLASS**

The turmoil of whiteness in American culture is undergoing a transformation that affects the lives of whites. This transformation is a result of the changing color of America. 

**IDENTITY**

White Americans will lose their majority status by 2050. But will this mean real change is on the horizon?
Boycott Israel Movement Creates ‘Sea Change’

BY ALEX KANE

Modeled on the international campaign of economic and political pressure that helped bring an end to South African apartheid nearly two decades ago, the growing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement targeting Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories has notched notable victories of late.

Achievements include the announcement in April that the flagship London outlet of Ahava, an Israeli cosmetics company that reportedly manufactures its products in an illegal West Bank settlement, is losing its lease in response to years of protest. In February, legendary folk singer Pete Seeger joined, at a roster of artists honoring the boycott of Israel, including Elvis Costello, Dustin Hoffman, Gil Scott-Heron, Johnny Depp and the Pixies.

Defenders of Israel dismiss these victories as minor irritants, but the government has reacted with alarm. In February the Knesset gave initial approval to a bill criminalizing advocacy of BDS. Israeli commentators, including the influential Tel Aviv-based Reut Institute, have called the BDS movement a “strategic threat” to the state of Israel. And the United States, Israel’s patron, has joined the chorus of critics. “When academics from Israel are Boycotted — this is not objecting to a policy — this is anti-Semitism,” Hannah Rosenthal, the State Department’s envoy on combating anti-Semitism, said in an April 2 speech.

Rosenthal’s statement came right after the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem approved a long-delayed visa for Omar Barghouti, a leading figure in the BDS movement. Author of the new book, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Freedom, Barghouti was forced to postpone a tour of U.S. college campuses after his visa was held up for four months. In response an international campaign bombarded the consulate with phone calls and emails.

The attempt at scuttling Barghouti’s tour comes as no surprise in the context of increased U.S. and Israeli government scrutiny of the BDS movement’s growing popularity. Barghouti is a founding member of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and award-winning journalist Max Blumenthal refers to Barghouti as “one of the BDS movement’s most effective strategists and promoters.”

I met with Barghouti after his publisher, Haymarket Books, rescheduled his tour for April. Siting in a crowded coffee shop in Manhattan, Barghouti talked about building on his experience as an anti-apartheid campaigner by focusing his attention on U.S. college campuses. “When I was in the anti-apartheid movement, we knew that we won when Columbia, Stanford, Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton divested. That was the beginning of the end for the apartheid system in South Africa.”

Barghouti describes his book as “about a movement that’s still growing very rapidly, in fact, and changing and transforming and gaining many more supporters. [The book is] taking stock of the main intellectual basis for the movement, the main achievements, the main challenges and where we go forward from here.”

The movement has three demands: an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands and the dismantling of the separation barrier, equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. To meet these goals, the BDS movement advocates boycotting Israeli products and institutions, divesting from companies profiting from the occupation and government sanctions on Israel.

Critics of BDS allege that the movement seeks to “delegitimize” Israel. Barghouti dismisses such charges. “It’s at best hypocritical, unfounded and totally baseless. In the anti-apartheid movement in the South Afri-
What Goldstone Wrought

By Philip Weiss

Editor's note: The report by the U.N. Human Rights Council fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict of 2008-2009, known as the "Goldstone Report," was ground-breaking for potentially holding Israel to account for war crimes committed during its assault on Gaza, which resulted in at least 900 civilian deaths and 5,000 wounded. In April the Washington Post published an op-ed by Richard Goldstone in which he questioned the findings of the report.

PHILIP WEISS: You write in your paper that [Goldstone's reconsideration] might pave the way to further attacks.

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN: It depends. First of all, there's been the tit for tat going on for a long time, so he is not personally culpable for this current tit for tat. Hm, however, this climaxizes in a second massacre on the scale of Operation Cast Lead 1, then of course he's responsible; he would have given Israel the impunity it needed; otherwise it could not have launched a second attack on Gaza.

PW: I often quote the title of your book, This Time We Went Too Far, and I infer from that, not so much they learned their lesson, but there's less impunity. They understand this tit-for-tat, whatever it did or didn't do, really hurt their image around the world.

