



It's Not Enough to be Angry

by Willie Baptist

It's Not Enough to Be Angry

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University of the Poor Press

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History has taught...it is not enough for people to be angry—the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force.

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., February 23, 1968

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Dedication

This compilation of the essay, *It's Not Enough to Be Angry*, including appendices, has been written in dedication to the founding and development of the University of the Poor. As described in the University's founding concept paper:

The University of the Poor is an on-line and offline leadership development and Bible Institute for a growing movement to end poverty. Its mission is to systematically identify and develop leaders committed to the unity of the poor and dispossessed across color lines and other lines of division so as to build a broad-based and powerful movement to end poverty.

The University of the Poor is thereby committed to the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in re-igniting the Poor People's Campaign under current conditions. As he stated in 1967 Massey Lectures with the Canadian Broadcast Company:

“The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both white and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against that injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. The only real revolutionary, people say, is a man who has nothing to lose. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life.”

The University of the Poor aims, therefore, to unite the leaders who are to unite the poor and dispossessed so they become this “new and unsettling force” capable of winning over the American and global public to abolish poverty for all.

The curriculum, pedagogy, and research and analysis projects of the University of the Poor seek to promote and develop a politically relevant and intellectually

rigorous Poverty Scholarship to equip newly emerging leaders with the qualities of leadership necessary for the practical resolution of the defining issue of our times, that is, poverty in the midst of plenty, abandonment next to abundance. This Poverty Scholarship challenges today's prominent notions of scholarship promoted by the currently dominant curriculum and education system, which is institutionalized in universities primarily, and propagates the values and views of the rich to maintain an unjust status quo.

The Poverty Scholarship that the University of the Poor aims to develop and promote demands an engaged intellectualism, an engaged scholarship, and an engaged theology. It is absolutely antagonistic to a scholarship that amounts to fiddling while Rome is burning.

Deeply embedded in the virtual and actual walls of the University of the Poor are the forever living spirits of Annie Smart, Larry Gibson, Ron Casanova, Diane Bernard, Dottie Stevens, Veronica Dorsey, Peg Franzen, General Baker and all other fallen fighters of intellect and indomitable commitment and courage. *It's Not Enough to Be Angry* is submitted in dedication to their inspirational spirit of human dignity, decency, and determination. It is written in the hopes of encouraging the submission of many other analytical and strategic papers that have a bearing on the success of our great and just struggle to emancipate the world from the growing scourge of unnecessary poverty and inhumanity.

Preface

Ability is nothing without opportunity. – **Napoleon Bonaparte**

Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. – **Karl Marx**

These statements above summarize the essentials of the art of leadership, that is, the science and art of the possible, and are among the most vital lessons of history. They are true not because Karl Marx and Napoleon said they are truths of history. They are true because all of human history—the blood-soaked, timeworn experiences of billions and billions of different peoples—confirms them.

Know the enemy, know yourself and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated ... To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

Sun Tzu, the well-known ancient Chinese philosopher and strategist, put forth these fundamental principles of strategy and tactical leadership over 2,500 years ago in his classic, *The Art of War*. As with the first two statements, they are true not because they are ancient. They are true because the entire history of conflict of all forms has corroborated them. And the truth of these principles recall the political insight once offered by the American writer and futurist, Alvin Toffler, “If you don’t have a strategy then you end up being a part of someone’s else’s strategy.”

The aforementioned axioms concisely capture the key points of *It’s Not Enough To Be Angry*. The book echoes these axioms when it states:

All social movements and all social change are products of the confluence of certain conditions and a certain consciousness of those conditions. In other words, social movements are not simply the results of well-sounding

conversations. They are compelled at base by the necessities of changing conditions. Raising the consciousness of the oppressed serves to hasten changing conditions by making their social movements more coherent and cogent. Victory in struggle requires the proper combination of these two indispensable elements. Many leaders think that success in building a social movement requires hard work and exhortation alone. They are not attentive to the conditions and are unaware of what is possible and what is necessary at any given moment. Nor do they lead with a vision based on an accurate analysis of the possibilities contained in the current conditions for the ultimate solution to the effects and structural cause of the problems they face. They think that fighting hard and not fighting smart can win the day. They therefore inevitably fall into frustration and resignation. Or they fall prey to simply being manipulated or outmaneuvered by a more knowledgeable foe.

It's Not Enough To Be Angry offers an assessment of our present enemy and of ourselves, foundational knowledge in the contemporary struggles for justice and dignity. Its basic argument is that the accumulation of capital and centralization of wealth have reached a stage of competitiveness and speculation that has given rise to an unprecedented labor-eliminating micro-electronics technological revolution. This has resulted in a globalized crisis that is not simply cyclical but chronic: it is casting huge sections of the middle-income strata down into the ranks of the poor and reducing those with poor income to superfluousness.

In other words, *It's Not Enough To Be Angry* focuses on how the fundamental technological shifts in today's economic and political realities are such that today the predominant movement of global capital is the greatest enemy of humankind. Global capital dictates all concerns at all levels — city, country, and world — whether they are economic, political, social, theological or ideological. This essay concludes that the only effective counter to global capital and its political strategists is the newly globalized and growing massive army of the poor and dispossessed as a united and leading social force. This force presently lies at the Achilles' heel of the movement of global capital. But to unite and organize this new social force — this potentially powerful army — its newly emerging generals must unite in a collective commitment to the development of a profound knowledge of

the two main antagonistic social forces. As Francis Bacon once noted, “Knowledge is power.” Without this knowledge, all attempts and maneuverings for victory are limited and lost. This strategic knowledge must guide and direct the considerations of all immediate issues of struggle and the conduct of all related tactics, agitation, education, and organizing efforts. This is especially so given the content of the new era of social conflict into which we are now entering.

In a new day you got to do new things in a new way.

Introduction

The title of this essay, “It’s Not Enough to be Angry,” is drawn from a speech the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave on the occasion of the celebration of the centenary birthday on February 23, 1968 of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois. This speech was made during the time when Dr. King was leading efforts in the launching and organizing of the Poor People’s Campaign. His appreciation of Dr. Du Bois’s life no doubt influenced his conceptualization and conduct in the organizing of that Campaign. He stated:

Dr. Du Bois was not only an intellectual giant exploring the frontiers of knowledge, he was in the first place a teacher. He would have wanted his life to teach us something about our tasks of emancipation.^[1]

Dr. King summed up the lessons of this self-sacrificing and courageous scholar and organizer when he concluded:

History has taught ... it is not enough for people to be angry. The supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force.^[2]

In other words, it is not enough to be upset about a problem of inhumanity and injustice. One must seriously come to deeply understand the problem so as to effectively and efficiently educate and organize the social forces necessary for its solution.

In the course of my life, I went from membership in the United Steel Workers Union to membership in the National Union of the Homeless, from a middle-income wage to no wage, from being a trade union organizer to being a homeless union organizer. Today millions are being forced to traverse a similar course—a trajectory toward a standard of living below the poverty line, of “downward mobility” or a “race to the bottom.” This is not simply a replay of the past. It is

caused by profoundly new, world-shaping developments in human history.

In the early 1970s, I served as a leader in shop floor fights, which included office sit-ins and wildcat plant walkouts. Out of these fights I was elected a shop steward representing the United Steel Workers Union of America. During this period, I was a strong advocate of the need for trade unions to “organize the unorganized,” and for the “employed to unite with the unemployed.” This is how I understood the problems of the exploited, poor and dispossessed, because at that time the poor were largely a part of the old industry/factory-centered working class. My thinking about the problems of poverty was limited to its immediate effects, for example, low wages or lack of services in the community. I was blinded to poverty’s deeper causes. This was my frame of reference for anti-poverty struggles for a long time.

This essay argues that the chronic aspects and globalized dimensions of the current economic and social crises have revealed new developments that challenge the accuracy of old ideas and the relevance of old ways of seeing and doing things. By June 2009 the economic and financial crash of 2008 was declared officially over. Many economists have more accurately described this continuing crisis as a “jobless recovery.” The chronic aspect of the economic downturn not only persists, but also has worsened. This reality can be likened to a ping-pong ball dropping down a staircase. Despite it bouncing up and down, the ping-pong ball’s general direction is downward. In other words, beneath the cyclical ebbs and flows lay the new more prolonged chronic crisis: the deepening polarity between the concentration and extreme centralization of wealth at one pole, and the expansion of a globalized poverty at the opposite pole, continues.

This growing polarity between wealth and poverty is confounding economists, whose theories are founded on a critique of the fundamental conclusions of Karl Marx. Some are even now saying “Marx was right” and admitting that his theory that the capitalist economic system is irreversibly driven towards a widening polarity of wealth and poverty has at least some plausibility. Indeed, the reality of our times is not defined by scarcity but rather abundance. In this new reality, where poverty exists in the midst of plenty, and many are abandoned for the few to have all, the fundamental contradictions of our economic structure are being revealed. Recognizing this fact is key to understanding what is possible even as conditions

continue to worsen.

This essay discusses two of the most important principles that today's leaders must master: 1) the art of leadership is the art of the possible and not well meaning attempts at the impossible, and 2) the only social force compelled and capable of being a leading and driving force toward resolving the fundamental problems of global capitalism is the unity of action of the newly globalized and growing numbers of the poor and dispossessed. This social force has absolutely no stake in the economic status quo and, as the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., once taught, they have "little or nothing to lose" in its total transformation.

First, the art of the possible requires an appreciation of the confluence of conditions and consciousness of those conditions. The stages of economic evolution and revolution make the accomplishment of certain tasks possible and other tasks impossible. Exploitative and oppressive social conditions necessarily give rise to social resentment and independent impulses of social resistance. This in turn makes possible and necessary a change in social consciousness that will assume the form of a new social movement. This essay explains today's changing social conditions, i.e., the economic relations undergoing crisis owing largely to technological developments in production, exchange, and communications, that are the basis for a broader change in social consciousness. To effectively counter the sophisticated forces who have vested interests in the status quo—and their strategic and tactical maneuverings—clarity is absolutely necessary, especially as to what tasks are possible in both tactical short terms and strategic long terms.

Second, the kind of leadership most needed today is one that is educated and trained to be theoretically clear, ideologically committed, politically competent, and organizationally connected in carrying out the possibility and therefore the necessity of uniting the poor and dispossessed. This unity poses a direct threat to the existence of global capitalism, therefore its political representatives will adopt any means necessary to preempt or prevent this unity, including the efforts to develop leaders committed to building it.

As Dr. King said, "getting the poor to take action together so as to become "a new and unsettling force"^[3] is the task at hand—uniting the poor and dispossessed into a force capable of awakening the middle strata of people and giving direction to the building of a broad social movement to abolish poverty forever. Such efforts

require a class consciousness that goes beyond organizing the poor simply and separately on the basis of their different occupation, color, gender, age and ethnic statuses or “identity.” It requires a strategic approach to tactics that politically unite the poor and dispossessed as the poor and dispossessed, that is, on the basis of their common needs and demands, based on their common relationship to the economy. While the starting points for organizing this new and unsettling force are different given the unevenness and the different geographical, income and cultural contexts, leaders dedicated to this strategic objective must ensure that “all roads lead strategically to Rome.” To do this, older and prevailing modes of organizing such as trade unionism, community Alinskyism, electoral and civil rights organizing, must be reconsidered.

Over 40 years ago Dr. King had already pointed out in his December 1967 Massey Lectures that the wealth and productive capacity were “at hand to lift the load of poverty,”^[4] but that the political will to do so was lacking. Today the capacity to eliminate poverty has been multiplied many times over, particularly given the level of productivity created by the present ongoing, unprecedented and comprehensive economic technological revolution. This vision of a just society in which basic human needs be assured for “all God’s children” is more realistic today than ever before. In other words, the problem of poverty today is not due to a lack of productivity and wealth creation. It is not one of scarcity, or one of robbing poor Peter to pay poor Paul. The problem today is one of a “cruelly unjust society,” a social edifice of unheard of abundance that continuously produces unheard of abandonment.

This present paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty—in a time when the elimination of poverty is technologically possible—has no parallel in history. Yet we live in a time when the only life prospects for the increasing numbers of the globalized class of the poor and dispossessed are worsening misery, resurgent slavery, and unnecessary devastation and death.

Likewise, because of the unprecedented and comprehensive technological revolution in production and communication, the poor today are not the poor of yesterday—neither slave, agrarian serf, nor the industrial pauper. Consequently the social standpoint and behavior of today’s poor is also bound to be different than yesterday’s poor. The composition of this force is being drawn from every social

stratum and embodies every major social ill—be it homelessness, healthcare, hunger, racism, militarism, etc. The unity of action of the poor and dispossessed enable them as a leading social force to tie all the major social ills and issues they embody into a strong and powerful knot of mass resistance, moving society in the direction of ending all forms of human misery and impoverishment.

This emerging social force has nothing to lose—and everything to gain—from the abolition of the inhumane, poverty-producing system that is in effect; therefore, the objective development of this newly globalized class of the poor and dispossessed is of strategic import whether it is currently conscious of itself or not. This calls for their conscious formation and unity into what Dr. King anticipated as a “new and unsettling force” awakening a broader social and political movement to abolish global poverty. Taking up the mantle of Martin means developing a strong vision to realize tomorrow the unprecedented possibilities of today.

Therefore, the development of this consciousness is the supreme task of clear, committed, connected, and competent leaders today. This necessitates mastering new ways of uniting this new social force to take action together. As these conditions unfold and impact growing masses of the American and global populations, a world movement to end poverty, led by the poor and dispossessed as a united and organized social force, is possible as it never has been before.

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1. Honoring Dr. Du Bois, Speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered at Carnegie Hall in New York City, February 23, 1968. Sponsored by FREEDOMWAYS Magazine on 100th birthday of Dr W.E.B. Du Bois ↵
 2. *Ibid.* ↵
 3. “Nonviolence and Social Change” in *Triumph of Conscience* 1967 by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ↵
 4. *Ibid.* ↵

Conditions, Consciousness, and Victory

The poor and dispossessed are being compelled by new conditions to awaken to a new consciousness. They must adopt new ways of fighting—ways of fighting beyond relying solely on the actual (or threat of) withholding of labor, in a time when labor is becoming increasingly superfluous. (How this labor is becoming superfluous will be explained below.) In other words, strikes and strike associations—i.e., trade unions—can no longer be the tactics of the multiplying masses of the structurally unemployed and underemployed. Moreover, predominant capital formations are becoming increasing global and mobile and not tied to a factory plant, any single location, or one national stock market. This means that even concessionary victories in terms of concluding a collective bargaining contract from a company or achieving a major reform like healthcare reform from a state legislature or in a specific country assume a temporary or ephemeral character in the face of the capability of ‘capital flight’ to any place on earth.

