

# the Socialist

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Socialism and the Family

## Editorial

### Family Values: Theirs and Ours

Since the 1970's, the right wing has been waging a battle to hold the mantle of paragons of morality. With the founding of groups such as Moral Majority and Focus on the Family, the right, led by Christian Evangelicals, made it their mission to define American morality. They did this on all fronts from attempts to censor books, music, video games and other media, to campaigns against abortion and gay marriage. By launching a full assault on civil liberties under the guise of family values, the right has largely been able to control the debate about issues of morality for at least the last three decades.

The right's version of family values have their basis in extremely conservative Christian doctrine. This means that questions of family planning are limited to choosing abstinence or pregnancy, that the family itself is narrowly defined as the traditional nuclear family composed of a man, a woman and their children and that sexuality outside of marriage is supposedly off limits. All this was meant to push people into the model nuclear family where women bear the brunt of child rearing and are expected to be subservient to their husbands who support them financially. Unfortunately for the right-wing, these values do not reflect the reality of most Americans. Despite this, the mainstream conversation about family values and morality has largely been limited to arguments of varying degrees of conservatism.

Meanwhile, the left has traditionally been left out of the morality conversation completely. Despite the lasting effects of the sexual revolution and women's rights and queer movements of the 1960's, left rhetoric about morals and family values has been vastly overshadowed by the right's fear mongering and dogmatic approach. Some of the blame for being left out of the conversation on family values, lies with the left itself. As a movement, we have largely avoided campaigning on issues of morality and kinship and have favored economic, anti-war, and labor concerns. Without a strong voice of opposition, the right used their privileged access to the media to fill it with the kinds of conversation and rhetoric we have now become accustomed to hearing on the national stage.

For the left to continue to ignore issues of family values and morality is a big mistake. As socialists, we know that the values espoused by conservatives are not really family values at all that, in fact, most of their positions undermine families. What value is there in denying women abortion rights and putting infants and children into situations where they may be unwanted or economically unable to be cared for? What value is there in denying same-sex partners the right to marry, to adopt and to have families,



families that will provide loving stable homes for children? What value is there in opposing social welfare programs that will allow parents extended paid parental leave or provide a stipend for stay-at-home parenting? With the growing strength of the LGBT movement, the occupy movement and changing views regarding sexuality and family, there may be a new opportunity for us to claim a space in the conversation about family values and morality.

To put it more bluntly, left-wing values strengthen families. We support full access to all family planning including but not limited to access to abortion, contraceptives, prenatal care, lactation consulting, midwifery care, and parenting classes. In supporting this wide range of resources, we intend to provide support to women and men at all points in their decision making process regarding whether and how to parent. We want to insure that all children born are wanted children and that people who choose to parent have all the resources available to them to do so in the best way possible from conception, to birth and through out infancy and beyond. For people who choose not to parent, full access to contraceptives and abortion as well as comprehensive sex education will allow people to make informed decisions about family plan-

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## Statement of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society... where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members.

## Kids, Politics, and Occupy

by Billy Wharton

Parents bump into politics almost immediately. First it is the rash of advertising subtly implying that not purchasing a product might result in some catastrophic loss for your oh so adorable bundle of joy. Then it might be the health insurance shuffle as insurance companies, your employer and your doctor seemingly conspire to loot your bank account while pumping up the paranoia. And if you have made it through this gauntlet a far greater invitation to politics lurks just around the corner – school. I should know since my five-year old spent the better part of year crammed into a trailer behind a school too crowded to accommodate her kindergarten dreams.

Really, I might have known that problems were afoot from the start. As school clothes were being bought and backpacks carefully selected, a depressing note from the local public school said that there was no room at the inn for my child – too many children had applied for Kindergarten and there was too little space. Never mind that I lived directly across the street from the school or that I had had dozens of conversations with my excited daughter in anticipation of her entrance into the school.

Here's where having the co-chair of the Socialist Party USA as a father came in handy. Working on a tip from a local crossing guard, I started to ask questions about the selection process for potential Kindergarteners. The trail led to a series of complaints by NYC parents about the selection process and the shutting out of local children from local schools. A trip to the dreaded Department of Education seemed in order. There we wended our way through the bureaucracy until we found the proper person. The proper person to threaten that is.

The threat of a Freedom of Information Act request about Kindergarten selection was just enough to prompt a new letter in the mail – one with “accepted” prominent in the first sentence. However, this victory was short-lived when I had a look inside the rickety trailers behind the schools. Here, more than 20 five year olds spent most of the day jammed next to one another. Local sources related that the trailers had, in fact, “expired” five years ago, but the school had secured a waiver to continue using them.

Into the abyss went my five year old who soon found that a cramped trailer was the least of her problems. Her teacher, battered by a lifeless curriculum and conditioned by so many years in the trailer, was a yell. And yelling drove the children's dreams underground – even my daughter's seemingly routine dreams of using the bathroom. It seems that keeping order in the classroom was contingent on the teacher controlling access

to the bathroom. However, being five and controlling one's urine was a far greater challenge.

The urine arrived before the teacher was willing to recognize my daughter's hand in the air asking to use the bathroom. This is a typical problem of childhood easily solved by a call home for a clean set of clothes. But when dreams go underground so too do routine problems. My daughter concealed her accident for the rest of the day until she arrived home.

I was furious when I discovered this and had a weekend to stew over the next step. I decided to go the direct route by speaking one-on-one with the teacher. My hope that this might prevent other children from experiencing the same humiliation was quickly dashed by the teacher. After hearing my story, she turned to class and yelled that they should let her know sooner when they had to go – “Don't wait for the last second!” I suggested that the bathroom might be freely available to them given their stage of development, but this was cast aside – “It would be chaos in here!” Chaos indeed.

The wheels were then in motion, and after a meeting with the Vice-Principal, the Counselor and a scalding letter to principal that mentioned “the abuse of children” my daughter was placed in a different trailer with a teacher who was a little less crispy than her original one.

Weeks later, I asked my daughter to draw a picture of her class. She drew six students at their desks, each in a different state of terror. The teacher stood in front of the class with her hand holding something on the wall. I asked her what she was holding. “It's the light switch,” she said matter of factly, “she's turns it off when we are bad.”

And then, suddenly, a way out. Through the educational grapevine, I became aware of a beautiful oasis. An unzoned public school that had a decades long commitment to student centered democratic education. Better yet, the school was suffering from a strange demographic deficit in which male births far outstripped females. A few quick interviews, some paperwork and more than a few pep talks with my daughter and she was in. Rescued from a school system that was seemingly designed to make her fear her classroom and ultimately to be alienated from the very idea of education.