NF: The problem I have with your argument is that it's premised on the notion that Israelis think that they have another option except the resort to massive force. But that's just not how Israelis think. The Israeli mentality is the Arabs only understand the language of force, and if they get out of hand, you have to go in with the big stick or big club and break some skulls. For Israel the big problem with Goldstone is that it was preventing them from launching future wars...

PW: Larry Derfner and Bernard Avishai have suggested that Israelis have misgivings about all that destruction they perpetrated, to no end.

NF: I don't think that's entirely true. They did achieve something. Just as they achieved something in Lebanon in 2006. It was quite clear that henceforth Hezbollah was very careful not to provoke an Israeli attack, after July/August 2006, because Hezbollah knew that an Israeli attack would alienate the whole population against Hezbollah. So during the Gaza assault, Hezbollah was very quiet... and the reason was obvious, because they knew the Lebanese would turn their wrath on Hezbollah if it seemed as if they had provoked a war in defense of not Lebanese interests... In the case of Gaza, it had its successes. It turned a lot of people against Hamas, which is why Hamas had to suddenly inflate the figures for the number of its people killed, because the people were saying, it was Hamas's reckless decisions that caused the attack. I don't agree with the argument that when Hezbollah wants to claim a victory where there was no battlefield defeat of Israel and where there was just death and destruction...

PW: You're saying that these operations were effective.

NF: There is nothing that doesn't have an upside. Everything is on balance. On balance Israel got some things out of it. It also suffered some deficits...

PW: But it's equivocal.

NF: There was equivocation because in this case, they were going to have to pay a price, because of the Goldstone Report, which they'd never had to pay. They have already paid several prices — the loss of immunity to Israeli diplomats and soldiers who traveled abroad, the threats of universal jurisdiction being used against them, and some alienation, not qualitative but quantitative, in the diaspora Jewish communities, they paid a price. But on balance... more than 90 percent of Israelis afterwards continued to support the Israeli assault. So Israeli society was not exactly appalled or even against what the Israeli government did because they don't pay any price...

PW: [Threats of legal culpability create a very real difficulty for Israel to launch future wars, and that for Israel is a disaster. That's exactly why they're fearful of the revolts in the Arab world. They don't think that Egypt is going to attack, whether the Muslim Brotherhood or anyone else comes to power. What they're afraid of is that an Egypt led by a figure like ElBaradei, a comparable figure to Erdogan in Turkey, just won't let Israel carry on in their reckless and ruthless fashion. Just like [Prime Minister Recep] Erdogan said when Israel was saber-rattling against Lebanon a half year ago, Erdogan visited Beirut and said, "Israel, cut it out." Now you know ElBaradei gave an interview... in which he said the same thing. If Israel attacks Gaza we're not going to stand idly by, and that's what Israel's afraid of. It's afraid that between Iran, Turkey and Egypt, the three main regional powers, each of them saying that they're not going to stand idly by, that Israel's going to lose its war option, and that's what it feared with the repercussions of the Goldstone report...

PW: The retraction shows that you need to count on the movement people, not the mainstreamers.

NF: Goldstone freed up a lot of Jews to criticize Israel, that's clear, and now that he's retracted, no one's really going to trust future Goldstones.

Look, there were three strategies... that have been tested to deal with Israel's occupation. One is nonviolent civil disobedience whether in Bil'in or Botillas. A second strand has been the BDS. And a third strand has been holding Israel legally culpable. And the third strand was the Goldstone strategy, so to speak, holding Israel legally culpable. What was so disastrous about what Goldstone did is now it's going to be very tough to go in front of Palestinian or even activist audiences and talk about the legal weapon. Because they're all going to say "oh really — Goldstone?" He's delegitimized — you talk about delegitimizing Israel — he has delegitimized before the activist community the legal weapon for holding Israel accountable...

When Israel launches its next murderous war and you accuse it of having committed war crimes, what do you think they're going to say? Goldstone. It's just the reverse now; it's become their weapon. That's the most painful blow of all: Goldstone has now become their weapon.

For the full interview, see mondoweiss.net.
Egypt’s Army and Muslim Brothers Join in a Dance of Power

By Joshua Stacher

Egypt’s popular revolution is now more than two months old, but so far it has produced a structural change in the governing coalition of Egypt without resulting in regime change per se.