This means that the continued hegemonic addiction to old philosophical frameworks and related tactical assumptions of the 1930s and 1960s must be reconsidered. We must not fall into the forever crippling and self-defeating trap expressed in the adage, “Generals are always fighting the last war.”

In a new day, you got to do new things in a new way.

All social movements and all social change are products of the confluence of certain conditions and a certain consciousness of those conditions. In other words, social movements are not simply the results of well-sounding conversations. They are compelled at base by the necessities of changing conditions. Victory in struggle requires the proper combination of these two indispensable elements. Many leaders think that success in building a social movement requires hard work and exhortation alone. They are not attentive to the unfolding conditions and are unaware of what is possible and what is necessary at any given moment. Nor do they lead with a vision based on an accurate analysis of the possibilities contained

in the current conditions for the ultimate solution to the effects and structural cause of the problems they face. They think that fighting hard alone can win the day and inevitably fall into frustration and resignation. Or they fall prey to simply being manipulated or outmaneuvered by a more knowledgeable foe.

Mastering the art of leadership requires realizing what conditions make possible, as well as what they make necessary. This means having a collective of developed and disciplined leaders operating with an accurate estimate of the conditions, including a true assessment of the alignment of the contending social forces and the state of their respective consciousness.

This is not a task to be taken light-heartedly or for granted. As Italian statesman and strategist, Niccolo Machiavelli warned in his early sixteenth-century classic, *The Prince*:

There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful of success, than to step up as a leader in the introduction of changes. For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new!^[1]

World history has confirmed Machiavelli's conclusion about the precarious, risk-taking nature of this innovative leadership, about the life-threatening danger of introducing new consciousness of the need for change. The current conditions are compelling the poor and dispossessed to awaken and build unity in their immediate struggles for their basic necessities of life. These struggles become the means through which this newly developing class can take their place at the forefront of a broader movement for fundamental social change effectively confronting the powerfully opposing forces of global capital.

Today the unity of the poor and dispossessed represents the only social force that can win a critical mass of the middle strata away from the currently prevailing ideological and political influence of the powers that be, namely, global capital. This poses a fundamental threat to global capital as the middle strata constitute the main social base of support of their political power and ideological hegemony. Operating through its increasing control of the dominant legal and political

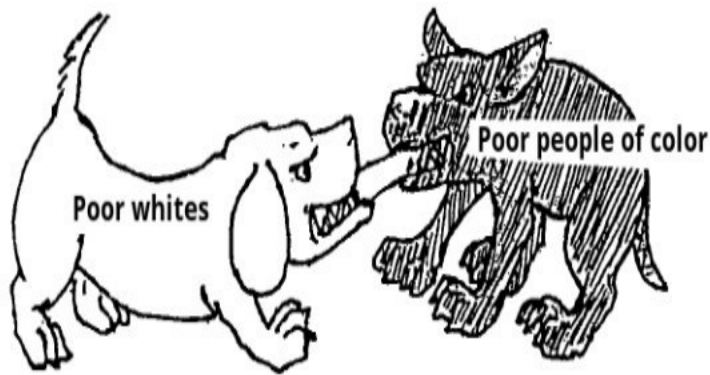
institutions, global capital is compelled to maintain its present hegemony and power, by all means preventing the bottom of the economic ladder from uniting as a leading social force. Global capital is everywhere and at all times forming, funding, and forging their own leaders to manage and manipulate these institutions. The vested and vital interests global capital have in the economic status quo make it the class enemy of this introduction and unity of change. To overcome the prevailing influence of these institutions, an organization specifically designed to introduce a new class-consciousness so as to unite the poor and dispossessed is needed. This has to be an organization of leaders deeply committed to this strategic unity as the fundamental counter to the strategic vision and maneuvers of global capital.

Meanwhile, the fate of the world rests on the unity of poor and dispossessed as the new leading social force. It rests on the unsettling and rallying power of their conscious and strategic unity across lines of color, gender, occupational, geographical, and tactical differences.

Inherent in capitalism since its inception has been the battle over jobs and wages, the competition between laborers, between sections of the employed as well as between the employed and unemployed. This competition has now been globalized. It involves the competition between immigrant and non-immigrant labor, and the competition between labor in Europe and North America and labor in the so-called "Third World." Global capital and its "think tank" networks of well-paid political strategists and tacticians take advantage of this fundamental fact of the capitalist economy to promote all kinds of racial, ethnic, religious, political and military conflicts among the poor and dispossessed, preempting their independent unity and organizing. Indeed, the whole of capital's economic existence and political strategy are predicated on preventing this unity by any means necessary.

Owing to the histories of different countries, which have included the evolution of different social institutions, this competition among the working class has assumed different forms. For instance, in the United States, race and white supremacy have been the major form that this competition and the resulting inequality and division have taken.

"Plantation Politics"



The rich and powerful



"Plantation Politics" – Joe Strife

In his last speech, Dr. King stated:

You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a ... favorite formula for doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery.^[2]

The historical lesson Dr. King draws from this provides a guiding strategic principle for the struggles of the poor and dispossessed today. To get out of poverty they must be united and organized. Through this unity of struggles they become the leading social force in a broad-based social movement to end poverty. In other words, a united, sustained, and coordinated fight waged on different fronts by those directly deprived and dislocated can awaken and attract even greater numbers, i.e., the broader swath of the dispossessed who may not be poor today, but could, because of their fundamental relation to the economy, become poor tomorrow. This describes the increasingly precarious position of growing numbers of the middle-income strata today. As the National Union of the Homeless used to say, "most people are just one paycheck or healthcare crisis away from poverty and homelessness." Once the whole of this sleeping giant is awakened it can become the critical mass of a powerful movement to abolish all poverty and misery.

If the newly arising global class of the poor and dispossessed are to be united, they must have their own united group of political strategists and tacticians committed to bringing to the forefront their common needs and demands. This is the only way to counter the efforts of global capital that emphasize every difference among the dispossessed, be they racial, ethnic, gender or geography.

History teaches that it is the struggles of these embattled masses that help produce and forge their own leaders capable of uniting and organizing these masses. These struggles must be understood and utilized as “schools” in which emerging leaders are systematically educated and trained. This indispensable task of developing leaders who are connected and committed to the unity of the dispossessed is the first step toward abolishing all poverty today. These newly emerging leaders must be taught and trained in the art of leadership, i.e., the art of the possible.

Today’s conditions are comparable to the stories in the Bible about the ministry of Jesus Christ. His ministry gave birth to the early Christian movement, which took place primarily in Galilee, one of the most impoverished regions of the Roman Empire. Jesus’ ministry focused first and foremost on the education and training of disciples, who would become the leaders of a world-changing movement. He taught fishermen how to become “fishers of humanity,” as much as he taught against the “blind leading the blind.”

1. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (Random House: Toronto, 1950). ↩

2. King, “I’ve Been to the Mountain Top” (April, 1968). ↩

"Knowledge is Power"

In his 1967 book, *Where Do We Go from Here?*, Dr. King stated a simple, but often overlooked truth: “The prescription for the cure rests with the accurate diagnosis of the disease.”^[1]

Martin Ford in *The Lights in the Tunnel: Accelerating Technology and the Economy of the Future* begins to suggest an accurate assessment of today’s new conditions and the resulting realignment of social forces. In a 2010 article, Ford observed:

There’s ... mounting evidence that a good part of that unemployment is really structural in nature: The skills and capabilities of many experienced workers are simply no longer demanded by the market ... In manufacturing and in many clerical and administrative occupations, computerization and automation have left many formerly middle-class workers with few viable career options ... If that trend continues through the next decade—and there is every reason to expect that it will—we can anticipate that the computational power available to be focused on automating jobs of all types will increase by a factor of approximately 32. A change of that magnitude isn’t something to take lightly ... It’s not just factory workers that can be replaced by robots and machines: Rapidly improving software automation and specialized artificial intelligence applications will make knowledge worker and professional occupations requiring college educations and advanced skills increasingly vulnerable.^[2]

For example, robots are not just building cars—a job historically associated with blue-collar workers. Robots can now also perform heart surgery and advances in 3D printing are further redefining the production process.

Chart 1: Long Robots, Short Human Beings

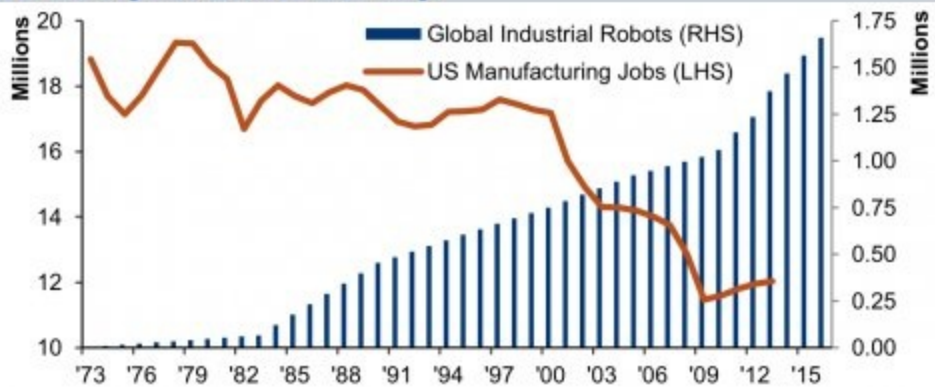


Chart taken from Business Insider, "BoFA: 'Long Robots, Short Human Beings'" (January 16, 2014)

In a June 2015 interview, Martin Ford accounted for this broad-based impact, adding to his earlier assessment:

Our computers are now so much faster than they used to be, and they continue to accelerate. They're getting faster and faster. But perhaps the most important thing is that it is now so broad-based. You can think of information technology today as being almost like a utility. It's almost like electricity, except that rather than delivering electric power, it actually delivers, in some sense, machine intelligence. So it's delivering the ability to actually make decisions and solve problems and, most importantly, to learn. We now have algorithms that can learn and get better and better, and that's really quite unprecedented. So what we see is this utility-like technology that delivers intelligence, that delivers brainpower rather than muscle power, and it's happening everywhere. It's happening throughout the whole economy in every employment sector. And you can contrast that, for example, with what happened in agriculture. The classic example that people who are skeptical about this typically will give is what happened in agriculture. It used be that most people in the United States worked on farms. Now the number of people who work on farms is less than 2 percent. And, of course, you know, there were millions and millions of jobs that were lost, but it wasn't a bad thing. It turned out to be a very good thing. You know, food is much cheaper now. People did move on to other areas. But what happened in agriculture when it happened a long time ago, it was a very specific and mechanical technology. It impacted agriculture, but it didn't impact the

entire economy. So what happened was that those jobs were indeed lost, but then people were able to transition to other areas. People first moved to factories. And they moved, essentially, from more routine, repetitive-type jobs in agriculture to routine, repetitive jobs in factories. And then later on, the factories automated or offshored, and then people then moved into the service sector. But once again, they moved into relatively routine, repetitive jobs in the service sector.

So what you've seen is that this has, in the past, impacted on a sector-by-sector basis. First, agricultural, then manufacturing and now everyone is working in services. But now with today's information technology, it's just everywhere. It's impacting across the board. And the most disruptive thing that's going to happen is it is going to impact heavily in the service sector, which is now where everyone works. So there really isn't some new sector of the economy that's going to arise and be very labor-intensive to absorb all the workers that lose their jobs because of this. So that's really why it's different this time.^[3]

These new technological developments have objectively confronted today's dislocated and impoverished masses with the predominance of an increasingly mobile and global capital, which has eclipsed the power of more nationally based and fixed investment capital. These are momentous times, producing many unanswered questions and presenting leaders with both obstacles and opportunities. People suffering from the pain of sustained economic and social crises are compelled to question old and embedded false assumptions and misconceptions. Their current plight is forcing them to fight. The fight forces them to seek new insight—answers to their urgent questions, and solutions to problems of life and death, which require accurate knowledge of the causes and cures being effectively and efficiently introduced, because the linchpins of this fight and insight are clear, committed, connected, and competent leaders. Guided by knowledge, these leaders must function collectively as teachers, agitators, and organizers of the fight, and be well positioned to provide the answers to the problems that need to be solved. This kind of network of leaders is indispensable to bringing about the needed confluence of conditions and consciousness.

In short, “knowledge is power” and power grows from organization. Over 150

years ago, Karl Marx, the practical leader and theorist of the dispossessed, affirmed that a major strength of the movement of the property-less or dispossessed masses was in their numbers. He said, however that “numbers weigh in the balance only if united by combination and led by knowledge.”^[4] He states further:

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle.^[5]

And over 2,500 years ago, Sun Tzu, the well-known ancient Chinese philosopher and strategist, put forth a central principle of the art of strategy and tactics: “Know the enemy, know yourself and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated.”^[6]

Knowledge of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of your enemy and yourself enables one to secure victory through concentrating on the strategic and tactical levels your strengths against the enemy’s weaknesses. This means, of course, strategic leadership guides tactical operations, considerations of the war or conflicts as a whole direct the considerations of battles, steps are taken with the overall knowledge of the staircase. Sun Tzu’s basic understanding and approach to conflict have withstood the trials and tests of time.

Consistent with this irrefutable imperative toward knowledge, Dr. King pointed out that “... it is not enough for people to be angry—the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force.” However, organization without education results in short-lived and misdirected mobilizations. In his 1967 book *Where Do We Go from Here?*, he warned:

Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents.