Today, she will freely tell you that she loves school. Last week she asked if she might go to summer school. A week earlier she was a stamp seller in the pretend

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## Raising Our Children: Now and for a New Society by Susan Dorazio

*How a society treats its children says everything about its values.*

In capitalist society, the predominant values center on the acquisition, accumulation, and display of goods. This encourages and rewards a competitive rather than a cooperative attitude, hierarchical rather than collective organizational models, and relationships build around power rather than compassion.

dissenting voice to the status quo and put forward a program based on the possibility for fundamental change and the premise that the welfare of a child depends on a complex network of interconnecting relationships that extends well beyond the nuclear family.

For example, children need parents and guardians who are economically secure. This can only occur in a full employment economy where everyone receives a minimum wage of at least fifteen dollars an hour.



However, even within this dominant framework, positive values and models exist. Kindness, love, and empathy are frequently evident among us, as is the capacity to learn, work together, and make positive changes as individuals and group members.

To nurture and build upon our best inclinations, those of us concerned about the future of our children, especially the millions of those being raised in poverty, need to take time from our daily tasks to reflect on our ultimate goals, and to speak for children in the broadest possible way.

We should take every opportunity to present a strong

Children need comprehensive health care, and yet millions are excluded from vital preventive measures. This situation calls for a system of socialized medicine, with universal coverage paid from revenues generated by a steeply graduated income tax.

Young children deserve child care provided by trained teachers receiving wages and benefits in keeping with the importance of their work, and in a setting where high standards of health, safety, and developmentally appropriate practice are established and maintained.

Such a child care system would require a massive increase in public funding, achievable by progressive taxation and an

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## Parental Solidarity in the Face of Child Abuse by Wakagi Takahashi, Commission on Religion and Ethics

In contemporary America, not a week goes by without the media reporting ghastly scenes of child abuse. The graphic descriptions of physical and psychological injuries, deliberate malnutrition, and malicious neglect of children tell us of parents' cruelty verging on perversity. While there are many cases where children are abused by adults other than parents, parents' abuse of their own children poses a particularly unsettling question of the relationship between the private realm of individuals and the authority of public agencies. Faced with the urgent task of saving children who are exposed to such treatments without anyone's knowing, the dominant tendency is inevitably to call for stricter codes for mandatory reporting, granting more authority to local officials to take children into protective custody, setting more severe punishments for child abuse to enhance deterrence, and providing parents with more opportunities for education.

While all of these measures should be considered and implemented, none of them will truly be effective unless we first acknowledge the fact that the apparently demonic, abusive parents are but "points of convergence" of concrete social factors concerning parenthood in contemporary society. The feature of current society that is arguably the most detrimental to parenting is the structural lack of collective autonomy and moral solidarity among parents in society. In short, parents are alienated from one another. How can neighbors offer accurate checks on fellow parents behavior if they are isolated from each other and do not lead a life of local, political community where they interact on a regular basis? What good is protective custody if public employees and social workers, themselves, are embedded in structures of social life where the only thing that seems to matter is the mere occupational responsibility of his or her position in the relations of wage labor? If penal deterrence and public education are still ultimately aimed at impacting the individual psychologies of parents, (as is often explicitly claimed by law government officials) then how can these policies start to actually address the social causes of this widespread problem?

This is where the socialist perspective can offer crucial insights and moral inspiration. What is lacking in the common moral imagination regarding abusive parenting is the recognition of the essentially social nature of problems concerning parenting. A common view of socialism depicts socialists as advocates of more state intervention in civil and private spheres than liberal individualism allows. This is not entirely false. In the case of child abuse in households, it is possible that root causes such as poverty, the lack of education, and the degradation and humiliation of parents in the exploitative workplace can and should be forestalled through concrete policies, in addition to preemptorily protecting children in actual cases of abuse. But the emphasis on material conditions and public intervention only represents one side of the socialist imagination.

It is important to recognize that the even liberal principles of individual freedom and happiness in a capitalist society can justify strongly interventionist public policies. But the purpose of the liberal responses to the problems of parenting will only be to ameliorate the unfortunate consequences of what liberals perceive as some "accidental" incidents of alienation in society, without recognizing its totally structural nature. From the standpoint of socialism, the problem is the structural deprivation of the social and communal solidarity of parents. Socialism will justify public interventions in the labor relations of parents and in the institutional settings of the life of the households only to the degree to which this contributes to restoring and promoting the collective moral autonomy of parents, which is corroded and prevented by

the current social system.

From the socialist perspective, making the individual conscience the only subject of debate about the issues of family, parenting, and child abuse will not only be inadequate as a response to the crisis of parenting, but could actually also be conducive to the cause of increased child abuse, by putting more pressure on already isolated parents.

Thus, the urgent task of our society is to foster the local sites where parents can develop collective moral autonomy and solidarity, and to invent new forms of basically anonymous but communal accountability of parents to each other. Presumably, in this context, religious institutions such as Temples, Synagogues, Mosques, and Churches can be the vital reference for the development of socialist projects. In fact, it was traditionally those religious communities which embodied the space of communal solidarity, filling the gap between the private households and the public prerogatives of the modern state. Yet, socialists can learn from religions in this regard only insofar as it remains faithful to its foundational principles of autonomy and egalitarianism, which will come into tensions with the hierarchical orders of many religious institutions.

Despite the fact that raising children seems to mandate a respect for authority based on personal virtues, (i.e. respect of children for their parents), parenting from the socialist standpoint actually requires most the collective solidarity of autonomous individual parents in thoroughly egalitarian relationships. Ultimately, we need to face the fact that no particular individual alone, including the mother, should assume or be pressured to assume the role of providing children with unfailing love, guidance and protection, against the background of social inequality and isolation, by the sheer force of personal will and commitment. Rather, affection, protection, and guidance for children are to be provided in the context of social solidarity of parents as equally "imperfect" beings. (The insight into the essential imperfection of human beings as individuals, in separation from the communal indwelling of divine grace such as the spiritual concept of "Shekinah," is yet another point at which socialists can learn from religions, but goes beyond the scope of this article.)

Thus, it will be our task as socialists to develop sites of solidarity for parents to organize local networks of mutual support, and also to call for the state to remove the economic and social obstacles to people's free participation in those sites. In fact, such an effort will be the only alternative to the spiral of demonization of individuals and increasing calls for state intervention to break up families and punish abusers at the eleventh hour - when the damage has already been done.

Developments of robust collective solidarity, with the removal of the economic and political alienations preventing it, will go beyond solving the currently perceived crisis of parenting to the deep renewal of people's moral imagination for the life of the family in society. Since nothing can even slightly alleviate the already inflicted, unimaginable sufferings of abused children or exculpate the adults' acts of abuse, our collective response must not end at vague lamentations about individual cases but should rather be politically directed at creating the bases for social solidarity - the lack of which continues to suffocate parents and make the suffering of abused children invisible.