That coalition, as it evolved under deposed President Husni Mubarak, was made up of the president and his circle of rotating ministers, the president’s son Gamal Mubarak’s economic reform team, croony capitalists who grew rich under Mubarak and his predecessor Anwar Sadat, the intelligence and security services and the army. The regime’s strategy for presenting a “democratic” face to the West was to place select ministers, croony capitalists and members of the economic reform team at the head of its electoral vehicle, the now-disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP).

The military, though it has been the prime beneficiary of aid packages from Washington, was an institution in decline as it was forced to compete for resources with the Interior Ministry and Gamal’s team, composed mostly of a younger, flashier generation of croony capitalists. Reports during and after the revolution have likely overstated the military’s role in the economy, which in fact has been shrinking. Mubarak’s ouster allowed the military to return to prominence, while the disciples of the Washington consensus were dropped from the ruling coalition and various police and intelligence services, purveyors of domestic spying and torture, were re-disciplined under the military’s hierarchy.

THE MILITARY’S DILEMMAS

As Egypt’s citizenry commanded the initiative for the first time since the January 1977 bread riots, the army faced a predicament. Despite deploying tanks in the capital on Jan. 28, it seems to have calculated that its crowd control capacity was all or almost nothing. It confronted a Hobson’s choice in the revolutionary situation between the grimiest of repression — firing automatic weapons at the assemblers of protesters — and the Interior Ministry’s old techniques of tear gas and hand-to-hand combat that the crowds had already defeated. Debate has swirled around the question of whether an order to fire was given and disobeyed, but the question is moot. The military, once it realized they could not control domestic disorder and lawlessness in Cairo and other cities, this feeling was sharpened by reports that state security agents had emptied several prisons of convicts. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces needed means of outreach, not repression, as it entered this new political era. Without a plan, they began to design a way out of the predicament before he and Mubarak were jettisoned.

On Feb. 6, with the wounds of open battle in Tahrir Square still fresh, Suleyman called for “national dialogue” between the regime and the opposition. Organizations representing protesting youth eschewed participation in such efforts until Mubarak stepped down, but other elements accepted, including formal opposition parties, self-appointed “wise men” who were trying to broker a constitutional compromise and the Muslim Brothers. According to defectors from the Brothers’ ranks, the initial dialogue led to a series of secret meetings between Suleyman and the Islamist group in which the vice president asked the Brothers to send their members home from the square in exchange for an expanded political role. After Suleyman departed, this agreement seems to have stayed in place for Ahmad Shafiq’s short-lived government, which lasted from Jan. 31 to March 3, and it appears to still remain operative now that ‘Isam Sharaf is premier.

When Sharaf was introduced to the masses in Tahrir Square on March 3, he claimed, “I am a Muslim Brother to whom legitimacy belongs.” A Muslim Brother leader, Muhammad al-Baltagi, appeared by his side. Earlier, the Supreme Council had appointed a Muslim Brother to the eight-member committee charged with drafting amendments to the suspended 1971 constitution.

MODELS OF ACQUIESCENCE

Muhammad Habib, a former deputy guide of the Brothers, says, “The military realized they could not control domestic stability set still uphold unpopular foreign policies. They are using the Brothers to serve as this domestic source of stability.” While it is impossible to know for sure if such a deal was struck, the patterns of accommodation emerging in post-Mubarak Egypt seem to confirm the thesis.

Since the fall of Mubarak, the Brothers’ decision-making body, the Guidance Office, has been a reliable partner of the generals. The Brothers’ communiqués have been filled with praise for the Supreme Council’s pronouncements. When, shortly after Mubarak’s exit, sectarian clashes broke out south of Cairo, the Brothers dispatched teams there to lead reconciliation talks between Copts and Muslims. They continue to support the army’s goal of “national unity” through outreach to the Coptic church hierarchy and meetings with Christian youth. Meanwhile, the Brothers’ leadership implored the rank and file to quit protesting and return to work for the sake of the economy, and then to vote “yes” on the March 19 referendum, which was endorsed by 77 percent of voters at the polls. Indeed, the Brothers have been models of acquiescence compared to the man everyone thought would be the military’s candidate in prospective elections, former Foreign Minister and serving Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa.