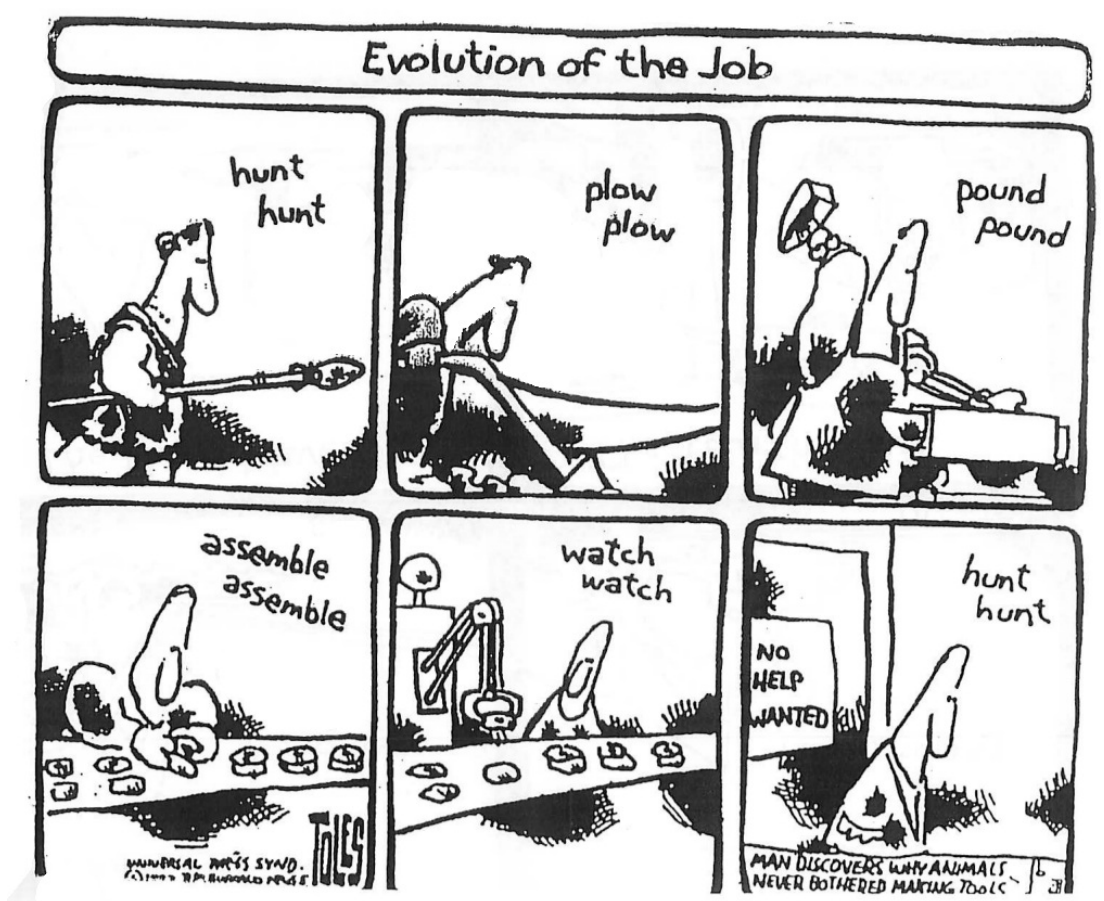
Because conditions are constantly moving and shifting, leaders must necessarily be equipped with more than book knowledge. Their knowledge must be continuously supplemented with ongoing investigation of these movements and shifts as they are being experienced and interpreted by the two social forces strategically posed against each other: the one that has vested interests in the status quo and the one that is being killed by it. The antagonism between these two social forces is fought out in battles against each other hourly, daily, yearly—first in economic and social arenas, and then on political and ideological battlefields. Leaders in the movement to end poverty must have an informed and expanding knowledge of these struggles, the positions of both their enemy and the poor and dispossessed, as well as an assessment of their comparative strengths and weaknesses.

The global crisis of 2008 has revealed that the enemy's strengths continue to lie in the general ignorance of the mass of the people and in the prevailing lack of consciousness enforced by long embedded stereotypes and prejudices in their ideology and thinking. At the same time, the crisis has exposed a terminal weakness in the structure of the economic status quo and in the enemy's narrative in defense of that structure: the untenable paradox of plenty producing poverty, caused by a profound technological revolution that is now in conflict with the economic system that gave it birth.

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1. King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Beacon: Toronto, 1968). ↵
 2. *Fortune Magazine*, "What If There's No Fix for High Unemployment?" (June 2010). ↵
 3. National Public Radio, Interview with Martin Ford, "*Attention White Collar Workers: The Robots are Coming for your Job.*" (May 18, 2015). ↵
 4. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume III* (Penguin: London, 1991). ↵
 5. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. ↵
 6. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Sterling: New York, 1987), 137. ↵

The Industrial Age to the Information Age

The poor today are being drawn from every segment of society, from white-collar workers to students to the homeless. This is especially true with the destruction of the middle-income strata. Given the current historical direction of development of the capitalist economy, the poor being both poor in property and poor in income only anticipate the social and economic position of increasing sections of the middle strata. However, the basic condition tying these two major groups—the poor and the middle—together is their common dispossession. In other words, they are both property-less, that is, their livelihoods are not derived from any ownership of capital investment in stocks, bonds, or derivatives, etc. The confluence of this dispossession with the technological transformations is making major sections of both groups absolutely superfluous.



The world is currently undergoing a comprehensive technological change from the industrial age to the information age. This has given the capitalist economy its globalized character, while at the same time eliminating increasing sections of the workforce. The overall consequence of this new technological revolution is the turning of the capitalist economy against itself in chronic crises. Researcher and analyst Jim Davis in his 1998-9 essay, “Rethinking Globalization,” gives a brief synopsis of some of the major technical and historical aspects of this new epochal boomerang:

The development of the microprocessor was the culmination of a long line of advances in everything from philosophy to electronics. The selection of the microprocessor as a pivot point is not entirely arbitrary, because its cheapness, lightness and versatility has made possible practical robotics, and has made possible breakthroughs in other fields by cheapening and extending the tools of scientific production. It, like other critical breakthroughs in biology, materials science, computing, and electronics, is a product of a widening understanding of the workings of the universe. The microprocessor has had a particularly radical impact at the heart of the production process. The widening understanding of nature has given us the ability to record workers’ skills and encode it into tools, and to play back the skills in the absence, for all practical purposes, of workers. The microprocessor is the device that activates the production process, and brings to life, as it were, dead labor—the knowledge and skills of past workers that has been encoded into the instruments of production. Through combinations of servo motors and switches this machinery is fleshed out ... In this sense, it is a prime mover of a new type, as was the steam engine—that central component of the production apparatus that sets the production process into motion.

This is not just a matter of replacing the worker-as-manipulator-of-materials with robotic equivalents. The English mathematician Alan Turing showed in the 1930s the possibility of constructing a machine capable of carrying out any computational task that a human being could do (with a few notable

exceptions). As George Caffentzis points out, the Turing machine proved that any skill, whether physical or mental, can be replicated mechanically —‘computing, like tailoring and weaving, is just another aspect of human labor-power that can be exploited to create surplus value and, if its value is higher than a rival machine, it can be replaced ...

These are technologies to squeeze the human being out of the labor process, not just in material production, but in mental production, and not just in the ‘advanced’ economies, but globally.

In summary, human beings are increasingly being rendered superfluous in mental and material production by these technologies. Most economists have long celebrated the role capitalism played in giving incentive to the growth of technology and productivity. Karl Marx spoke to the revolutionary role of the capitalists in competition with each other spurring on major technological developments. He showed in *Das Kapital*—in Chapter 13 on Cooperation, Chapter 14 on The Division of Labor and Manufacture, and Chapter 15 on Machinery and Large-Scale Industry—how capitalism brought about major growth in productivity from the tools of cooperation to machinery and the factory system. And in his 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, he stated:

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

Today, the capitalist economic system has given rise to the micro-electronic revolution. Known also as the “information revolution,” the “digital revolution,” the “high-tech” or “technotronic” era, this is clearly the most productive and the most comprehensive technological revolution in human history. It has heightened the productivity of the present economic system to a level far surpassing the

capability of all previous economic systems combined. Compared with the Neolithic or agricultural and Industrial revolutions, its transformation of civilization looms to be more rapid, more thoroughgoing, more global and far-reaching. In comparison, this revolution is already making the industrial revolutions of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries seem like “storms in a tea cup.” The major economic, social, and ideological consequences those revolutions had in human history are well documented. The consequences of this revolution portend to be many times more profound and widespread.

Although still in its early stages, the micro-electronic revolution is already transforming world production, circulation, transportation, communication, and the scope and speed of mathematical calculations. These mathematical calculations include the whole new world of what is called “high-frequency trading,” in which computer programs buy and sell huge amounts of stocks at breakneck speeds that are impossible for any human being to calculate. For instance, counting to 1 million at one number per second would take 12 ½ days, but counting to 1 trillion likewise would take 36,000 years. Movements of capital investments take place in magnitudes in matters of milliseconds and can turn a tiny dividend into billions of dollars in profits. Managing the movement of monies and commodities on a global scale is made possible only by this new information technology.

Global economy analyst Jerry Harris, in his 2001 essay “Information Technology and Global Class Formation,” pointed out:

Information technology (IT) has laid the foundation for global capitalism. It’s the electronic skeleton through which globalization works, connecting every performing part of the world economy ... Information capitalism has built the structure of the new economy through two revolutionary methods in the production of information and knowledge. The convergence of telecommunications and computers has made possible a global command and control structure for trans-nationals, building a global assembly line for manufacturing. Secondly, the same information systems have established 24-hour global financial markets that function in real-time, leading to world capital integration. In addition, information technologies are thoroughly imbedded in the tools and productive processes of the traditional industrial sector, as well as

consumer products, services, media and entertainment.

Most significantly, the new technologies have brought about a historic transition from labor-saving to labor-eliminating machinery. Labor-saving technology moved large numbers of workers from one sector of the economy to another sector and from production to services. Today, labor-eliminating devices are comprehensively and simultaneously ending the need for human labor, manual and mental, in every sector from robotized auto production to huge computerized agricultural combines, from ATM machines and on-line banking to people-less toll booths and more.

These are tremendous human achievements that have made possible the pursuit of even greater human happiness for all. A level of productivity has been attained in which less time is needed for manual labor, making it possible for more time to be committed to creative mental labor. This could allow for the fuller development and broader use of the unique intellectual capacity of the human race. Humankind has now reached a production capability where we can have a realizable vision of a society in which “all God’s children” have the right to not be poor, homeless, hungry and discriminated against because of sex and race, etc. However, this potential is not being realized for all humanity. Under the current exploitative and competitive economic system, the technological revolution is rendering increasing segments of human beings jobless and superfluous with no future for them and their children, while restricting the potential of these technologies to the few.

In Chapter 32 of *Das Capital*, Marx anticipates this phenomenon, writing how the “capitalist integument” turns into a fetter blocking the full application of the great productive potential of new technology for the advancement of human society and for the fuller development of human capacities and happiness. Since its inception, the capitalist economic structure has required the employment of an ever-expanding wage labor force with an ever-expanding capacity to purchase more and more goods and services. This has been the main means by which capital investments have realized the continual accumulation of profits and how those who own and control those investments have secured a degree of social and political control and stability. While this new labor-eliminating technology is creating the conditions for maintaining a system of profits, it is also placing itself in flat contradiction to the very logic of how the system must work by making more and

more people unable to buy anything.

Understanding the tremendous implications of this new situation is complicated by the fact that things and processes always assume appearances that hide and contradict their essential movement and nature. This is especially so when phenomena are newly arising. As Marx noted in Volume III of *Das Kapital*, “all science would be superfluous, if the appearance, the form and the nature of things were wholly identical.”

The enormous complexity of current developments makes this particularly true of these times. Although the micro-electronic revolution is far from having completely worked itself out, the essential character and direction of these times can and must be understood. It is already an overwhelming reality profoundly impacting at once every sector of the economy, all forms of communication, and every other aspect of life today. Human labor has to now compete with the lower cost and higher efficiency of computers and robots. What is more, the technological trend of industrial jobs lost is now manifesting around the world, as those labor-intensive sectors of world production and circulation processes that shifted globally to areas of cheaper labor seek out technological solutions to reduce or eliminate their labor costs. As former Labor Secretary Robert Reich explains in his May 29, 2009 blog post, “The Future of Manufacturing, GM, and American Workers (Part I)”:

First and most broadly, it doesn't make sense for America to try to maintain or enlarge manufacturing as a portion of the economy. Even if the U.S. were to seal its borders and bar any manufactured goods from coming in from abroad—something I don't recommend—we'd still be losing manufacturing jobs. That's mainly because of technology...When we think of manufacturing jobs, we tend to imagine old-time assembly lines populated by millions of blue-collar workers who had well-paying jobs with good benefits. But that picture no longer describes most manufacturing. I recently toured a U.S. factory containing two employees and 400 computerized robots. The two live people sat in front of computer screens and instructed the robots. In a few years this factory won't have a single employee on site, except for an occasional visiting technician who repairs and upgrades the robots ... Factory jobs are vanishing all

over the world. Even China is losing them... The Chinese are doing more manufacturing than ever, but they're also becoming far more efficient at it. They've shuttered most of the old state-run factories. Their new factories are chock full of automated and computerized machines. As a result, they don't need as many manufacturing workers as before ... Economists at Alliance Capital Management took a look at employment trends in twenty large economies and found that between 1995 and 2002 before the asset bubble and subsequent bust—twenty-two million manufacturing jobs disappeared. The United States wasn't even the biggest loser. We lost about 11% of our manufacturing jobs in that period, but the Japanese lost 16% of theirs. Even developing nations lost factory jobs: Brazil suffered a 20% decline, and China had a 15% drop.

This process, which is known as “deindustrialization” in the developed countries of Western Europe and North America, is beginning to take place in the more impoverished areas of the world, such as China and Southeast Asia. This has resulted in a highly exploited and increasingly excluded mass that is not simply international; it is *transnational*, immediately global, and governed by the same globalized capital market as is the United States. Accompanied, often, by the acceleration of urban migration, this process of labor-elimination is giving a new economic character to the class of the global poor and dispossessed.