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## “Positive Socialism”

### Modeling Democratic Socialist Values within the Family by Todd Vachon

*We do not practice democracy, cooperation, and solidarity because we are socialists, but because we practice cooperation, democracy and solidarity we are socialists.*

ing so long as on the other three days their labor is used to support the lord to whom they have pledged allegiance. The nuclear family has been declining for decades and new forms of social relations within the home are rising; some are more communal such as multi-generation and multi-family dwellings, while others are more



Living as socialists in America, the “home of neoliberalism,” we are often forced to define socialism by what it is opposed to—capitalism. After engaging fearlessly in oftentimes futile confrontations with the hegemony of market ideology we then proceed to rail tirelessly against the negative aspects of a profit-driven consumerist society, but we often do all of this at the expense of not promoting the positive aspects of democratic socialism. While there is much about American society with which to be less than satisfied and it is important to shine a spotlight on the problems of capitalism, I want to argue that it is equally important for us to espouse the positive values of socialism in our daily lives. One great opportunity for doing this is in our relations with our partners and our children.

Karl Marx identified five types of class relations that have existed throughout human history: ancient, communist, slavery, feudal, and capitalist; the last three are considered to be “exploitative” relationships. Rick Wolff has suggested that the traditional “nuclear” family in America practices a feudal set of class relations within the home—stay at home mothers and children may “work the land” of the home for three days per week for their own well be-

capitalist, such as paid childcare, fast food dinners, and hired cleaning services. The class character of the social relations we practice within the home, be it feudal, communist, or capitalist, is inevitably internalized by children who then bring that type of practice with them into society, thus reproducing these forms of social relations.

As a husband and father of three young children, the positive aspects of socialism are an important part of my home life. Through practice I am able to model for my children what I feel are the core principals of democratic socialism: cooperation, democracy, liberty, critical thinking, and solidarity. You may of course feel that a different set of values best represents the core ideals of socialism and that is fine; my point is not to insist that these are the only true principals of socialist practice, but rather my point is that we must practice what we preach. As a former fourth grade public school teacher, I can tell you that there is nothing more valuable than consistency when interacting with young children. They have expectations just like the rest of us, and they make important decisions based upon those expectations. In short, actions speak louder than words.

Let’s take a look at these five values of socialism and see how they can be brought to life through action within the family:

For young children, cooperation is a lesson best learned at a very young age. Kids who have more opportunities to interact with other kids are more likely to develop better cooperative skills than kids who spend their early years isolated from other children. Anyone with siblings can surely remember having quarrels with a brother or sister over a particular toy or activity; however it's pretty amazing to consider how rare these disputes actually are. By



engaging, as parents or guardians, in cooperative play with children we can further reinforce the value of cooperation by modeling different ways of sharing and playing together (not just taking turns, which actually reinforces individual play). Another way of enabling cooperation is by selecting toys and activities which lend themselves well to cooperative play. One of my favorites is building blocks and (dare I say the name?... ) legos. Kids find working together to create something to be very rewarding and they develop a sense of collective ownership and pride in their work; “look what we built!”

The second value, democracy, is a pretty easy concept for kids. My wife regularly holds carpet family meetings on the living room floor where everyone chooses a square in the carpet pattern to sit on. We use this forum to make simple decisions such as what we want to do today or what we want to eat for dinner. The important thing to model here is that democracy is not merely voting. Remember, the American understanding of political democracy is highly commodified as voters must choose between product A and product B, while full democracy, in the socialist sense, requires participation in the development of the options which will be ultimately decided between.

The third value, personal liberty, might seem like a value we would see in a capitalist parenting booklet, but if we consider a deeper understanding of liberty we see that it is far more socialist. For capitalists, liberty refers by and large to what social philosophers call negative freedom. Negative freedom means that you are free from coercion; you make your own decisions and no one controls your actions. What is largely missing from capitalist society, however, is positive freedom, the actual ability to do what you want to do. For example, I may want to be a nature photographer who travels the world, but without the proper network of social connections and availability of opportunities I am likely not able to do that. Thus my choices are limited based upon my starting position in the social hierarchy. For children, liberty is best understood as free-thinking and the ability to be themselves and to accept others for who they are—unconditionally. Positive freedom is not possible for everyone in a profit-oriented society, but it is an important value to hold onto as we strive to make a better world.

The last two values I want to share are most relevant to our lives within a capitalist society. First, critical thinking is by far the most important skill any child (or adult) can learn. We live in a world of misinformation and propaganda and teaching ourselves and our children to take things with a grain of salt is going to be key to any successful transformation of society. I often remind my children that television shows, advertisements, and pretty much all forms of media are created by particular individuals with particular interests. Analyzing the “who,” the “what,” and the “why” are very important skills that can be easily modeled by discussing TV programs or books with your children. The final value, solidarity, is best modeled through practice. By engaging in acts of solidarity with your neighbors, your community, or your co-workers and by including your children in these acts of solidarity you can demonstrate that our strength lies in our connection to each other (singing “Solidarity Forever” and reading “Click Clack Moo” are also helpful!).

Younger socialists, who are not parents, have a natural tendency to engage in protest—it is an important part of the human experience. Older socialists, whose children are adults, have acquired the wisdom required to understand exactly how unjust the capitalist system really is, and have certainly earned the right to speak about it. But being squarely in the middle of the age bracket increases one’s odds of being a parent—a degree of responsibility which prevents many from finding time to engage seriously in activism or independent political action. It is this third group I feel who must carry the torch of “positive socialism,” by “being the change they want to see in the world,” and modeling that change for future generations to learn from. Teaching the values of socialism to children does not require indoctrination and dogma, rather it simply requires the exercise of good parenting. So bring your kids to union rallies, bring your kids to protests, bring your kids to socialist meetings, but more importantly, make your ideals concrete by practicing what you preach within your home and family life—in fact, do it throughout all aspects of your life and help to create a new society within the shell of the old!

*Todd is the chairperson of the Socialist Party of Connecticut, he is the father of three young children, and he is currently a graduate student in the Sociology Department at the University of Connecticut where he studies the labor movement, social organizations, and democracy.*





# family

by Harriet Fraad

The family is like religion, a heartless haven in a heartless capitalist world. Family is America's grand romance. US candidates sport their families as evidence that they are moral and upstanding. What they claim is family is a mother, father, and children who

or divorce. For the first time in US history the majority of women are single. The majority of people from 18-34 years old, who are considered in the prime years for marriage are now single. Fully 40% of children are born outside of a marriage and the numbers are rapidly rising (Fraad 2011). These erosions of what we thought of as family have been presented by the Right as moral decay. For socialists, they present an opportunity for true democracy from childhood on.

The great Marxian philosopher, Louis Althusser wrote a crucial essay and a book on family (Althusser 1977, 1992). Althusser was concerned about the forces that shaped people's collusion with their own subordination. He wanted to explore the forces that kept people in submission as if by their own will. Althusser showed that in addition to the external forces of repression like the police, and the army, there are three forces that teach people to police themselves and keep themselves submissive to authority. They are the family, orthodox religion, and authoritarian education. These are forces that build relationships of dominance and subordination from birth onward (Althusser 1977). Children grow up with the absolute authority of their parents. They transfer that authority to their priests and then the state. Children grow up



share a home. That kind of marriage and family are invoked by the religious right as the reason for crushing the rights of homosexuals and women. Those married political men caught with their literal and figurative pants down have extra work to do to qualify as "moral" men.