Moussa has dissented from the Supreme Council’s course, voting “no” on the amendments and publicly criticizing the army’s management of the transition. For some, such as Muhammad Habib, the reason for the apparent military-Muslim Brother entente lies in groupthink inside the Guidance Office, which he says has blinded them to the role they are playing. Habib believes the Brothers badly miscalculated in betting on the army to oversee a transition favorable to the Brothers’ interests. He scoffs, “After they said freedom, they can run behind the council.”

In interviews, the Brothers say past repression and their adjustment to the newly unfettered political space affects their actions today. Khayrat al-Shatir, a senior Brother who has spent 12 of the last 19...
years in prison, explained, “The group recognizes that times have changed. We cannot manage our meetings and information in the way that we had. But this was never a function of secrecy, as analysts said. It was because of the oppressive climate in which we had to operate.”

INTERNAL INFIDELITY

Muslim Brotherhood youths have reportedly mounted an internal infidels, presumably against the Brothers’ cooperation with the army, but leaders are not eager to define the issue. Al-Kitami, head of the Brothers’ delegation in the parliament serving from 2005 to 2010, says vaguely, “There are some ideas coming in, but there are also discussions taking place. The youth just met with the general guide last week.” Al-Shatir contends that most youths who object to the society’s present course are not full members of the Muslim Brothers, only sympathizers.

As for future plans, the Brothers are cautious on details, but leaders are clear that most youth who object to the society’s present course are not full members of the Muslim Brothers, only sympathizers.

WILL THEY STAY OR WILL THEY GO?

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Before assuming the leadership, the Muslim Brothers were highly critical of the methods Egypt’s rulers used to circumscribe the political process. Not today. On March 26, for example, the Supreme Council released a draft law that included a ban on parties founded on sectarian, religious or regional bases, just like the Mubarak-era law. Under Mubarak, this clause was widely understood as a face to “civilize” the regime. Now, it’s just “me.”

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THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES

The revolution is far from over. Yet, as the Islamists continue to expand their political influence, many of the secular revolutionary forces may have second thoughts. If the Brothers racked up large numbers of seats in September’s parliamentary elections, how would Egyptian society and Egypt’s external patrons respond?

Given such uncertainties, it is possible that someone like Army Chief of Staff Gen. Sami ‘Inan could run for executive office. Like many of his fellow generals, ‘Inan is now using the same social networking tools that helped the revolutionaries publicize their achievements in January and February.

Most, however, think that another general-president is a non-starter, with the liberal Ghad party leader Wafaa al-Shwarsa calling such a prospect “impossible.”

If putting up its own candidate seems too brazen, the military could run a candidate such as the docile new Prime Minister ‘Isam Sharaf, who then could appoint a vice presidential candidate who happens to be a former general.

Over the past few months the Supreme Council has issued increasingly Mubarak-like laws. On March 23, the council’s ministerial cabinet promulgated a new law saying that those who harm the economy with public demonstrations could be fined up to 500,000 Egyptian pounds (over $83,000) and imprisoned. The law targets sectors like the police, which have struck continuously since Feb. 11, but it could be applied to the industrial actions and street protests that composed the revolution.

Similarly, on March 30, Maj. Gen. Mamdouh Shahin announced a “constitutional declaration” wherein the amendments ratified by referendum were nine of 63 articles, most of which reaffirmed laws of the Mubarak era. One of the more familiar stipulations was the provision that parties cannot be religious, sectarian or regional in character. For many, the declaration was a deep disappointment revealing the Supreme Council to be disingenuous from the get-go.

Many Egyptians have begun to grumble about the military’s increasingly prominent role. A well-attended April 1 protest in Tahrir Square called upon Field Marshal Husayn Tantawi, Mubarak’s minister of defense, to resign from the Supreme Council and demanded swifter action toward putting the men of the deposed regime on trial for corruption and other offenses. In a move that surprised many, the military imprisoned Mubarak’s two sons on April 13 and has reportedly detained Husni Mubarak himself in a hospital. But Mubarak was already sacrificed to the crowds; the real test of the army’s commitment to democracy lies ahead.