"A New and Unsettling Force"

During November and December 1967, Dr. King delivered the Massey Lecture series over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In these lectures he talked about how the poor and dispossessed, if united, can become “a new and unsettling force” capable of awakening the masses of the American people out of a complacent acceptance of the cruel injustice of poverty in the midst of plenty. The new economic position of the poor and dispossessed as indicated above is giving new potential to this analysis.

Where once the exploitative system of capitalist production thrived on the ongoing development of advanced technologies, now this development is becoming its nemesis. The capitalist system and the new micro-electronics technological revolution that it has brought about has created new conditions that are giving rise to a new class formation of the poor and dispossessed. This newly composed and globalized class is capable of becoming a powerful leading social force for abolishing and transforming the very economic system that is giving it birth and growth. This is much like the turnabout in the 19th century novel *Frankenstein*, in which Dr. Frankenstein created a “monster” that became his own nemesis.

These transformations in technology have given way to a qualitatively different definition of who is “poor” in this era. In this connection there are three major unprecedented factors that the poor and dispossessed embody today:

1. The poor are the product of the most rapid and comprehensive technological revolution in human history. These new technologies are not simply labor-saving, but are labor-eliminating. This has resulted in the poor no longer gravitating toward the position and living standards of the employed and exploited industrial worker, but toward the position and lowering living standards of the permanently unemployed and excluded. This labor-eliminating character of the new technological revolution contributes in two

major ways to driving down the wages of those remaining in employment to levels of impoverishment. They are being more and more compelled to compete with 1) the lowering living standards of the unemployed and underemployed, and 2) the lowering costs of constantly revolutionizing computer and robotic production technologies.

2. Poverty and the poor today have to be understood as the products of an unprecedented concentration of wealth on a global scale, i.e., the formation of global capital. We cannot understand the current crises of hunger, homelessness, inadequate education and healthcare, un- and under-employment, etc., without understanding the massive wealth accumulated and centralized into hands of the likes of the Walton family, Bill Gates, Carlos Slim and Warren Buffet. In other words, you cannot be against poverty unless you are also against the concentration and centralization of wealth. This unprecedented concentration and centralization of wealth is made possible and necessary by a society where a wealthy few have ownership and control of the commanding heights of the economy, that is, of the major institutions of production, retail, and finance. This, in turn, has made possible and necessary the amassing of global capital by those few at the expense of the technological intensification of the economic exploitation, which is ever more conditioned by an exclusion from the economy of an increasing impoverished many.
3. Unlike the poor in previous periods in history, the poor today represents the total breakdown of society and its economy. The problem of poverty today is not due to a lack of productivity, a lack of material resources, or a lack of wealth creation. Instead, the expansion of globalized poverty is produced by a social edifice that is constituted on unheard of abundance. Within this newly globalized class of the poor and dispossessed is the embodiment of and reflect a strategic point of connection of every major social issue from racial and gender inequalities, to the problems of the military and prison industrial complexes. The interconnection of these issues, if recognized, reveals the dominant mechanisms of social control that are employed to preserve an edifice that produces the polarity of extreme wealth on the one side and massive poverty on the other. For instance, the worsening economic and social position of the poor and dispossessed objectively counters the prevailing

narrow notions of racial oppression and gender inequality. These notions, reflecting the viewpoint of the petty bourgeoisie or “middle income strata,” separate the problems of race and gender from the problems of the economy and class exploitation. The political ideologists and strategists of global capital have used this deeply embedded view to promote a disuniting “identity politics” to preempt or prevent the creation of the critical mass necessary to solve these interconnected problems altogether.

In other words, due to fundamental shifts in the economy, the poor today are not the poor of yesterday. For example, in the history of the United States, every generation since the abolition of slavery and the slaveholding power has experienced a relatively steady rise in their wages and living standards. This trend paralleled, and was partly based on, a steady rise in industrial productivity. Over roughly the same period, Western Europe and Japan experienced a similar rise in their standards of living. These rising living standards resulted partly from the production of cheap raw materials acquired through the super exploitation of the so-called “Third World”, which produced lower labor costs and meager living standards in those countries. For instance, the magnates of the auto industry have been securing high profits through the systematic exploitation of an international workforce, which has included southeast Asian laborers and Detroit autoworkers. The overall production costs and wage packages combined the extremely oppressive conditions of the poverty/slave wages of rubber plantation workers of Malaya, which help pay for the political allegiance of the so called “middle class” incomes of the auto workers of Michigan. In no unambiguous terms Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois described the super exploitation of “dark proletariat” of so-called “Third World” in his magnum opus, *Black Reconstruction*,

That dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States—that great majority of mankind, on whose bent and broken backs rest today the founding stones of modern industry—shares a common destiny; it is despised and rejected by race and color; paid a wage below the level of decent living; driven, beaten, prisoned and enslaved in all but name; spawning the world’s raw

material and luxury—cotton, wool, coffee, tea, cocoa, palm oil, fibers, spices, rubber, silks, lumber, copper, gold, diamonds, leather—how shall we end the list and where? All these are gathered up at prices lowest of the low, manufactured, transformed and transported at fabulous gain; and the resultant wealth is distributed and displayed and made the basis of world power and universal dominion and armed arrogance in London and Paris, Berlin and Rome, New York and Rio de Janeiro. . . .

Out of the exploitation of the dark proletariat comes the Surplus Value filched from human breasts, which in cultured lands the Machine and harnessed Power veil and conceal . . .

In that industrial era of capitalism, the poor constituted from time to time a “reserve army of the unemployed.” This reserve army was a necessary part of a workforce centered on the mass employment of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the factory system. Some of that army was periodically thrown back into employment for purposes of expanding production and profits. This made possible and necessary the “national Keynesian welfare state”—which included unemployment compensation and poor relief, the purpose of which was to hold in reserve this army for the future.

Today, however, the reserve army of the unemployed has become as superfluous as the labor that is being eliminated by technology, leaving increasing segments of the workforce structurally unemployed. This growing demographic acts as an anchor that pulls down the wages of those still employed to below poverty levels. The result is the most horrific and relentless “race-to-bottom” exploitation of the workforce worldwide, as companies and sectors that still need to employ cheap labor are now in immediate and intense competition with companies employing more efficient and relatively cheaper electronic technology. In other words, the wages of human labor are now having to compete globally with the lowering costs of computers and robots.

This new poor is far from being what Marx called a “*lumpen*-proletariat,” which arose from the break-up of the old feudal classes that society could not fully integrate into the arising capitalist production process. It is also not the so-called “criminal black underclass,” as it is manifesting in all races, places and sectors. It

is, rather, a new social formation arising out of the conditions produced by the beginning breakdown of the capitalist economy: a class of the poor and dispossessed constituted from all other classes and strata, standing in opposition to the class of global capital whose worldwide accumulation of wealth knows no national, ethnic, racial or gendered borders. The economic position of the poor and dispossessed today lies at the Achilles's Heel or weak point of every major social and political issue of global capitalism, be it related to youth and the children, race, gender, geography, jobs, food, water, healthcare, education, or the climate, etc.

The centrality and significance of this development finds particular expression in the approximately 20 to 30 trillion dollars worth of newly globalized capital rifling around the world seeking the greatest return in a real-time rapidity with the simple tap of a computer key. Functioning in this new way, global capital has acquired a freedom and power unmatched historically, forcing every nationally based economic interest, national government and urban establishment to ultimately yield and kowtow to it.

Exploitation of Human Labor in the Era of Electronics

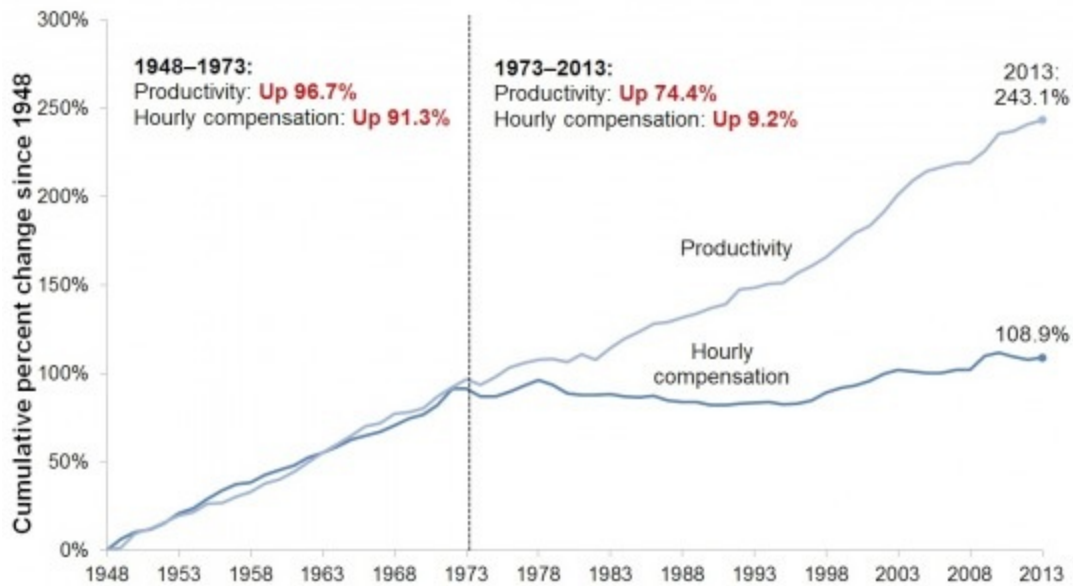
Taking a closer look at how changes in the fundamental relationship between capital and labor is instructive in grasping how momentous these times are and why the creation of a global, growing class of the poor and dispossessed is of central political strategic importance. In the new global context of growing mass impoverishment, it remains the necessary role of the poor to unite itself in order to build the organization and influence needed to help move the middle-income strata of the population to become politically conscious of their own economic position and to see the common dispossession they share with the poor. Rather than an appeal to charity **for** the poor, it is through this commonality **with** the poor that the middle will join the fight to end poverty and its many manifestations. This task of uniting the poor so it can become this catalyzing force becomes all the more crucial as the wealthy attempt to win much of the middle strata themselves, to turn them against the poor, in the hopes of safeguarding their (the middle's) current standard of living, even as this is being eroded.

History has shown that the movement of capital necessarily creates and exploits its opposite, i.e., the movement of wage labor. The wages paid to the laborer only cover the cost of those things necessary to keep the worker and his or her family alive, even if barely so. Of the total labor the laborer puts into the production of goods and services, the wages received only compensate for a part of that labor. The rest is unpaid, from which profits are derived and capital accumulated. This is a necessary relation in which capital has to compete with other capital in exploiting the laborer for more profits. Otherwise it ceases ultimately to exist as capital. To live the laborer has to get hired by capital to get paid a wage to ensure at least a minimum subsistence. Capital is the condition of the existence and development of hired labor, and hired labor is the same for capital. Essentially, unless one owns the social means of production, one has to find a job to eat and provide for one's basic needs. This is the condition of existence of the dispossessed or property-less,

whether poor or middle income, and it is the socio-economic position of the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

Therefore, since the births of both capital and labor, they have been locked in “mortal combat” against each other—sometimes hidden, sometimes openly. This relentless struggle between these two basic social forces has been and remains the hinge of modern history, conditioning the issues and struggles of every social stratum. Capital's competitive use of the new technological revolution has intensified these struggles for purposes of maximizing profits. The results thus far have been the unprecedented accumulation of wealth by a tiny group of billionaires, who in turn have used this wealth to strengthen their political power and controlling influence. This has enabled this class of rulers to bend every major struggle and institution to meet their economic interests and satisfy the aims of their political policies. This class reality was openly affirmed by one of the world's three richest global capitalists, Warren Buffet, who admitted, “There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war and we're winning.”^[1]

The implications of this relationship today are broader than income inequality, which has been the focus of the current popular and mainstream discourse on emerging economic realities and gross disparities. Indeed, given a communications revolution that leaves no stone unturned, the ideologists, analysts, and strategists of the ruling class are engaging the mainstream media in discussion around this most obvious manifestation of capitalism today. However, the purpose of this much talked about admission has been to divert attention from the deeper cause of this disparity: an economically antagonistic structure of exploiting and exploited social forces based on the deeper inequality of economic assets and the control, ownership or possession of the productive mechanisms of society.^[2]



Note: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. “Net productivity” is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis data

The relationship between the technological advances of this era and these structural relations – and their historic import – was recently remarked on in the above-referenced interview with Ford:

DAVIES: To what extent is the advance of technology and this kind of automation contributing to the concentrations of wealth and income we’re seeing in the U.S.?

FORD: Well, I think it’s having a tremendous impact. What we’ve seen is that, you know, it used to be up until around 1973 or so that as technology progressed and productivity rose, workers – average workers captured most of that productivity increase in the form of higher wages. And that was true from the end of World War II up until around 1973. But then somewhere around that point, these two lines decoupled. And what happens is that productivity continues to increase as technology advances, but workers aren’t getting any more raises at all after that point, so all of the fruits of innovation and of technological progress are really being captured by business owners and by

investors – in other words, by the people at the top of the income distribution. So this is one of the most important drivers, I think, of income inequality. It's not the only thing. There are obviously other things going on in terms of political changes and in terms of the fact that unions have been wiped out and in terms of globalization and so forth. But technology is certainly one of the most important things that's going on. And as we look forward from this point, we need to keep in mind that this technology is going to continue to accelerate. So I think that there's every reason to believe that it's going to become the primary driver of inequality in the future, and things are very likely to get even more extreme than they are now.^[3]

Because of how technology has been utilized in the capitalist production process, i.e., to eliminate labor, we have, in fact, come to a point where the production system has become “too productive.” Increased productivity and increased joblessness is thereby producing declining “final demand” for surplus goods and services. This is forcing capital to move out of the “real economy” to the speculative economy in search of profits. For instance, in 2004 the nuts and bolts automotive sector of the Ford Motor Corporation recorded profits of \$850 million before taxes—while its financial sector, Ford Credit, wracked up a record pre-tax profit of nearly \$5 billion.^[4] For the most part this trend has resulted in the investment of global capital and corporations into more speculative areas of the financial markets, which do not produce or employ on the level of the real economy. But, under the current conditions this shift has become a necessity if corporations are to remain profitable and keep their shareholders.