Looking closely at family in the US we have to face that family is a heartless haven indeed. Over the last 10 years, 20,000 US children have been killed by their families, and that is a conservative estimate. Three quarters of them are under four years old (Petit Oct. 11, 2011). Child abuse goes down dramatically at age 6 when children leave home and family to go to school for the day. Fully 85% of child abuse is perpetrated by and in the family (Fraad 2001, 2008, 2012).

What we thought of as family, mother, father, children, is disappearing fast. The majority of US marriages end in separation

in a literal dictatorship. Their lives are hostages to the arbitrary decisions of one or two people with absolute authority and control over them. The qualification for the job of total controller of infant destiny is biological conception. Let's check the logic in which the biological process of conception qualifies people to be the guardians of a totally vulnerable infant life for 24 hours a day. That holds no matter who the "parents" are, what kind of violence they practice and what state they were in when the child was conceived. Looking at that, we might decide that the current dissolution of what was "the family" may create room for vast improvements in the lives of both children and parents. The social ramifications could be amazing.

What would such socialist improvement look like?

The first step would be to share the costly and difficult responsibility for infant and child care. That would spare parents and children



as well. That step is taken in every other of the 21 wealthy nations in the world (UNICEF, 2010) The US is currently the only nation in the Western world to have no universal, free supports for mothers, infants, and young children.

A first step we might take would be to adopt the French system of childcare. That would only be a first step since France, like the US, is a nation plagued by racism and inequality of income. The US is now the most unequal of the wealthy nations. US and France now have about one quarter of their children born into poverty or near poverty. Inequality of income is the biggest determinant of child abuse and maltreatment (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). In the French system, quality child care centers for children from zero to two years old cost \$1.00 an hour. There, children are nurtured physically and psychologically by well educated, well paid, professionals. All medical care is free. Maternity medical care is free. If a child is born to a teen aged mother or parents with histories of child abuse, a social worker is assigned to the family for the first 5 years of the child's life. Maternity helpers are provided for all new mothers to help them with both the infant and household chores. After 3 years of age education is free and full free pediatric care is provided at child care centers. Children's problems are spotted and addressed whether they are physical or psychological (Fraud 2008). Naturally, child abuse and death in France is far lower, actually half of what it is the US even though child poverty rates are the same (UNICEF, 2003). Since child maltreatment and family violation decreases when parents are no longer exclusively responsible for children and when children are outside of the home, a child care system of the French kind, would be a beginning.

The next step would be to create alternative institutions so that when families fail, which they so often do, there could be safe, kind alternatives. Alternatives to the nuclear family have been successful in the Israeli Kibbutz cooperatives (Aviezer, et. al. 1994) and the model infant and children's orphanages in Hungary and what was The Soviet Union after World War 2 (Swain 2008, Makarenko 1951). In the case of infants, a limited number of caring, trained child nurturers, 5 or less were assigned to each infant child in order to help him/her to bond and become empowered. In the case of older children, they lived in democratic empowering communities. The results were impressive. Children grew up to be independent, kind, highly productive people.

Eventually, people may choose to create whatever hybrid between private family and public care works for them and their children. These suggestions open a door to endless creative possibilities. The kinds of families we have are not eternal or natural and of course, they can be changed. Family is still the place where children learn how to live before they have any idea of what is happening. Patterns of relationships to oneself and society form in the unconscious child and are hard to change. As socialists, we believe that people need empowerment. They should learn lessons of equality and curiosity rather than blind obedience and submission. Lives should not be shaped in dictatorships. As socialists we believe that all people deserve to be nurtured and given kind and expert care. The family we have known is failing. Of course we can do better.

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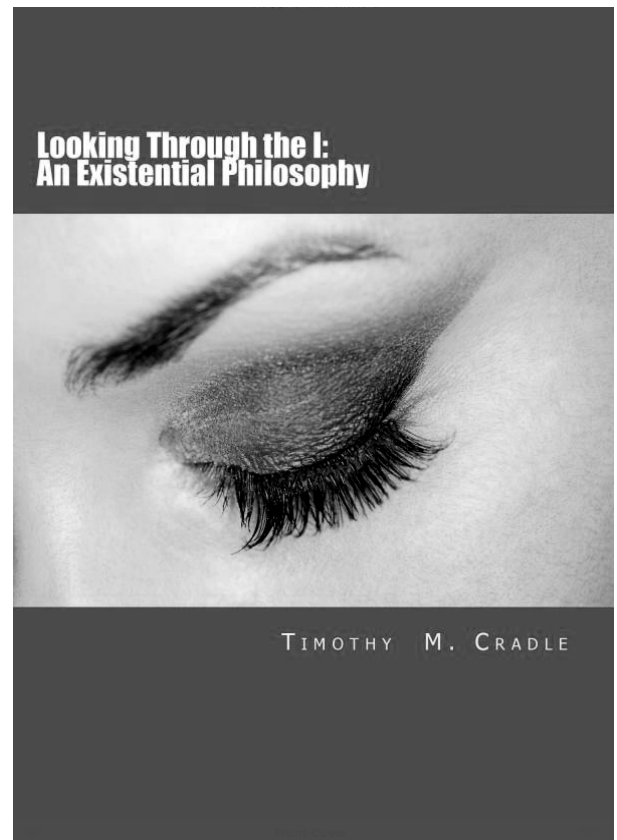
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## Socialism and Radical Psychoanalysis

By Steve Katz



With the Capitalist Totalitarian Death-States murdering with impunity all over the planet, destroying our environment and our very biological existence, can we who are carrying on the rich legacy of Marxism find a way forward? This is the fundamental question no matter what political current you are working with.

The class struggle is not only material, it is spiritual-psychological. The Capitalists are using the same kind of psychological warfare domestically that they use against foreign populations to demoralize them and prevent the masses from knowing the truth. For example, high unemployment is used to devalue and depress workers. The other side of the same coin, sweatshop conditions for both white and blue collar workers, further destroys the psychological well being of the people. This places intolerable stress on the family, frequently resulting in alcoholism and child/spousal abuse. In addition to these direct biophysical assaults, the advanced Capitalist States through their 24/7 media control have refined mass mind-control and rely on it to produce the passivity and acquiescence in the population necessary to continue its crimes and exploitation, both domestically and in foreign wars.

Marxists have historically been mistrustful of contemporary psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. [1] This is because of the adjustment therapy prevalent since World War II that rationalizes the Capitalist exploitation and tries to make people compliantly find their place in the madness. [2] This has not always been the case. Radical psychoanalysts once existed who helped people overcome their social-psychological problems to see truth and become revolutionaries. The attainment of health was signified by the release of revolutionary energies, and self-direction. We need their knowledge today more than ever before.