The March 19 referendum may have led the army to bank on a silent majority of Egyptians who will cling to the institution they have known for the past 60 years in place of the Brothers or protesters who are seen as disrupting normal life. At the same time, discontent with the military is growing, and one can expect more popular mobilizations to safeguard the revolution process Egyptians began by heroically overthrowing their dictator of 30 years.

A great contest to define the center is under way and the outcome remains unknown. The only certainty is that after an exhilarating spring, Egypt is in for a hot summer.

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Off With Their Heads!

BY ARUN GUPTA

Our ancestors once coveted before royalty they believed were divinity made corporal. These days, supporters of monarchy are reduced to citing tourism to avenge in defense of a barbaric relic.

Other rationales -- the divine right of kings, a repository of tradition, moral paragons, manifestation of the state, a (barely) living national symbol -- have long been eroded by the tides of history. So the last excuse for the monarchy is that of the bean counters' ledger: the cost-benefit analysis.

Kate and William's royal nuptials will reportedly generate more than $1 billion in economic activity, supposedly a bonanza for commoners who each proffer but a few pence for the $60 million annual subsidy to the flashy Queen and her abundant horse-faced brood. (Never mind that this sum excludes the costs of security, policing and vast estates and monies off-limits to the Exchequer, though at least a few years ago the royals were foiled in their attempt to heat their drafty castles by tapping public monies meant for patrons.)

Perhaps it would be tacky to mention that the wedding pageant will not have "any sort of lasting effect" on the economy. If public, however, doesn't seem to be listening. Brits "graced by The Presence [come] away like medieval peasants brushed by the royal fingers to cure the scrofula," says the Financial Times. The real boon then may be to distract the serfs from higher taxes, galloping inflation, fewer jobs and public services under the axe.

Tackier still is commemorative merchandise like ashtrays -- stub your cig in the face of the newlyweds; toilet seat covers -- Kate and William can now grace your throne; or "regal prophylactics" -- wrap your willie in a William condom for coitus with your fantasy Kate.

Raining on the parade, anti-monarchists say direct subsidies are $180 million, or triple the amount usually cited. And the royals are downright plebian as a tourist attraction; the crowning glory, Windsor Castle, is only one of the 37th most-visited tourist sites in England, easily surpassed by the nearby Legoland.

Of course why would anyone want to fork over $26 to gawk at Queen Liz's chambers and screech, "Fewe, lovely?" Many more prefer to traipse through the Tower of London, once a royal residence, but far more notorious as an executioner's ball and medieval Guantánamo crammed with racks, scold's bridle and head crushers.

If the only justification left is tourism, then it's time to imagine more lucrative schemes. Eliminating the royals would first free up all those tax dollars spent on such vital activities as Charles and Camilla's 12-day yacht tour of the Caribbean in 2008, a $430,000 bargain.

If Clinton-era donors were willing to pony up $400,000 for a White House sleepover, think of how many uber-rich would spend $50 million in 2004 for his daughter's wedding, a couple's value.

Camilla's tampon — is utterly useless as a well-deserved fate. The depredations they visited upon their countries are precisely what Galileo is to blame for consumerism and hatching dimwitted real-estate schemes, including putting his charity foundation in peril for a $40 million loan to purchase an estate, which has since lost 80 percent of its value.

There is always regicide. A bit extreme, but it would only be taking the lead from London protesters who cried "Off with their heads" while attacking a Rolls Royce-bound Charles and Camilla last December. Plus, with media saturation, what better way to capture viewers' attention than televised a 16th-century-style beheading of the royal family.

Regicide has a storied past. During revolutions, most monarchs manage to escape popular wrath for murder, plunder, torture and other crimes of absolutism. But in the populations that define modernity — the French and Russian — the royalty met a well-deserved fate. The depredations they visited upon their countries are precisely why Louis XVI was guillotined and the Romanovs shot. Other less-known nobility — King Faisal II of Iraq, George I of Greece and Umberto I of Italy — were cut down by bullets for their crimes.