Indeed, new technical capacity has made it possible for a relatively small handful of manufacturing firms and giant farms to overproduce unheard of quantities of merchandise, far outstripping the world's stagnating and contracting purchasing capacity. Today the over-extension of the debt structure on a global scale reflects and contributes to the intensification of this economic antagonism. Investors therefore have had to turn more to computer-aided speculation to acquire higher profits.

1. *New York Times* (November 26, 2006). ↩

2. These assets are essentially the possession or ownership of the controlling interests or investments in stocks, bonds and other forms of profit-making property. ↵
3. National Public Radio, Interview with Martin Ford, “*Attention White Collar Workers: The Robots are Coming for your Job.*” (May 18, 2015). ↵
4. Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy* (New York: Penguin, 2006). ↵

Derivatives and Debt

Derivatives

Confronted with the unprecedented downward pressure on the rate of profits in the production process, global capital has had to translate its tremendously accumulated wealth into an expanded debt structure and derivative speculative operations. These, however, have only temporarily postponed global instability, as the world witnessed in the “Great Recession” and its aftermath.

The monstrous growth and manipulation of exotic financial instruments, particularly derivatives, have turned speculation into the leading form of global capital today. In other words, making money by wholesale gambling through the buying and selling of these financial innovations has far eclipsed the traditional functions of speculation. While speculative activities were part of the capitalist economic system historically, today’s highly computerized economy has made it possible and necessary to speculate on an unprecedented scale and speed. There has been an explosive creation, investment and innovation in financial instruments and speculative derivative activities, especially by hedge funds, which make huge bets on the rise and fall of commodity prices, the volatility of the exchange values of national currencies, bull markets and bankruptcies of major corporations, and even the defaults of whole governments. Indeed, the nominal value of derivatives has mushroomed five-fold from \$100 trillion to \$516 trillion globally over the last five years. This dwarfed the Gross Global Product, which is today \$70.16 trillion.^[1] Speculation, of course, produces no new wealth but is only centralizing it into the hands of a few banks and billionaires.

Debt

Debt and banks have long predated the system of capital formation and

accumulation. Yet, today the extending of loans in terms of the buying of corporate and government bonds and the growth of all forms of consumer credits (including student debt) have reached unheard of quantitative levels. The loaning of bank capital or credit to production capital and speculative capital gives greater “leverage” by enlarging the amount of capital invested for purposes of greater profits. However, the emerging new technological conditions are creating tremendous downward pressures on profit rates particularly in the production sector and is resulting in the stagnation and slashing of wages.

All functions of government—from legislative, judicial, and executive domestic activities to foreign diplomacy, from police to intelligence and military operations—are paid for through taxes drawn ultimately from wages. The new technology revolution with its elimination of wage labor allows for the lowering of wages for the remaining workforce, which leads to the stagnation and decline of tax revenue. This is increasing governmental deficits. The government on all levels is therefore compelled to sell or issue bonds—federal, state, municipal—to attain loans or credit to compensate for the lack of tax revenue. This in turn is giving rise to huge governmental debt and budgetary crises.

The financial crisis set off in 2007-8 is the by-product of the worst global economic storm since the major cyclical overproduction crisis in the 1930s. It has revealed an unprecedented growth of a huge and debilitating personal, commercial and governmental debt structure. The June 2009 issue of *The Economist* pointed out:

Across the rich world governments are borrowing vast amounts as the recession reduces tax revenue and spending mounts—bail-outs, unemployment benefits and stimulus plans. New figures from economists at the IMF suggest that the public debt of the ten leading rich countries will rise from 78% of GDP in 2007 to 114% by 2014. These governments will then owe around \$50,000 for every one of their citizens.^[2]

Ryan Avent, economics editor for *The Economist*, wrote in a February 2010 article that:

Currently we’re looking at deficit levels at around 10% of gross domestic

product, and that for the United States is quite high, relative to the post-war level ... [However] ... if you compare U.S. debt levels to some other developed countries, then we're doing quite well. There are countries like Japan, or we hear a lot about Greece and Spain, which are having some serious troubles in capital markets funding their debt. They're looking at debt ratios over 100 percent of GDP. So they owe more than they produce in a year.^[3]

Regarding personal debt, economist Rick Wolff said in a March 2009 Real News interview that:

When the great depression started in the early 1930s the average level of debt of an American family was about 20% of its annual income. The average level of debt of an American family today is 130% of its annual income.^[4]

Moreover, in terms of the present dangers of federal government deficits and debt, the current president of the powerful and highly informed Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, and fellow CFR member, Roger C. Altman warned:

For all the commentary on deficits and debt, the danger is greater than most Americans understand. Not even the US can indefinitely run up debt at the current, astronomical rate. If our leaders do not rein it in, global capital markets will ultimately force a solution. In other words, adjustment will either be done by the US or to it. The latter scenario would mean ugly budget changes: larger than necessary, indiscriminate and imposed virtually overnight. No one can predict when markets might move on America, but it is a question of when, not if.

The result would be an age of American austerity. No category of federal spending, from defense to Medicare, would be spared. Taxes on most or all individuals and businesses would rise. Economic growth would slow. The consequences for America's international role, and for world stability, would be profoundly negative.

America's debt is piling up at a rate not seen, outside of the Second World War, since record-keeping began in 1792. Federal debt has nearly tripled in the past 10 years, from \$3,500 billion to more than \$9,000 billion. The ratio of debt

to gross domestic product has doubled. Federal debt, of course, is the dollar-for-dollar product of deficits. Each of the past three years has seen trillion-dollar deficits, each larger in both absolute and proportionate terms than ever recorded before 2008.

Unfortunately, this picture gets worse.^[5]

This US budgetary crisis is more than matched by the sovereign debt crisis in Europe.

Ultimately, the fundamental impetus for this increase of governmental and private debt has been the maximization of profit in relationship to the accelerated leveling and lowering of wages. This has resulted in, among other things, mounting governmental budgetary crises from diminishing tax revenues on the municipal, state, national, and global levels, which, in turn, can be attributed largely to the permanent elimination of especially middle-income manufacturing jobs. The growth of debt had served to temporarily prop up purchasing power, particularly in the US, to compensate for stagnant wages.

The global dimension of the implications of these factors is important—the US market represents over 20% of the global market, and this country has been a major purchaser in the global economy, especially of exports from “developing” countries such as China. Meanwhile, China itself has been propping up the limited growth of low wage manufacturing jobs there. This economic interdependence contributes greatly to the unstable and crisis-ridden character of global capitalism.

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1. Central Intelligence Agency, “Economy: overview” in *The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html<>. ↵
 2. *The Economist*, “The Biggest Bill in History” (June 2009), 13. ↵
 3. Ryan Avent, *Economist Magazine* (February 2010). ↵
 4. Rick Wolff, *The Real News* (March 7, 2009 interview). ↵
 5. Richard Haass and Rodger C. Altman, “Indebted America Risks an Age of Austerity,” *Financial Times* (January 23, 2011). ↵

Global Crises and "Cracks": The "Dam Breaking"

In response to these increasingly excruciating conditions, we are witnessing incipient struggles and outbreaks worldwide for economic survival. However these are only seepages in the cracks of the global dam that is about to break economically, socially, and politically with sustained mass outrage. The possibility of this type of outbreak today is greater even than the economic, social and political events that led to the 1965 Watts Uprising. Watts inaugurated the mass upheavals in the impoverished black ghettos throughout the United States during the latter half of the 1960s. This explosive situation has to be the continual nightmares of the political strategists of the ruling class, as the prolonged unemployment and deteriorating economic situations that conditioned those uprisings have returned on a globalized scale. Today these conditions are not limited to the black ghettos, and they are now devastating many other communities, particularly increasing sections of whites in the so-called "developed" world.

The relation between capital and wage labor remains fundamental to society as it is presently structured.. It is, in other words, the pivot of conditions as they unfold objectively. This process is caused by socio-economic necessities and will develop independently of people's consciousness or even policy prescriptions. Despite prevailing public opinion, excessive greed, mistaken or mean-spirited policies and related economic theories are not the root causes of the conditions producing worldwide poverty and human misery. While the policies of Friedrich Hayek's neo-liberalism calling for unregulated "free markets", advocated by conservatives, and neo-Keynesian policies calling for more government market regulations, advocated by self-proclaimed "progressives," have served to exacerbate the fundamental problems with today's economic structure and resulting social ills, they are not their root causes. This is evident from the fact that these policies have been unable to point to the new possibilities and the necessary social forces leading to the solution of the present economic, social, and political problems.

In past eras of economic hardship, the old industry-centered working class was immediately confronted in their struggles over wages and working conditions with an employer. Today's new social force of the poor and dispossessed is compelled to directly and politically confront an entire system of economic exploitation that is no longer concentrated in just one place or one workplace. Moreover, out of the current crisis, there are hints of what amounts to an advocacy of more fascistic and austere policies retaining elements of both neo-Keynesianism and neoliberalism dressed in various colorful populist garbs. Both Hitler and Mussolini were "socialists" who nonetheless militantly gave their life for the capitalist economic system and fascist policies designed to enforce and expand that system.

The social consequences today of the micro-electronic revolution are somewhat analogous to the effects of the invention and the large-scale introduction of the mechanical cotton picker in the 1940s-50s. The mechanical cotton picker could out-pick 50 human cotton pickers. This made it possible and necessary for the rich cotton entrepreneurs to cut production costs to amass immense profits. The production and employment of these harvesting machines led to massive job loss, and evictions and migrations of millions of both black and white southern sharecroppers.

However, one of the major social effects of the mechanical cotton pickers, combined with legalized housing segregation, was the creation of larger concentrations of urban black communities and bigger black churches in the so-called ghettos. This historic transition from a scattered rural black population to a newly concentrated urbanized population helped set the stage for the mass Civil Rights Movement. This created the critical mass necessary to end the well entrenched de jure Jim Crow. For instance, in the earlier stages of the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus Boycott took place as a yearlong campaign with major media coverage. It could not have been fought out in the way it was without these objective economic and demographic factors. These factors decidedly shaped the conditions that made possible the conscious and successful tactical combination of mass direct action with maneuvers in the federal court system. The tactical victory of the Montgomery Bus Boycott gave legitimacy to the call for the strategic establishment of a core group of leaders, which formed the Southern Christian Leadership Council. This formation united leaders mostly from across the South,

which in turn contributed largely to the successful building of the mass Civil Rights Movement.

Similarly, the microelectronics revolution is now eliminating whole sections of manual and mental labor in all sectors of the economy—production, commerce, and financial services. Under the present economic system, this is giving rise to a new and greater mass impoverishment and dispossession regardless of race. Most significantly, in the United States, it is making possible and necessary the building of a new mass movement to end all poverty led by the have-nots as a powerful social force united and organized across color lines and all other social barriers. This, of course, has worldwide significance because of the current superpower status of the US state.

In launching the 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King anticipated the tremendous potential of this new social force today to awaken and lead a larger social movement involving other social strata to abolish poverty. He recognized that uniting and organizing this social group could become a force that had to be reckoned with. He called it "a new and unsettling force," the "nonviolent army" or "freedom church of the poor." Most strategically he pointed out that this new social force of the poor and dispossessed had no stake in the social and economic status quo. This force is emerging largely out of the destruction of the old industry-based capitalist world. And at the center around which this newly globalized and increasingly impoverished working mass gravitates is a growing permanently unemployed population. This new fundamental fact of the present technological age cannot be overemphasized. For this social force the economic status quo has become a system threatening its very life and livelihood. It is therefore locked in a life and death struggle against a class who has vested interests in maintaining at least the fundamentals of the status quo. The socio-economic position of this new social force compels it to kill the system before the system kills it.

The direction and dedication that Dr. King both practiced and preached in his launching the 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign are the indispensable qualities of the leaders we must develop. We need many Martin Luther Kings today. The identification, education, and unification of leaders who are the teachers and organizers is the first and most difficult step or stage in the strategic process of uniting and organizing the poor and dispossessed masses. In this respect, Antonio

Gramsci was correct when he stated:

One speaks of generals without an army, but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals. So much is this true that an already existing army is destroyed if it loses its generals, while the existence of a united group of generals who agree among themselves and have common aims soon creates an army even where none exists.^[1]

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* ↵

Conclusion: Rise of the Globalized Dispossessed

Old ideas and old habits of struggle and organization serve to block the development of consciousness beyond the fight around immediate issues or the effects of major social and economic problems. They have served to reinforce the ignorance of especially newly emerging leaders of the poor and dispossessed, obscuring the cause and cure of the diseases of poverty and inequality.

In the United States, old ideas and old ways of thinking and doing things are largely limited to the struggles for trade union rights, civil rights, and community improvements. These concessions only deal with the effects of struggles breaking out and not their cause, and therefore are only temporary tactical victories. Even though these struggles have been quite radical at times, concessions won from the existing power structure in these types of struggles have the potential, and can be used, to divert from the strategic goal of uniting the dispossessed as a new and unsettling force. Further complicating today's struggle are the misleading influences of progressive corporate philanthropy, which express a militant and limited outcry for charity championed by liberal representatives of the power structure and their extended networks of non-profits and non-government organizations (NGOs). But this call for charity has served to preempt and restrict the struggles and organization of the poor and dispossessed to simply managing the effects of poverty and not abolishing their cause. Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author, once explained the thinking behind a charity that preempts change: "I sit on a person's back and persuade myself and him [or her] that I will do everything necessary to alleviate his condition except get off his back."^[1]

In his 1967 "Beyond Vietnam" speech, Dr. King echoed this penetrating critique:

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice, which produces beggars needs

restructuring.

Speaking to older developments that paralleled the new developments of our times, he further stated:

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe, [people] are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before.^[2]

This unjust edifice that continues to undergo new developments is not only necessarily producing beggars, but is at the same time producing powerful billionaires. Significantly this process of polarization is asserting itself in both more developed and less developed countries. The recent crisis that erupted in 2008 has brought to the foreground not only the plight but also the fight of the poor and dispossessed. It has triggered outbreaks and struggles on every continent of the globe. The crisis has shown that all these protests—whether in Wisconsin or South Africa, the Middle East or the UK, Greece or Chile—have a common cause. They are fighting an economic edifice that is mass-producing globalized dislocations and deprivations. These fights are taking place despite ethnic differences, varying locations, and racial and gender income disproportions—which have been hypocritically seized upon by learned pundits and analysts to cover up their underlying and unsettling commonalities.