Leon Trotsky zeroed in on the main problem facing revolutionaries: the cancer of counterrevolution within the revo-

lution. [3] This is the failure of the dialectic to throw off all repression and exploitation, continuing in an unbroken chain to freedom. What has prevented the dialectic from negating the negation and becoming unchained?

Trotsky had dialogues with Marxist psychiatrists and sociologists Alfred Adler and Wilhelm Reich. These pioneering radical therapists provided biopsychological methods to unchain the struggle for freedom from the internalized repression that 4000 years of class-exploitative civilization left in humanity. As Herbert Marcuse put it, we have always suffered from the “return of the repressed,” in the historic form of counter-revolution, and in deformed post-revolutionary societies.

What have Adler and Reich to contribute to the revolution in permanence?

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) is best known for his concentration on the “inferiority complex” that produced neurotic symptoms in his patients. The neurosis, as he defined it, was a reduced ability to function in the fields of love, work and knowledge. It was anchored by the inhibited aggression produced by internalized class-based repression, and the separation of the worker from the means of production. Adler extensively studied Marx, and he had a close friendship with Leon Trotsky (when Trotsky was in exile in Vienna).

Trotsky had taken over as editor of the exile newspaper, *Pravda*. He had on his staff a fellow exile journalist named Adolf Joffe (Joffe later became a key Bolshevik diplomat in the early Soviet revolutionary society). Joffe became addicted to morphine, and, suffering from depression, sought treatment with Adler. Dr. Adler cured him, and he thus spoke highly of this to Trotsky. In this way Trotsky and Adler met and enjoyed a close personal friendship (they played chess together in a Viennese coffee house). Adler had already read Marx in his student days. [4]

Adler gave a paper to Freud’s Group in Vienna on Marx. [5] In it, he pointed out that healthy aggression was released in the working class by suitable political organization. This aggression had been repressed by the Capitalists in the interest of exploitation. It could be released in the service of the higher civilization that Marx analyzed as gestating in the womb of Capitalism. I would further argue that this aggression was the unchained dialectic, realizing itself subjectively and objectively in the Notion of freedom. Later on his in his life, Adler described it as going from a negative through to a positive (by the negation of the negation) in an evolving spiral of compensation building higher civilization.

Dr. Adler stated to the Psychoanalytic Society:

“While in neurosis the aggression instinct is inhibited, class consciousness liberates it. Marx shows how [the aggression instinct] can be gratified in keeping with the meaning of civilization: by grasping the true causes of oppression and exploitation, and by suitable [political] organization...Marx’s entire work culminates in the demand to make history consciously.” [6]

Significantly, Adler’s first work was a book on the tailoring trade and the diseases that unhealthy work conditions brought to the tailors. He originally set up medical practice in a poor working class district of Vienna. Adler was always concerned with the social causation of disease.

Adler was also the pioneer in discovering a biological basis for socialism. He started by finding that inferior organs could be compensated by other organs in the body, such as one kidney taking on the function of two. Psychologically, a felt inferiority would be compensated by more intense bio-energetic movement; either in a constructive sense by removing the social cause of the inferiority, or in a destructive sense by turning the inferiority feelings against others to exploit or destroy (The fascists did this with the Jews, or the current right-wing extremists against Muslims.).

Adler noticed that inferiority feelings in workers, produced by class oppression and exploitation, could be compensated in an

individual and group by social action in the class struggle. This strengthened bio-psychological health in both the individual and the group. He developed the concept of social feeling which was the highest expression of solidarity between workers in the dawning society. It represented empathy and mutual aid.

He was a supporter of the post-war socialist government in Vienna. His wife remained a supporter of Leon Trotsky until the end of her life. One of Adler's daughters was an economist, and perished during the purges of Stalin in the Soviet Union.

Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) was a very gifted student of Sigmund Freud.[7] He joined the German Communist party in the 1920's. Reich broke with Freud over the biological origin of neurotic symptoms, arguing that repressed sexual energy fueled psychological disease.[8] Freud at that time was promoting the death instinct and ego psychology. Reich developed a therapy that freed the body/mind from repression and helped the bio-psychological energy to flow freely in work and in sexual orgasm. The therapy involves direct work on hypertensive musculature combined with character analysis (the typical way individuals held themselves and projected or defended against bio-psychological energy).

This newly freed energy enabled a person to unchain the dialectic of freedom. Where before they submitted passively to the exploitation of Capitalists, now they reacted immediately and fought back. Reich discovered an inherent work that democratic structure developed between freely associated labor without the necessity for vanguard parties or labor bureaucracies. The parallel with the Soviets and the Paris Commune was strong.

Reich stated: "Every social order produces character forms which it needs for its preservation." He created a bio-therapy to release the masses from the cramped-contracted character structure needed by the class structure and division of labor, enabling people to function in a fully revolutionary way.

Dr. Reich worked with the Communist party and developed Sex-Pol, [9] a movement devoted to the sexual counseling of the masses (including abortion and full rights for women in all spheres). The Stalinist functionaries dislike this and expelled him. He argued that the party was not reaching the masses emotionally. Instead, it provided dry economic analysis. Hitler was to prove more successful with his mass psychology. (See Reich's "Mass Psychology of Fascism." [10] He described the Soviet Union as a state capitalist society in this work.)

Reich found himself on Hitler's death list, and all of his books were burned in Germany in the 1930's (later to be repeated in the U.S. in the 1950's). He fled to Norway and joined the Norwegian Communist Party. Later, he had a meeting with Leon Trotsky, also in exile in Norway at the time, and they discussed possible ways of uniting their anti-Stalinist struggles.

Ultimately, Reich felt that the creation of a new Marxist party or international (such as the still-born Fourth International), would not mobilize the masses and unchain the dialectic of freedom. He felt the movement to freedom must come from the masses of people in their own lives, both individually and collectively. Trotsky went to Mexico, and Reich went to the United States. Reich moved to Maine and pursued natural scientific research into cancer and weather control. He remained a Marxist until the end of his life. In the 1950's, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an injunction against Dr. Reich for misbranding his cancer treatment devices (they were cosmic energy accumulators) as a cure for the disease.[11] He did not answer the injunction and was held in contempt of court for violating the injunction.[12] He died in Lewisburg prison in November 1957 (murdered by the American Capitalist State for his sexual and political radicalism).