But, whingers may object, the Windsors while parasites are a mostly harmless lot. It may seem that way with all the garden parties and polo matches, but as head of a British Empire (rebranded as the Commonwealth of Nations) soaked in the blood of its forced subjects, the royals have never paid for their crimes. (For a terrifying account of the tens of millions killed by imperial British policy in Asia in the late 19th century, see Late Victorian Holocausts by Mike Davis.)

What better way to help the English to topple a government rooted in medieval despotism, overcome their class difference and end a culture of hereditary idiocy than chopping off a few royal heads?

Plus, imagine putting the Queen's head in a jar on public display. It would be the ultimate tourist attraction.
Welcome to the Grand Illusion

The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order
BERNARD HARCOURT
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011

Those who talk the loudest about freedom are often the ones most inclined to place people behind bars. In *The Illusion of Free Markets*, University of Chicago Professor Bernard Harcourt attempts a genealogy of the seemingly paradoxical coupling of the discourse of free markets and the practice of mass incarceration in the contemporary United States.

Although *The Illusion of Free Markets* is primarily a work of intellectual history, Harcourt starts from his interest in how the ideological fiction of the “free market” helps produce contemporary U.S. mass incarceration. He posits that the key to understanding what he calls “neoliberal penality” is that maintaining “law and order” has become one of the only acceptable forms of state intervention. Even those who decry the “distortions” of the marketplace caused by government interventions such as minimum-wage or rent-control laws support state involvement in policing the populace. While the marketplace is thought of as naturally self-ordering, in the realm of punishment, order must be imposed. Thus, looting in Iraq became an example of the messiness of freedom—in Donald Rumsfeld’s famous phrase — while “broken windows” are not to be tolerated.

Harcourt traces the root of this conception back beyond economists Milton Friedman and Gary Becker to figures such as Jeremy Bentham, Cesare Beccaria and the Physiocrats. Along the way, he carries out case studies of the Chicago Board of Trade and the grain trade in Paris prior to the French Revolution. Harcourt demonstrates that once you pierce the rhetoric of “free markets,” the Chicago Board of Trade consists of regulation all the way down. On the other hand, he shows that the Parisian grain markets, often held up as examples of state hyper-regulation, were largely self-regulated and seen by many contemporaries as freedom-enhancing.

Harcourt convincingly argues that not only is there no such thing as a free market, but in fact the discourse of free markets blinds us to the real political choices we face. Governments are always intervening in markets in one way or another, making decisions that determine the distribution of resources. They are faced with an endless set of choices between the interests of debtors and creditors, renters and owners, taxpayers and banks, and so on. By buying into the rhetoric of self-regulating markets, we naturalize the choices made by the powerful under the cover of the “invisible hand” of the marketplace.

While *The Illusion of Free Markets* is fascinating and incisive, it is unfortunately limited in scope. Tracing the intellectual pedigree of neoliberal penality is no mean task, but the more interesting question is how the ideological fiction of markets as a naturally ordered, self-regulating sphere of freedom came to be adopted as conventional wisdom by both elites and the masses. It is notable that even those getting their pockets picked by the invisible hand often consider a belief in free markets to be simply common sense.

The left has a knack for ending up on the weak side of sound-bite battles. “Pro-choice” doesn’t sound as good as “pro-life,” while “fair trade” isn’t as appealing as “free trade.” No one seems to even have a good two-word alternative to “free markets.” But the important question is: freedom for whom to do what? In *The Illusion of Free Markets*, Harcourt does the essential work of bringing this issue to the fore.

—Matt Wasserman
Howard Zinn’s acclaimed and inspiring film *The People Speak* is available as an extended DVD for home viewing and community screenings.

Narrated by Zinn (August 24, 1922 – January 27, 2010) and based on his best-selling books *A People’s History of the United States* and, with Anthony Arnove, *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*, the film uses dramatic and musical performances of the letters, diaries, and speeches of everyday people who spoke up for social change throughout U.S. history.

The Los Angeles Times calls the film, “Striking, exhilarating... the performances are thrilling.”

The Boston Globe writes: “The documentary... works beautifully... Each passionate reading flows out of the previous one.”


TO PURCHASE the DVD of *The People Speak* (the extended version, with behind-the-scenes footage and a making-of short) and soundtrack CD, visit shop.thepeoplespeak.com.