New conditions brought about by technological revolutions have always given rise to the development of new classes or social groupings as leading forces for social transformation. This has required the adoption of new strategic and tactical approaches to leadership. The industrial revolution of the nineteenth-century ultimately created a new industry-based capitalist class that became the leading social force in the economic, social, and political revolutions that ended feudal societies. The beginnings of the struggles of the industrial workers, particularly in Europe, in turn gave rise to trade union activism and other forms of defensive struggles. Those struggles also set the stage for creation and dissemination of the social sciences and Marxist thought, and allowed for the possibility of those struggles to go on the offensive for real social change.

In the new electronics era, the newly dispossessed class is also being compelled to adopt new ways of thinking and fighting, and therefore new forms of organization. Global mass civil disobedience, sustained and synchronized disruptive tactics, seem to be the order of the day. They are more directly targeting the governmental apparatus and less targeting the point of production by withholding labor. Leaders must stay connected to the growing daily struggles of the impoverished and study the arising patterns and forms of these struggles. Through this connection and clarity they will be able to advance those tactics, including combinations of forms of struggle, that are most appropriate to today's new conditions. These tactics can then be advanced in the strategic direction of uniting the impoverished as the leading force for social change. History shows that experiences of struggle are a powerful teacher. Therefore giving proper consideration to the relation of old and new tactics, and their possible combination, is indispensable to ensure the most effective and efficient confluence of new conditions with a new and accurate consciousness of those conditions.

In this regard, attention and analysis must be focused on the current patterns of the worldwide responses of the poor and dispossessed to the global crisis. Their growing struggles are responding to a common economic devastation—as manifested in worsening health care crises, housing foreclosures, increasing homelessness, job and wage erosion, social services cuts, governmental crises, etc. As in the birthing of every social movement, skirmishes, scattered protests and fights breakout before coagulating into a united and powerful force.

However fledgling and dispersed, and however distorted and blacked out by major media, these social responses must be the focus of leaders committed to ending poverty today. They must see past the surface appearance of these struggles, so as to assess the actual reality of emergent and persistent patterns of the desperate battles of the dispossessed. For example, a closer examination of the mid-1980s to early 1990s national organizing drive of the National Union of the Homeless shows that it was, at its height, an illegal housing takeover “movement.” It was essentially a campaign to save the lives of homeless families by means of a more or less conscious and organized fight, which expressed what the homeless unemployed and underemployed were already being compelled to do all over the country. They were illegally occupying vacant properties, housing and empty lots. This lesson from

recent history provides some important tactical insights for today's times, when we are beginning to see throughout the world the reemergence of similar patterns of forced actions due to, among other things, the present foreclosure and job loss crises.

Dr. King once pointed out, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."^[3] Leaders who are arising out of the struggles of the global poor and dispossessed must be educated and trained to take into account new developments and patterns of struggle and what they represent in the broader trajectory of global economic trends and momentum. They must be involved in these fights in such a way as to ensure that these struggles for survival are not limited to attaining immediate and temporary concessions, nor turned against themselves. And they must constantly strive, both strategically and tactically, to also turn these battles into "schools of war" for raising mass consciousness. By these means, a global network of leaders can be formed committed to, and capable of, recognizing and realizing the possibilities and necessities of building a broad and powerful social movement to end poverty.

We are witnessing outbreaks and struggles in a new technologically interconnected world. Many of these outbreaks and struggles are manifestations of the rise of a newly globalized class of the poor and dispossessed with the capability of uniting and coordinating their fights and conducting global campaigns. The new possibilities of a global movement of the poor and dispossessed poses the ultimate nightmare and threat to the wealth and dominance of global capital.

Here again, the words of Dr. King are still prescient and prophetic, anticipating principles of leadership applicable to the present globalized world situation:

The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both white and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against the injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If

they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life.^[4]

Uniting the poor and dispossessed “to take action together” across color, and all other lines of division, is the indispensable task of political strategy and tactics in this historical period. The first step in uniting the struggles of the poor and dispossessed is to unite and develop leaders who are committed to building and fighting for this unity of action. In this process the poor and dispossessed are moved to the forefront of the struggle to build a broad and powerful social movement, taking in hand the advanced revolutionary technology in its various forms to abolish all poverty forever. This is the content and character of the globalized network of leaders that must be developed in these initial stages of this new period of world history.

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1. Leo Tolstoy, *Civil Disobedience & Non-Violence* (1886). ↵
 2. King, “Beyond Vietnam,” Riverside Church (1967). ↵
 3. King, “The Purpose of Education,” *The Maroon Tiger*, Morehouse College (1947). ↵
 4. King, “Trumpet of Conscience” (1968). ↵

Appendix 1: It's Not Enough to Be Angry: An Interview with Willie Baptist

Interviewed by John Wessel-McCoy for Organizing Upgrade, June 2009

I. Present Situation

Any approach to social change, organizing and leadership development has to be based on your assessment of the situation and of the problem. If you have one assessment or one diagnosis, you're going to have a particular prescription and a particular approach to the solution. Either we're dealing with a teddy bear or we're dealing with a grizzly bear, and either estimate will determine your set of tactics, your organizing approach. If you think you're dealing with a teddy bear and in reality it's a grizzly bear coming at you, you're going to be in trouble. So this estimate of the situation is absolutely crucial to the process.

I've learned some important lessons in my experience of having, for example, helped organized among homeless people in the Detroit area where we established a local chapter of the National Union of the Homeless. In Detroit, many of the homeless people had been stable "middle class" autoworkers, but they had undergone a dislocation as a result of the computerization and automation of auto production. What you find, throughout the entire economy, is a gigantic and unprecedented technological revolution that is shaping sources of income, places of work, but also communities. Communities are undergoing tremendous changes. So if you organize from prevailing influences of organizing that served the past, and you've had this tremendous change that has taken place, then your organizing approach and your tactics are not going to fit the new situation.

I don't think you would have had certain social theories such as Marxism or industrial unionism if it they were not shaped by tremendous technological changes that were taking place back during the latter 18th century and in the 19th century. Before the Industrial Revolution, you had the feudal agricultural societies that

dictated an approach towards organizing different from when the industrial revolutions took place. Changes in our times are analogous to those changes, but I think it's on a scale more comprehensive and a rapidity much greater than ever before. Deindustrialization alongside of the growth of urban populations globally is historically unprecedented. I think we're dealing with a grizzly bear, because there're tremendous dislocations happening in communities today, and I think the current crisis punctuates this problem. Our organizing has to reflect that.

II. Pitfalls of Large Parts of the Left

You can see the continuing influences on large parts of the Left of the 1930s trade union organizing and of the 1960s community organizing, the latter of which was heavily shaped by the influences of the Civil Rights Movement and the world's National Liberation Movements. There's a saying that "most generals are always fighting the last war." That is what we're finding in the Left. We're dealing with a totally new situation. In this new day you must do things in a new way.

Last year, the food riots that took place in more than 30 countries globally had the immediacy that the Watts riots had in the 1960s. Our approach today has to reflect these new elements, elements that didn't exist in 1930s and 1960s. On the "Left," there's a tendency to categorize different issues, different fronts of struggle—put them in different silos—and approach them from the perspective of solely organizing among this ethnic community or organizing among that trade union, or among women as a separate group. Although organizing in the different fronts of struggle is very important, the perspective in approaching them has to change given the changed situation. The problems today are problems that revolve around the growing concentration of wealth on a global level on the one hand, and the spreading of poverty on a global level on the other. Our organizing strategy and tactics have to be based in a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of this fundamental polarization that defines our times. This is crucial because to limit your perspective as to the fundamental problem and solution is to ultimately make your effort aimed at leveraging pity, not power. At most, this results in sort of a "militant do-gooderism" or charity paraded as "social justice" or "the end to extreme poverty." It amounts to much corporate funding of efforts that only strike

down the leaves and branches of the problem leaving its roots untouched, only for the leaves and branches to grow back in more devastating and fascist forms.

In history, different periods were defined by major social polarities. And the class forces or elements of class forces that were most dislocated or most affected by that problem had to be organized and placed at the forefront in order for that problem to be brought to a solution. The struggle against the British Crown in this country had to be led by the colonists, because they were the ones who were immediately affected. There was opposition to the British Crown coming from Spain, from France, even from within the United Kingdom. And these forces played a role in the struggle against the British Crown. But it was the colonists in that particular period that had to be at the forefront—that had to exhibit initiative—to actually galvanize and bring those other forces into play. The French support of that struggle was very important, but it was all predicated on the fight—and the military and political organization of the fight—by the American colonists themselves.

The overall struggle against slavery in this country had to be led by the struggle of those forces oppressed by the slavocracy, that is, the slaves of course, but also the industrial classes of the North. These most adversely affected social forces had to find some organizational expressions and thereby place their needs and demands at the forefront in order for that struggle to be brought to a successful conclusion. Take the struggle for women's suffrage. Can you imagine a struggle for women's suffrage led by men? Those forces most affected by the problem have to be at the forefront. They know when their pain is relieved.

In organizing today around the issues of poverty and the issues of extreme wealth concentrated in a few hands, to resolve this problem, social hegemonic leadership must come from that segment of the population that is the most directly affected, that is, the poor and dispossessed sections in the struggle. Our organizing and developing leaders today must first focus on uniting this segment. This must be the only basis of developing and uniting revolutionary leaders.

III. Power and Organizing

Part of an accurate estimate of the social problems we face involves power relationships. In the National Union of the Homeless we coined the slogan, "Power

grows from organization ... Freedom is never given. It must be taken. And therefore you only get what you are organized to take!" All of history—US and world history—confirms this statement. Are you able to generate a critical mass of power to counter the existing power relationships to make change? We've got to be real about that. Otherwise we're playing games. As Malcolm X once stated, "power only respects power ... power never takes a step back except in the face of more power."

A lot of the Left tends to avoid this question, but you can't get away from it. One of the problems we've had in American history is that, although there have been a lot of social movements over time, they have been basically divided into two types of movements. One, dealing with power changes: shifting power relationships, a social-economic group or section of a class out of power taking power. Here I'm not talking about the regular electoral changes in government administrative and legislative offices. And the other type of movement generates a tremendous amount of activity but ultimately results in reinforcing the position of major social elements in existing power relationships by social reform. They allowed for a modification or an adjustment of existing power relations, not a change in those power relations.

For example, the Anti-Slavery Movement, including the Civil War, resulted in power changes in terms of the slaveocracy being taken out of power and the Northern industrial classes being put into power. Or the American Revolution: the Tory elements within the colonies connected to the British Crown were in power. And what happened as a consequence of that struggle was that you had a change of places in terms of power relationships. But most of the other major struggles—the Women's Suffrage Movement, the industrial movements of the 30s, the Civil Rights Movement—these movements were reform movements, but they didn't result in power changes. We have to look at history and see what we can learn from movements for power as well as what we can learn from reform movements. The problem is that there has been very little study of US history with regard to these two types of social movements and social changes.

Today, again, we are confronted with the question: Are we dealing with a teddy bear or are we dealing with a grizzly bear? Are we dealing with a fundamentally reform movement or are we dealing with a transformation movement? My

experience and the experiences of others I've been involved with over the last forty years—in my study of American history and world history—suggest we're dealing fundamentally with a problem of power. That raises a question of how you generate a critical mass that's strong enough to take power.

The only thing that the oppressed classes have at their disposal is their numbers. They only enter in the scale of power struggle if those numbers are organized and are led by knowledge or an understanding of what they're up against. The influences of industrial union organizing and of community organizing—Saul Alinsky and some of the Civil Rights organizing—have left us very ignorant on the problems of power. Power grows from organizing, but how you organize—your approach to organizing under different circumstances—is something that's very critical.

Part of the problem of power in this country—a central aspect of the problem—is the relationship between color and class. The history of slavery, the slaughter of the Native Americans—these things have impacted American society all the way to today and have placed the color factor deeply in the thinking of the American people. You disregard this question at your own peril. But how you pose it is very important. The position of the poor and the dispossessed in the struggle to end poverty is very crucial, because what the poor show in their social and economic position is that ultimately the color question is inseparably tied to the class question. And then not only is it tied to the class question, but that the color question ultimately is or revolves around the question of class, that is the problem of the concentration of wealth and power.

The tendency has been to separate these issues because the prevailing influence around the issue of race, for example, has been the kind of petit bourgeois, “middle-class” kind of conception that is closely allied with the upper classes. This conception says: “The economy? I have no problem with the economy. Even with the current crisis, I have no problems with the fundamentals of the capitalist economy.” Therefore, you can discuss the problems of race separately, as if they are parallel to the problems of whether I eat or not, have a house or not, have the power necessary to at least have my basic necessities secured or not. From the standpoint of the economically exploited and excluded, I can't discuss the questions of whether or not we're going to be able to resolve the problems of color

or resolve the inequities of gender and all of the other ills in society disconnected from the questions of class and power.

I think this is where Martin Luther King in the last years of his life offers a bridge in terms of getting people to understand the inseparableness of these things. He pointed at the inseparableness of the three major evils: of unjust foreign policy in terms of the global situation and how it is tied to race relations and how race relations are inseparably tied to the problem of economic exploitation and poverty. You can't deal with one without dealing with the other. If we orient ourselves on the basis of those at the bottom, we're going to tend to see the inseparableness of these questions in reality.

There's this poster that I saw on one of my trips from Philadelphia to Atlanta to see my daughter. There's this billboard put up by the furniture industry in South Carolina. And it references a very common slogan put out in our country that I think influences the Left, that I think influences the whole of society. It said: "Let the sons and daughters of the former slaveholders unite with the sons and daughters of the former slaves." Now what's critical about that formulation is that they leave out the fact that most whites in the South were not slaveholders. They were mostly poor and working-class whites.