The importance of a Marxist psychology to free the creative energy of the masses, as Adler and Reich developed, is of the first importance in unleashing a movement from practice that

will itself become a form of theory. Capitalism makes work energy, which is also a form of biological energy, into an inert commodity, and requires the freezing of movement and sexuality in order to produce submissive people. How else could people be trapped in dull offices and factories? As the coal miners on strike stated: "what form of work is worthy of human beings?" [13]

Herbert Marcuse, a philosopher of radical psychoanalysis and long-time correspondent of Raya Dunayevskaya (he wrote an introduction to "Marxism and Freedom"[14]) theorized a biological need for freedom from the repression of the class-structure. He pointed the way to a new society of production as art, and a higher civilization based on ever greater unities of life in Eros. [15]

As Marx indicated, the goal of socialist society is to allow the full development in freedom of the all-around capacities of human beings. These capacities already exist in the masses of people and need to be unleashed. Marxist psychotherapy and mass psychology will help the dialectic freely extend itself as Absolute Mind-Body by helping free the masses to strive for freedom in a self-directed movement. This does not in any way detract from self-determination, it only enhances it.

[1] See Dunayevskaya, Raya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, "On the Death of Erich Fromm," pgs. 241-42.

[2] See Laing, R.D., *The Politics of Experience* (N.Y., Ballantine Books, 1968). This is a deep and brilliant poetic analysis of the pathology of the "normal" in State Capitalist societies.

[3] See Trotsky, Leon, *The Revolution Betrayed* (Mineola, NY, Dover Publications, 2004).

[4] Hoffman, Edward, *The Drive for Self – Alfred Adler and the Founding of Individual Psychology*, Foreword by Kurt A. Adler, M.D., Ph.D., pgs. 63-65 (N.Y., Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994). See also, Rattner, Josef, *Alfred Adler* (N.Y., Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983). Dr. Rattner's work delineates the socialist philosophy behind Adler's sociological and therapeutic work. His brother Leo Rattner practiced a form of libertarian socialist therapy in Forest Hills for 40 years.

[5] Hoffman, pgs. 63-65.

[6] Adler, Alfred, "On the Psychology of Marxism," *Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* (March 1909). Recorded in the minutes of the Society by Otto Rank.

[7] See: Sharaf, Myron, *Fury On Earth – A Biography Of Wilhelm Reich* (N.Y., St. Martin's Press/Marak 1983). See also, Corrington, Robert S., *Wilhelm Reich – Psychoanalyst and Radical Naturalist* (N.Y., Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

[8] See: Reich, Wilhelm, *The Function of the Orgasm* (N.Y., Noonday Press, 1961).

[9] Reich, Wilhelm, *Sex-Pol – Essays 1929-1934*, edited by Lee Baxandall (N.Y., Vintage Books, 1972). This book contains Reich's sociological work from his most active Marxist period. Also of great interest in this collection: "What Is Class Consciousness?" pgs. 277-358. Reich deals with the passivity of workers in the face of the power of Capital, and the resulting propping up of Capitalism rule. He also has very interesting comments on the newly formed Fourth International of Trotsky. Reich did not believe in the dichotomous separation of masses, party and leadership. At all times he fought for self-activity on the part of people in the face of oppression.

[10] See: Reich, Wilhelm, *The Mass Psychology Of Fascism*, pgs. 237-238 (N.Y., Orgone Institute Press, 1946).

[11] See: Reich, Wilhelm, *The Cancer Biopathy* (N.Y., Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973).

[12] See: Greenfield, Jerome, *Wilhelm Reich vs. The U.S.A.* (N.Y., W.W. Norton and Co., 1974).

[13] Phillips, Andy, & Dunayevskaya, Raya, *A 1980's View – The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, pg. 33 (Chicago, Illinois, A News and Letters Publication, June 17, 1984).

[14] Dunayevskaya, Raya, *Marxism & Freedom*, pgs. xx-xxv (Amherst NY, Humanity Books, 2000).

[15] Marcuse, Herbert, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969).



## International Womens Day Timeline from [internationalwomensday.com](http://internationalwomensday.com)

International Women's Day has been observed since in the early 1900's, a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies.



### 1908

Great unrest and critical debate was occurring amongst women. Women's oppression and inequality was spurring women to become more vocal and active in campaigning for change. Then in 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights.

### 1909

In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day (NWD) was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate NWD on the last Sunday of February until 1913.

### 1910

In 1910 a second International Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen. A woman named Clara Zetkin (Leader of the 'Women's Office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany) tabled the idea of an International Women's Day. She proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a Women's Day - to press for their demands. The conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs, and including the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament, greeted Zetkin's suggestion with unanimous approval and thus International Women's Day was the result.

### 1911

Following the decision agreed at Copenhagen in 1911, International Women's Day (IWD) was honoured the first time in Austria,

Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on 19 March. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination. However less than a week later on 25 March, the tragic 'Triangle Fire' in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working women, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This disastrous event drew significant attention

to working conditions and labour legislation in the United States that became a focus of subsequent International Women's Day events. 1911 also saw women's 'Bread and Roses' campaign.

### 1913-1914

On the eve of World War I campaigning for peace, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. In 1913 following discussions, International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since. In 1914 further women across Europe held rallies to campaign against the war and to express women's solidarity.

### 1917

On the last Sunday of February, Russian women began a strike for "bread and peace" in response to the death over 2 million Russian soldiers in war. Opposed by political leaders the women continued to strike until four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. The date the women's strike commenced was Sunday 23 February on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia. This day on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere was 8 March.

### 1918 - 1999

Since its birth in the socialist movement, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike. For decades, IWD has grown from strength to strength annually. For many years the United Nations has held an annual IWD conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes. 1975 was designated as 'International Women's Year' by the United Nations. Women's organisations and governments around the world have also observed IWD annually on 8 March by holding large-scale events that honour women's advancement and while diligently reminding of the continued vigilance and action required to ensure that women's equality is gained and maintained in all aspects of life.

### 2000 and beyond

IWD is now an official holiday in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China (for women only), Cuba, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar (for women only), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal (for women only), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zambia. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends, colleagues, etc with flowers and small gifts. In some countries IWD has the equivalent status of Mother's Day where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

The new millennium has witnessed a significant change and attitudinal shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and emancipation. Many from a younger generation feel that 'all the battles have been won for women' while many



feminists from the 1970's know only too well the longevity and ingrained complexity of patriarchy. With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women's visibility as impressive role models in every aspect of life, one could think that women have gained true equality. The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

However, great improvements have been made. We do have female astronauts and prime ministers, school girls are welcomed into university, women can work and have a family, women have real choices. And so the tone and nature of IWD has, for the past few years, moved from being a reminder about the negatives to a celebration of the positives.

Annually on 8 March, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate achievements. A global web of rich and diverse local activity connects women from all around the world ranging from political rallies, business conferences, government activities and networking events through to local women's craft markets, theatric performances, fashion parades and more.

Many global corporations have also started to more actively support IWD by running their own internal events and through supporting external ones. For example, on 8 March search engine and media giant Google some years even changes its logo on its global search pages. Year on year IWD is certainly increasing in status. The United States even designates the whole month of March as 'Women's History Month'.

So make a difference, think globally and act locally !!  
Make everyday International Women's Day. Do your bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding.

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### *Kids, Politics: Continued from p3*

post office students in her class made after spending a few weeks learning about how the Post Office works and about proposals by the City to close certain postal sites.

This article is, however, not some boastful claim about how effectively I managed my child's educational future. Instead, I mean to do two things. First, I would like to admit a mistake. The solution I discovered for my child was a thoroughly individualistic one. As thousands of other students suffer in similarly crappy educational conditions I used my knowledge of the education system to re-position my daughter alone – not try to address the larger systemic inequities.

Perhaps this is the most powerful potential of the Occupy movement. It can act as a clearinghouse for people who are suffering from similar experiences. The common suffering of each can be converted into the collective power of all by linking people together to make the broader systemic changes that are needed. If Occupy does nothing else, let it be a place for us to find each other, to strategize about the future we want to see and to take collective action.

My second point is to parents and to the organized left. Too often the struggle of the socialist left is couched in overly theoretical terms that separate it from our everyday lives. As a result, we have lost an entire generation of people who have exited their leftist college phase and moved on to full-time jobs and to raise children. Politics is literally everywhere. We should attempt to create organizations that are capable of recognizing and adapting to the changes people undergo in their lives. One, especially a parent, does not have to look far to see something that needs organizing. Parents should be active participants in both Occupy and the Socialist movement. Doing so will be bring a sorely needed bit of humanity, a bit of everyday life to both. Occupy our Future!

### *Raising our Children: Continued from p4*

immediate 50% cut in the military budget, with further reductions to follow.

Child care would be available to all as an integrated component of a fully-funded and responsive public school system. Educational materials would transcend racial, ethnic, and gender prejudices.

Extended families would be encouraged and supported, so that children would receive care from adults along the entire spectrum of generations.

Each child would feel confident of his or her abilities, seeing adults in a variety of jobs and engaged in decision-making within the workplace and in society at large.

With the work-week substantially shorter, gender stereotyping would dissolve as both men and women take pleasure in fully participating in the rearing of children. Paid leaves would be available to both male and female parents to raise an infant for the first eighteen months of childhood.

This is a program of radical change that could bring a sense of well-being to all of our children. It challenges corporate power, presupposes independent, grass-roots political action, and stretches the limits of the possible. It prepares the way to a democratically structured socialist society in which every child could flourish.

Children need, want, and deserve the life experiences that nourish aspirations. Right now, for too many of them, the present is bleak, and prospects for the future bleaker. It is all too easy for us, the adults in their lives, to accept the existing circumstances as inevitable, and to justify our behavior as realistic. Yet we are always making choices, and there are alternatives. We need to pursue them.

Only by taking a hard look at the reality of life for many children in our society today will we be able to build on our strengths and move toward a new society, one that replaces capitalist values and practices with those of democratic socialism.

*Originally published as a statement of Women's Commission, Socialist Party USA*

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## **Socialism: Women's Liberation and Human Liberation**

**by Hamad Al-Rayes and Landon Frim, Commission on Religion and Ethics**

*Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.*

This maxim is perhaps most true when it comes to the modern family. Since the 1970's, the structure of the household in the United States has undergone a significant transformation. Slowly at first, and then at an ever increasing pace, wives and mothers demanded freedom and self-determination, both inside the home and in civil society. This meant, above all else, the opportunity to enter the workforce and earn money. For nothing secures freedom at home quite like the ability to be financially independent outside of the home. Whereas, in 1950 less than a third of the workforce were women, by 1970 a full 38.11% of American workers were women; and this number has steadily climbed to 46.58% at the beginning of the new millennium.

Following this trend, the aspirations for young women were also indelibly changed. Whereas the social norm had been to raise daughters with an eye to a future of "domestic bliss;" increasingly young women were encouraged to seek out professions and the higher education necessary to attain those professions. This was, of course, a lagging development. In 1970 nearly half as many women as men completed some form of college degree. (12.9% compared to 20.0% respectively) Since 1970, this gap has narrowed to the point where, by 1993, there was no statistical difference in college graduation rates between the sexes.

### **Clash of Ideologies**

Of course, parallel to these educational and professional gains was an equally dramatic change in the American home-life. Equal work outside of the house rightly suggested to many women an equal share of responsibilities inside the home. A clear cultural tension emerged. Those who resisted change valorized the "traditional family" and "traditional family values" in such paragons of American media as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*. These mid-century cultural expressions were replaced by more serious and self-consciously political reactions in the 1970's. Against the growing acceptance of working women, family planning, and sexual freedom arose organizations such as James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* (still highly active today) dedicated to "nurturing and defending the God-ordained institution of the family and promoting biblical truths worldwide."

This, then, has been the contest thus far: Against the ideals of "traditional" family life and domesticity, arose a new consciousness. Women demanded equality and self-determination. In short, they demanded something greater, something more substantial than merely the formal political rights won by their suffragette forbears. The right to vote meant little if all of the actual power was still in the hands of men alone. Demands for access to the workplace, and the still ongoing struggle for equal treatment in hiring, promotion, and wages, formed the new "second wave" of feminism.

### **Beyond Ideology - The Structural Basis for Women in the Workforce**

However, a significant reason why women were progressively integrated into the workforce is usually ignored. While it is undeniably true that the integration of women into the workforce was driven by the conscious struggles of women's liberation movements, there were objective structural causes as well. These had less to do with self-conscious demands for equality and self-determination, and much more to do with the changing requirements of the U.S.

economy.

Not paying attention to these objective factors makes it sound as if it were the sheer will-power of progressive women's rights movements which broke through the barriers of a male-dominated society. Although workplaces and industries were indeed opened to women one by one, on a seemingly individual basis, corresponding to the intensity of the struggle in this or that place, it should be emphasized that the broad economic tendency was already one of greater and greater integration. It was up to feminist struggle to seize upon that objective tendency and to exploit it for the goal of women's liberation.

The deep roots of increased integration of women into the workforce had to do with the peculiar situation of the world-economy in the period after the Second World War. The standard account of women's integration into the workforce cites their participation in the American military at the home-front. Women filled industrial jobs left vacant by enlisted men, and about a quarter of a million participated directly in (mostly stateside) women's military regiments such as the army's WACs and the Navy's WAVES. The WAC manual began, "Your Job: To Replace Men. Be Ready To Take Over." And so, the standard account goes, women became accustomed to the life of a paid worker and agitated for a place in the workplace ever since. But of course, that is far too simple a story to be the whole truth.

### **What is missing is the broader economic picture:**

The war was a great conflagration, and this conflagration saved American capitalism in four key ways. First, as fires do, the Second World War destroyed goods, and at a very quick pace. The tragedy of the Great Depression of the 1930's was that factories were closed because making things became unprofitable for the owners of those factories. In short, people were too poor to buy things. But the war fixed that by suddenly creating a huge demand for industrial products (not cars, but tanks and planes) which were then deployed overseas and often destroyed in combat. Factories were thus retooled and reopened with fresh orders rolling in every day. Second, the war saw huge advances in technology and production techniques - again, as a matter of wartime necessity. Above all else, this meant increased automation.