Left out of most discussions of history is this formula of power that W.E.B. Du Bois talked about that pitted the poor non-whites against the poor whites. Even today, when we are discussing the need of people of color to unite, it's usually done in a way to leave out the strategic necessity of finding ways of uniting with poor whites to ensure real emancipation from poverty and all forms of human misery. As Du Bois suggested and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. directly pointed out in his 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign, this can and must be the starting point in building the necessary critical mass to move power relations in this country of 300 million. And historically that has been a stumbling block in terms of any kind of struggle for power in this country. When you consider the power relationships as expressed in the composition of the civil bureaucracy and government jobs on all levels—municipal, state, and federal—or you consider the military and police forces, you're talking about mostly white folks. This is also true of the key corporate jobs in the "commanding heights" of the economy, i.e., the auto industry, housing, steel, energy, etc. A growing number of these strategically positioned

employees, their relatives and communities are beginning to have difficult times. Poverty is increasing among whites at a faster rate than among non-whites, especially resulting from the current crisis with the dismantling of the so-called “middle class.”

These are real pivotal problems of power. Aristotle once stated, and this has been more than corroborated by world history, that “Where the middle class is large, there are least likely to be factions and dissension.” Today we are confronted with greater opportunities and dangers with regard to problems of political influence and power relations than have rarely happened in American history. Yet we leave these opportunities for the fascists to win sections of the poor and working class whites.

W.E.B. Du Bois pointed out this problem of power in his *Black Reconstruction*, where he talks about how the political situation of slavery in the South was different from slavery in the Caribbean and South America. There, the opposition among the slaves tended to have a much wider and more of a mass character. That even culminated in the Haitian Revolution, which is the only actual slave-led uprising to successfully take the slaveocracy out of power. You had this massive uprising in the Caribbean and South American slavery, but in America—in the Southern United States—you had smaller resistance in the forms of runaway slaves and preempted slave rebellions. Du Bois pointed out very clearly that at its height in the Southern United States, you had something like four million black slaves, but at the same time, right alongside the black slaves, you had something like five million poor whites. You didn’t have that kind of demographics in Haiti where enslaved blacks outnumbered whites by 12 to one.

The poor whites in southern United States were plentiful. They were the social base for the police forces, including the slave drivers and slave patrols. The ruling slaveholders were able to use these two sections of the bottom against each other. And with the accumulation of wealth from the brutal exploitation of black slaves, the powers that be controlled the poor whites, and they employed poor whites to control the poor blacks. This formula of plantation power politics is what we have been dealing with in the US all the way up to this day. For instance, we can see how this racial political formula is being effectively employed to control and oppress immigrant workers. For us to not completely appreciate power relationships of

class rule is to our detriment and to the peril of the struggle.

You see this lack of appreciation in most discussions of gentrification and the growth of global cities today. The tendency is to limit the discussions as to the whole complexity of these processes by only seeing what is perceived as simply white folks coming in and displacing poor peoples of color. You don't see the whole class question. You don't see that the people coming in are not poor whites, because poor whites can't afford to come in. Or you don't see communities like poor multi-racial Kensington in Philadelphia, PA that are proliferating throughout the country, where you have an equality of poverty developing. I've gone to places within Kensington and the neighborhoods around it where we'd go into these homes, and you'd see homeless families—poor whites—who are stacked up in the housing; where you'd have the holes in the roof, holes in the ceilings, holes in the floor, living under horrible conditions. Certainly the blacks in the community of Mount Airy, for example, where the petit professionals live, have better homes and far better living standards than these poor whites in Kensington and neighboring Fishtown. And the key political question is: Do poor blacks in Kensington have more in common with poor whites in Kensington, or do they have more in common with former Merrill Lynch CEO, multi-millionaire Stanley O'Neil or with Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice or other upper class blacks folks? No, they have absolutely nothing in common with these black folks and everything in common with poor whites.

In fact, I think that speaks to a dangerous kind of racist exceptionalism that says you can have class differentiation among whites but it doesn't exist as a factor among people of color. And no, the upper class blacks are not puppets or modern "Uncle Toms." Despite their adroit use of racial colloquialisms and coqueties, they are quite class conscious of their integration into the ruling capitalist class and bent on intelligently and steadfastly defending their class interests like any other of their capitalist brothers and sisters. Of course, the questions of class factors in majorly in terms of how the political dynamics are played out—in terms of the prevailing and historically evolved formula of power in this country, that is, the cruel and shrewd manipulations of the color divisions within the bottom class. And I think this persistent aspect of power relationships in the US has to be taken into account if we're going to have the tactics and the organizing approach that really brings about

social change. Otherwise, it ultimately comes to pity for poor folks—especially poor nonwhite folks who are down and out and that people should feel guilty about. Well, people don't feel guilty about that especially when they are beginning to hurt from increasing class exploitation and dislocations. Historically and politically, we have to have them understand how their oppression is tied to your oppression, how their exploitation is tied to your exploitation.

Your arm is cut off and my finger is cut off. A cut-off finger is certainly less than a cut-off arm, but it still hurts. If we don't link your hurt with my hurt but keep comparing whose injury is worse, we're not going to be able to unite the critical mass necessary to move the existing power relationships. Somehow we've got to solve this formula of power described by Du Bois if we're going to succeed.

The development of leaders with a proper grasp of social theory and political strategy allows for a deeper grasp of the big picture so we don't become a pawn to a greater power game. You can see the Left—the so-called “Left”—falling into that trap where the tendency, because of the influence of the recent Civil Rights Movement and the National Liberation Movements is for the Left to gravitate and hover around the inner cities and people of color exclusively. Whereas the Right—the so-called “Right”—gravitates and hovers around poor whites. Therefore the bigger picture is that both the “Left” and the “Right” are manipulated by the powers that be. And they're continuing to play out a game W.E.B. Du Bois described as beginning with the origins of this country.

IV. Lessons from King's Last Years

One thing that's very crucial in this period is the role of education and consciousness raising. What I've learned in my experiences in organizing is that building socio-political movement is about more than simply mobilizing bodies. It's essentially about moving minds and hearts. And education is central, especially in an information age. The technological revolution I alluded to earlier has created this ability to impact people's worldviews that ultimately influences people's political wills, which is what we're trying to get at. Today, unlike any other period, these influences work like a 24/7 netwar against the poor as the first line of attack against all of us.

In looking at the way you fight today as opposed to how we fought yesterday, the question of the relationship of education to organizing is more intimate and integral. You've got to talk as you walk. You've got to teach as you fight. You've got to learn as you lead. These things are inseparable to the problem of organizing, and I think the Saul Alinsky influence and some of the trade union influence and even standard community organizing has separated those questions. These approaches tend to de-emphasize the importance of education and thus miss out on the opportunity of using the daily struggles as a school to elevate consciousness particularly in terms of leadership development.

Part of that education is a recognition of lessons from history. The powers that be have done a great disservice with regards to curriculum and the philosophy of education in this country. They've left out whole periods of history and obscured certain periods of history that have direct bearing on what we are trying to do today. The experience of Martin Luther King in the last period of his life is obscured. It is something that is pushed under the rug. Clearly up until a certain point in his development, he was a leader in the Civil Rights Movement that was focused on de jure racial apartheid in this country. But at a certain point towards the end of his life, he began to recognize that—even though they were able to get the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed—the black masses who were succumbing to economic exploitation couldn't benefit from the results of the Civil Rights Movement. He pointed out: What good is it to be able to go into a restaurant now since they've taken down the “whites only” sign if you can't afford a hamburger? Today you don't have the “whites only” sign in the front window of restaurants. You have another sign. It's the menu, and the menu has the different items and their costs. And if you can't afford what's on that menu, I don't care what color you are; there's no need for you to go in there.

This is a very significant development because it offers us the opportunity to move American thinking in a way that focuses on power shifts and social change. But we've got to grapple with this reality. Martin Luther King said, “It didn't take a penny to integrate lunch counters in this country” (that is, to defeat de jure segregation). But when we talk about ending poverty, to paraphrase him, you're talking about a whole reconstruction of “economic and political power” relationships. He recognized that. And the powers that be saw that not only did he

recognize that, but that he begin to utilize his great international prestige to take actions that were a real political threat to them and their domestic and foreign policies. That's why he was killed; that was proven by the virtual media blackout of the 1999 MLK assassination trial in Memphis, Tennessee.

People should look at the transcripts of the testimonies of this historic trial where they proved that MLK's proposals threatened the powers that be. The evidence showed that the much-publicized theory—that a lone fanatical white racist killed MLK—was false, that this was the big lie spread by the FBI because they knew public opinion would be prone to believe it at the time. Indeed his murder involved the complicity of elements from all levels of government and intelligence services. It says a lot in terms of lessons for us today. How do we resolve this fundamental problem of power? How do you unite the dispossessed—the bottom—in order to turn things upside down in terms of resolving the problems of homelessness, healthcare, and all of these problems that are manifestations of this basic problem: the polarity between the concentration of wealth on one hand and the spread of poverty on the other?

V. The 4 Cs: A Networked Core of Clear, Connected, Competent and Committed Leader

When we talk about really developing a successful movement, there has to be an advanced theoretical and intellectual development to the movement. It has to be an engaged intellectualism. This is something that is indispensable, and this is where the education and consciousness-raising element is critical. Theory is basically the summary of historical experience. It's a means to take the general lessons of history as a way to guide your analysis, so you don't find yourself bumping your head against walls that other people before you have bumped their heads against. Yet we have in our culture and mindset an anti-theory, anti-intellectual approach especially when it comes to social struggle. Now, this anti-intellectualism is not coming from the poor and dispossessed. It's coming from the intellectuals. In fact the whole anti-theory philosophy of pragmatism came out of Harvard. It came out of people thinking through a philosophy that would divert attention and be an apology for the economic and political status quo. And it still has influence today

as expressed in its most recent variants such as “post-structuralism” and “post-modernism.” It has the effect of having people not see the importance of taking the lessons of history and the lessons of experience in terms of theory and using them to guide our analysis and actions. This is something that is a real disservice, because—even though there’s reference to theory on the Left—a large part of the anti-intellectualism comes from the Left. It doesn’t come from poor folks or people who are trying to figure out what in the hell is happening to them. They’re hungry for analysis of why it is that they are poor and who benefits from it and what their strategy is and how we counter their strategy with a strategy. These are the basic yearnings of those who are in a position of pain and suffering every day.

We need advanced theory that enables a kind of organizing that allows us to match our sophistication with the sophistication of the strategists, ideologists, and theologians of the present “powers and principalities.” You can’t meet sophistication just with sentimentalism. There has to be an engaged intellectualism—an engaged scholarship—to successfully guide our thinking and fighting. If we don’t outsmart the enemy, there’s no way we’re going to outfight them.

If we’re going to go forward, we’ve got to resolve this problem of education and theory. The important thing that I’ve learned in my political life was that the major defeats and mistakes were largely a result of a lack of a historical perspective that comes from theory, a lack of understanding of political economy that comes from theory, a lack of leadership development that comes from theoretical development.

And not having leaders—a core of leaders—who are connected to the struggles of the poor and dispossessed, who are committed, who are competent, and who are clear in terms of their analytical approach is problematic in terms of your ability to sustain an effort, to stick and stay the course, to go up against the sophistication of the forces we’re dealing with. What I’ve learned most is that the first stage in any kind of organizing is how you identify and develop those leaders that emerge in those struggles, how you use those struggles to identify leaders and concentrate them into a guiding intellectual force that can then organize the movement. They have to have the sophistication that matches the sophistication of the powers that be.

I don’t think that we understand what we’re up against. The forces we’re up against, on the one hand, don’t give a damn about us. They go around the world and

subject people to the most excruciating horrors. You think they're not prepared to do that with us? Certainly the history of people of color suggests that they are prepared to be dirty with anybody for dominance and the dollar. Still among broad sections, people cannot believe that the people we're up against are people who are very fascistic and who are prepared to sweep us under the rug, throw us off the cliff and have us to live out the most horrible existence. These people don't give a damn about us. You've got to understand that. That's what you're up against.

At the same time, we must respect them, which means to study to know and keep up with them in their strategic thinking and moves. They are the powers that be, and they are the most organized. They have the chambers of commerce and the different trade associations and most importantly, they have very sophisticated "think-tanks": the Rand Corporation, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Carnegie Endowment, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and other such groupings. The Carnegie formation is now organized as the first global think-tank. These major think tanks study the daily developments around the world; they study a problem before it becomes an issue. This is a tremendous opposition that we face. We've got to know our enemy and strive to know what they know. For if we only know ABC and they know A to Z then we stand to be outmaneuvered and manipulated. Our organizing strategy and tactics must be and can be developed directly in opposition to theirs.

But a lot of organizing makes general references to capitalism and the oppression of people of color at the hands of white folks or something like that, and not an examination of what and who we are really dealing with. Leadership development and the theoretical development that undergirds that leadership development has to take those kinds of things into account if we're going to proceed effectively, if we are going to organize an independent mass socio-political movement that can move the issues that affect us today.

Appendix 2: “You Gotta Always Remember ‘The Big Picture’”

The Battle for Broad Street and the War to Abolish World Poverty

A committed, loved and respected poor white mother and grandmother, Katie Engles was unanimously elected the President of the War Council of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU). KWRU is a multi-racial organization of poor and homeless families based in Kensington, the most impoverished neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The War Council is the leading body of the organization. We called it the War Council because we believed that poverty is an economic, social, ideological, and political war on our lives. As President, Katie understood the necessity and complexity of a struggle being waged against poverty on many fronts. She was well aware that conducting an effective fight against poverty meant dangerously stepping on the toes of the economic interests of the rich and powerful. And with this understanding she repeatedly insisted, “You got to always remember the big picture.”

When you look at the big picture you are not just looking at what the problem appears to be, but how the problem came to be. We cannot conclude on the basis of a mere glance that the man who runs out of his house without any clothes on is crazy, but we have to see why he ran out of his house in the first place. We have to not only know that an individual is poor but, most importantly, why that individual is poor and why there are in increasing numbers so many other people who are suffering in the same situation. Generally, the big picture reveals the basic causes and multi-sided dimensions of the situation we are confronted with. It reveals the roots as well as the branches and leaves of the problem that must be solved.