Third, the war devastated both Japan and much of Europe, yet left the American homeland largely unscathed. The American response to this was the Marshall Plan, a huge capital investment in the economies of both our allies and our defeated enemies.

Fourth, was the relative docility of organized labor due to the wartime "no-strike" pledge of the trade unions, and the inclusion of many wartime "replacement workers" who were, of course, generally without a union at all.

These factors ushered in the so-called "golden age" of capitalism (roughly from 1945). Why? Because each factor contributed to increased productivity. What's more, this increased productivity, in turn, was accompanied by a steadily rising standard of living.

Yet all things must come to an end, and the end of this "golden age" is usually dated somewhere between 1967 and 1973. To put it very crudely, the increased growth in the post-war capitalist nations (in both Europe and the Pacific) started giving way to international rivalry between those nations over markets and resources. By the late '60's, Germany and Japan, and to a lesser degree France and Italy, had all achieved their own "economic miracles". Successful competition entails underselling your com-

petitors in one way or another. This was increasingly attempted in the U.S. through strategies like resorting to cheap international labor (outsourcing), growing reliance on minorities and married women, and utilizing technological developments to produce with amplified intensity (for the same wages or less). Strategies such as these achieved the dual goal of 1) increasing the supply of labor and 2) reducing the demand for it (because of automation). The natural result was a decreased standard of living: a decrease in real wages. Meanwhile, productivity was soaring.

Relying on the data of the U.S. Department of Labor, economist Richard Wolff observes that while U.S. real wages witnessed a steady rise during every decade from 1830 to 1970, they stagnated at the same level from the 1970's up to the present. Such stagnation in real wages, continues Wolff, was met by a variety of solutions, all of which led to increased strain on the American family, particularly women.

More and more members of the family were sent to work, and to work for more hours, more intensely and – effectively – for less pay and with less job-security. As far as women are concerned, the comfortable standards of the 1950's still expected them to be “good housewives” while the increased pressures of the post-70's forced them to be competitive workers to boot. This led to women being expected to live as the exploited party in a situation Wolff refers to as “feudalism at home, capitalism outside.”

In a word, then, within the overall intensified exploitation of the working class, women were doubly exploited. Aside from the cultural expectations carried over from “the good old days” of the 1950's, the wage gap between men and women remains glaringly wide, currently 23%. What is worse, most of the change in the wage gap across the years comes not from increased wages for women, but decreasing wages for men.

### **Conclusion - Real Liberation Means Changing the System**

Understanding the structural trends behind feminist struggle is the only way to finally realize the promises of that struggle. If the ideals of women's liberation revolve around the notions of self-determination and autonomy, then it is clear that these ideals are not realizable under capitalism – a social mode of production that systematically requires the exploitation of the working class as a whole (which includes the increased exploitation of women because, hey, it saves capital; it is efficient!).

Social equality between men and women may very well be achieved under capitalist conditions, even though, in the U.S., this has not been the case so far. But we should ask whether this will be enough. Would this really achieve the self-conscious goals of feminism: autonomy and self-determination? No. Even absolute wage equality between men and women under capitalism would only mean equal opportunity for wage enslavement.

In a sense, women and men are today competing “classes” in the workforce, insofar as gender discrimination still thrives there. Objectively, there is nothing to prevent gender discrimination from one day disappearing in the workplace – given enough activism. However, in a more profound sense, men and women in the workforce form a single class: wage-earning workers. As workers, they are structurally denied self-determination and autonomy, regardless of gender. They do not determine what they produce, for whom they produce, under what condition they produce, and what rewards they reap for their production. Though politically they may be free, they are enslaved in the workplace. This situation can never be ameliorated by activism that has as its horizon the elimination of gender discrimination in the workplace, without questioning the necessity of that workplace itself. Many forms of gender activism seek to open up the exploitative structure of capitalism to more kinds of people (sexes, ages, races, etc.). It should

not be denied that this is progressive – if incomplete – work. The deeper point, however, is to challenge the system itself.

Bertolt Brecht, as quoted in Dictionary of Contemporary Quotations (1976) by John Gordon Burke and Ned Kehde, p. 224, also in The Book of Positive Quotations (2007) by John Cook, p. 390

Mitra Toossi, “Labor Force Change, 1950-2050” in Monthly Labor Review May 2002 - <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf>

Focus on the Family - [http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about\\_us/guiding-principles.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us/guiding-principles.aspx)

Richard Wolff, “The Fallout from Falling US Wages” in Monthly Review, December 2006 (<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2006/wolff120606.html>)

U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Series PINC-05

National Committee on Pay Equity - <http://www.pay-equity.org/info-Q&A.html>

The National Committee on Pay Equity itself projects the wage gap to close in 50 years - <http://www.pay-equity.org/info-Q&A.html>

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### *Editorial Continued from p2*

ning and sexual activity.

We value all families. As socialists, our definition is not limited to families made up of a mom, a dad and children. Instead, we recognize the wide variety of families that are possible whether two moms, two dads, single parents, grandparents raising children, adoptive families, chosen families, even traditional nuclear families. We respect the right of all people to freely associate and to define family in whatever way works for them. Family is not defined by blood relation or even marital ties, it is defined as people coming together to form a unit of mutual support and love for one another. It is not up to us to value one arrangement over another. Instead, we must provide support and resources for all families and fight for the right of all families to be recognized. Therefore, we fully support gay marriage and the right of same sex couples to adopt. Any limitation on a group's ability to form a family unit is a clear violation of civil liberties.

Finally, socialists envision a society where people have the free-time to devote to family. Today, many people work 60 or more hours a week and approximately 60% of children under 5 are cared for by someone other than their parents. While we support free, high quality childcare for working parents, in the current system often childcare arrangements are not a choice, but a necessity for survival. Shortening the work week through job sharing and other measures will give parents the ability to spend more quality time with their children. Providing stay-at-home parents with a stipend will allow more children to be raised by their parents instead of other care givers and offering long term, up to a year or more, of paid parental leave, will ensure that parents have the chance to spend vital bonding time with newborns and infants.

Socialism is about more than economics, it is a whole system that aims to enrich the lives of everyone in society. Similarly, family values are not limited to marital rights or sex education, they extend to all areas of life. In order to value family, society must provide the conditions necessary to properly care for children where parents have time to spend with their children, where hunger is no longer an issue, where everyone has access to healthcare, education, a home, and a job. It's time that socialists claim the mantle of champions of morality and family values away from the right wing. Our positions, which are based in solidarity, compassion, and justice are also based in a strong moral and ethical commitment to humanity. Socialism is family values.



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