Understanding a problem is the greater part of solving it. Like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once stated, “The prescription for the cure rests with the accurate diagnosis of the disease.” A superficial glance at a problem gives you no

more than an outward appearance of it, or at most a view of the effects of the problem and not of the conditions and cause that gave rise to it. Attaining the big picture that shows the cause and conditions that gave rise to the problem indicate the means that make it possible to solve it. This is why the art of leadership is essentially the art of the possible, which is, in other words, the art of problem solving. One of the last campaigns the Homeless Union conducted in Philly was the struggle to get the local office of HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) to concede housing for some 200 homeless families. We at first identified 200 boarded up housing units that HUD had foreclosed on. We then set about establishing friendly relations with the neighbors who had grown disgusted with HUD for allowing the empty units to deteriorate into havens for open drug dealing and gun play. They were concerned for the safety of their children who everyday had to risk their lives having to walk past these dangerous situations. For the most part, the neighbors were very grateful to help us to move families into the abandoned HUD units. In an escalating and dramatic campaign, which put a lot of pressure on both the city and HUD, we successfully attained housing for all the families. However, later on a joint study between the KWRU Education Committee and the local Philadelphia Taskforce for the Homeless was done on the growing problem of homelessness. It was found that on average every 30 minutes a person in Philly became homeless due to joblessness and other dislocations. That means that for every family we were able to successfully get in housing, four or five more were at the same time becoming homeless. And upon further reflection, we realized that the housing unit in which we placed a family resulted from a foreclosure, and thus was the result of making another family homeless. It was upon deeper analysis that we understood that there were larger economic conditions and causes that were continuously creating a not-so-merry-go-round of increasing homelessness.

So it became clear that we fell far short of solving the whole problem by just snipping off its leaves and branches, only to leave the root cause and conditions intact, producing even more leaves and branches. Our assessment of the problem could not stop at anything less than a total picture of the effects, conditions, and causes, of the immediate needs and the fundamentals of the problem. The struggle for immediate and short-term concessions or reforms must be carried out in a way that creates the critical mass and organization necessary to solve the problem in the

long term and once and for all.

In his essay, “Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders,” Lieutenant General Richard A. Chilcoat of the US Army War College quotes the following description of an indispensable strategic quality of a leader made by the former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill:

Like a painter, [Churchill] tells us, the strategist must have an “all-embracing view, which presents the beginning and the end, the whole and each part, as one instantaneous impression retentively and untiringly held in the mind.”

Also speaking more specifically about this same quality over 2,500 years ago, the Chinese philosopher and strategist, Sun Tzu, in his much-studied famous little book, “The Art of War,” stated, “Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without defeat.” With this knowledge Sun Tzu deduces that victory can always be attained when “he whose advance is irresistible plunges into his enemy’s weak positions.”

History teaches that this strategic quality of a leader is nurtured more consistently by collective intelligence than by individual intelligence. In other words, to maintain a big picture perspective, it is better to rely on collective intelligence than on simply individual intelligence. The former strengthens the latter.

The 2000 National Republican Convention is Coming!

The 2000 National Republican Convention was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was estimated that more than 15,000 journalists and news reporters gathered from all over the world for this major event. They were obviously attracted by fact that mass protests were anticipated following the explosive outbreak of what came to be called worldwide the “Battle in Seattle” the previous year. All the major US media was making much ado about the upcoming event. The Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) would have been remiss not to take advantage of this political opportunity.

Much forethought and analytical thought went into the preparations for the Convention well in advance of it being held in July 2000. KWRU, the lead and host

organization of the national Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, made a political assessment of the major forces arrayed against it and the poor and homeless generally in the greater Philadelphia region.

The events we were involved in leading up to the day of the Convention and during the counter-convention March for Economic Human Rights Down Broad Street, compelled us to engage in an assortment of open and clandestine political maneuvers. These events pitted us against the sophisticated wit of the richest and most powerful economic and political forces represented in the region, particularly the Greater Philadelphia First Corporation (GPFC). GPFC consists of 33 major corporations including First Union Bank, the two main Philadelphia Newspapers, and the University of Pennsylvania Med/Ed complex. We had to deal directly with the main political instruments of Greater Philadelphia First, namely the Mayor's Office, the Police, and the Media. The National Guard was brought in as a back up reserve of military forces. The political moves of this array of groupings were well coordinated. Had we not maintained a strategic view of the big picture we would have been reduced to easily manipulable pawns of the larger game plan of these bigger players. With this perspective we sought to meet our overall objectives by moving to dramatically and strategically make our message heard. In this regard KWRU Executive Director Cheri Honkala stated:

They met us with countermoves. We then made moves and anticipated their next moves. The tit for tat maneuvers necessitated that we elevate our thinking from that of simply a checkers player to that of a chess player. We did this and accomplished all our objectives.

The protests and activities we carried out over a week period or more were not for the purposes of pulling off a single act of a march or a rally. It was one of combined operations or of an orchestration of different activities, more like the conduct of a campaign than that of a single battle. This enabled us to escalate step by step our daily tactical actions culminating in a mass civil disobedient march down Broad Street, all the way to the doors of the Republican Convention. Tensions built as we vowed to disobey the Police and their broadly announced public orders that prohibited marches on the main thoroughfare of Philadelphia. The drama and

the building pressure created by our planned series of actions attracted the attention of most of the 15,000 international journalists and news reporters present and successfully stayed the hands of the police and military forces.

Two other major operations that combined in the overall effort of PPEHRC were 1) the open and undercover work of Skylight Pictures in producing its important documentary, *Battle for Broad*, effectively capturing the drama for later educational work; and 2) the education arm of PPEHRC, the University of the Poor, was formally launched as part of these combined activities. It produced an Educational Supplement for the documentary, “*Battle for Battle*,” drawing out the key lessons of the drama created by the combined operations. The following brief excerpt is an example of how the Supplement captured the creative and dramatic employment of tactics:

We insisted we were going to march with or without a permit. The drama continued to build and attention was beginning to be focused on us. They [the city’s ruling businesses, politicians, and police] were hard pressed to stop us. However, the initiative and momentum were on our side. Our appearances on talk shows and the many interviews (CNN, 20/20, McNeil/Lehrer, etc.) were confirmations of the success of this political positioning. Ultimately, they had to concede to us. Estimates from media correspondents had the March attendance at as high as 10,000 to 15,000. We made a pledge of non-violence that added respectability and tied the hands of the police. More than 700 media representatives were present. We established a line of march with poor children – over 100 kids – leading off. Then the brothers and sisters from the disabled community followed in wheelchairs and behind them those from the deaf community and then the rest of the delegations from the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, representatives from the labor unions, and many other allies and supporters.

The police knew that everybody was watching...

The police had no choice but to back down. This was a tactical and political victory for the March...

Conducting our efforts in this way enabled us to turn the whole exercise of

protests into a school for raising mass consciousness. Most strategically, at these initial stages of development of the longer struggle to abolish poverty, it enabled us to turn our fight into a school for identifying and educating leaders.

Not the Limited Genius of Napoleon

Conditioned or brought up in a culture defined by the old shortsighted American Pragmatic mindset, most of us tend to have little patience for the long-term and larger picture. We are often satisfied with only a superficial glance at situations we face and perilously preoccupied with the short-term consequences of immediate issues. We see only battles and tactics and lose sight of the war as a whole and its strategy.

In a related lesson from history, the essay, “Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders,” also gives a very instructive critique of the limited genius of Napoleon Bonaparte. It states:

Napoleon, for example, is often remembered as a master of strategy.

Examination of Napoleon’s reputation for military genius, however, illuminates the boundaries between tactical and strategic leadership. His genius lay primarily in his innovations as a brilliant tactician marching through Europe winning battles after battles, defeating country after country. However in the end he had inspired unity of these countries into the Grand Alliance, which led to his losing the overall war [“... by the end of Napoleon’s career, failure in the realm of diplomacy, especially an unwillingness to compromise with opponents and allies, inspired the formation of the Grand Alliance and led to his defeat.” – “The Mark of Strategic Genius” by Steven Metz].

When judging Napoleon’s skills as a master of strategic art, we must keep in mind Clausewitz’s warning: “the effects of genius show not so much in novel forms for actions as in the ultimate success of the whole.” By this standard, which has even greater resonance today, Napoleon was a strategic failure whose legacy included the death of several million Frenchmen, the occupation of his country by three armies, the restoration of the monarchy, a century of British dominance, and his own exile. Similarly, German brilliance at the tactical and

operational levels on the battlefield in World War II did not prevent the virtual devastation of Germany and occupation by the Allies. In spite of demonstrated operational genius, these are not records that aspiring masters of strategic art would seek to emulate.

The big picture of the situation and problems of strategy today dictate that poverty will not be ended until the bulk of the 300 million American people make up their minds to end it. The leadership of the impoverished section of the American people as a united social force is a decisive factor in making and shaping this critical mass consciousness. The first steps taken must focus on the development and unity of a core of leaders committed to uniting the poor as a leading social force. This unity and leadership serve to effectively defeat the strongly embedded misconceptions and stereotypes of many people, helping to prove that the poor have not failed society but that society, with the assistance of the government, has failed the poor.

The co-chair of the KWRU Organizing Committee, Galen Tyler, commented on this strategic approach:

Therefore, all of our considerations of tactics and organization—whether they are of acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, marches, housing takeovers, food distributions, individual problem-solving, or whatever—must be made from the point of view of the ‘big picture.’ The ‘big picture’ tells us that tactics are only useful when they help us answer the big question. ‘How do we win the hearts and minds of the American people?’

So our approach to the March for Economic Human Rights was not from the narrow point of view of simply protesting for self-expression, or for the nonviolent exercise of “freedom of speech” as ends in themselves. Our history speaks for itself. We were prepared to go to jail, if necessary. Before the March no small number of us had committed to get arrested, if necessary. However, our objective was not just about getting arrested. It was about getting our message out that poverty and human misery should not exist in the land of plenty! All analyses and prolonged experiences show n’ tell how this message strikes a strategic blow at the Powers That Be’s main narrative defending their inhumane and insane poverty-

producing system.

Bushville – “A Base of Operation”

Liz Ortiz is a War Council member of the KWRU. During the National Republican Convention she was elected mayor of the tent city called Bushville named after George W. Bush, the Republican candidate for the US Presidency. Our tent city was similar to the Hoovervilles set up during the Great Depression, which were named after the then President, Herbert Hoover. To carry out her task she had to view Bushville as a tactical part of a whole strategy, a piece of a bigger picture. The bigger picture was that Bushville was to serve not just as a place where people can stay and sleep. It was a “base of operations” to house and help the fighters and members of the different organizations affiliated with the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, who would be battling to march down Broad Street to the Convention site. It was set up to ensure that the poor were not disappeared or hidden before the Republican National Convention and the 15,000 news reporters from around the country and world.

As mayor Liz had to always keep the big picture in mind. Keeping a bigger picture was a necessity in order for her to effectively and most efficiently give proper strategic direction and coordination to all her many responsibilities.

“I was constantly busy at Bushville,” Mayor Liz Ortiz recalled. “I had to help ensure the safety of the residents, their children and belongings; registration; medical care; breakfast, lunch, and dinner; enforce our no drugs and alcohol policy; oversee music entertainment and Human Rights Theatre skits; workshops; security meetings; morning general meetings and prayer services. In addition I had to help make sure that all the activities inside Bushville were coordinated with all the four days of activities outside of Bushville leading up to our March for Economic Human Rights. This included the preparations of our many children who took their place effectively and efficiently at the head of nonviolent mass march down Broad Street.”

“These four days of activities included the ongoing Reality Tour, the Unity 2000 March, the Healthcare March, the launching of the University of the Poor, the forum on the Labor Party and Economic Human Rights, media and filmmaking

activities, sign-making, legal strategy meetings, and the necessary secret operations. Every one of these activities had to be seen not as separate pieces but as pieces of a big puzzle. For example, Bushville was located in the heart of North Philly, the so-called ‘Badlands,’ the poorest section of Philadelphia. To have a little picture of Bushville as only a place to house and feed people we would have ran out of all our small means and ran away from our big mission, which is to build leading fighters in the fight to end poverty forever.”

Cadre, an Embodiment of the Big Picture

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word “cadre” as:

1. A nucleus of trained personnel around which a larger organization can be built.
- 2a. A tightly knit group, especially of political activists.
- 2b. A member of such a group.

In other words, a cadre constitutes a nucleus of systematically educated and trained leaders capable of thinking and acting strategically and not simply tactically. A cadre is the embodiment of the “big picture.” A cadre is the indispensable foundation, a network that provides the core of leadership of any social movement, military or political. All of history shows that the success of a movement starts with the formation of a core of cadre. This core has to be the embodiment of the unity and interaction between theory and practice, between analysis and action, between thinking and doing, between education and experience, between the “War College” and the “boot camp.”

To separate these sets of two basic factors is to place us at an extreme disadvantage and danger in the face of the sophistication of the cadre of our enemy. A cadre must commit to an ongoing study and struggle for the unity of theory and practice, education and struggle. These two aspects can be briefly defined as follows:

- Practice (personal participation in activities; “Boot Camp”) – an individual’s direct experience.
- Theory (education in knowledge, skills, and values; draws lessons largely from

indirect experiences of billions of people; “War College”) – general summation of world historical experience of all of humanity’s direct personal practices.

Lastly, in this connection, a scientist, director, and lecturer at the MIT Learning Center, Peter Senge, made some instructive remarks in his book, *The Fifth Discipline* (audio):

Current reality is just current reality [it has within it both adversaries and allied forces – my ed.]. The problem is that we don’t yet know how to work [with or against] the basic forces of current reality. [We don’t understand and are not skillful in dealing with those forces]. There is an old saying in sailing, ‘There is only one condition under which you can’t sail. And that’s when there is no wind. The wind can be blowing furiously against you, but a skillful enough sailor can sail [or utilize that wind to go in any direction he wants].’ The problem is not the condition in our organization. The problem is our level of skill and understanding. If we start to see it that way, then we realize that it always comes back to us: how skillful are we as sailors? Now you don’t get to be a sailor overnight.

...The distinctive thing about being human is learning, i.e., that constantly seeking and utilizing means drawing from our environment to increase our capacity to create things we need and care about. With these principles ... we find the appropriate starting point.

In short, learning is about building human capacity: “If you don’t learn as you go, you won’t go too far.”