

**The
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**Toward a Democratic Socialism
Represent Our Resistance
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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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And standing there as big as life
and smiling with his eyes.
Says Joe "What they can never kill
went on to organize,
went on to organize."

-From *Joe Hill*

We need to remember that we are bastards and forget that we're obedient citizens. Indeed, that our absolute loyalty lies in the disobedience to power and in our identification with poor.

-Breyten Breytenbach, *Mandela's Smile*

For every daydream of the few, there are nights of nightmares for the many.

When our expectations become low and when we learn the language of compromise, conciliation, we "see" below the horizon. We become used to "seeing" below the horizon.

And so seasoned imperialists, with resumes in hand, are lining up at the Chicago presidential transition office. After Joe-pro-war-Biden, the most desired are those who "...have worked with the Clinton administration as a corporate lobbyist or militarist:"

- Chief of Staff: Tough-guy Rahm Emanuel, pro-war, pro-Zionist, former investment

banker.

- Advisor: Jamie Miscik, former intelligence official, author of Colin Powell's Iraq WMD speech to the UN.
- Secretary of the Treasury: Timothy-Wall Street-bailout-specialist-Geithner.
- Chief Economic Advisor: Larry-de-regulation-Summers, a former Clinton Secretary of the Treasury.
- Attorney General: Eric-the-Chiquita-Brand-death-squad-attorney-Holder. (Eric Holder, the corporate media will repeat over and over again is another Black face, the first African American Attorney General).

Robert Rubin's protégés, Summers and Geithner, "are the protective guard-dogs of America's vested interests," according to Michael Hudson (*The Neo-Yeltsin Administration? The Obama Letdown*, November 26, 2008). The president-elect Obama appointments, Hudson states, are the "same anti-labor, pro-financial team that brought the kleptocrats to power in Russia in the mid-1990s."

And all this *change* will make Sen. Hilary Clinton as Secretary of State feel right at home within a third-term Clinton Administration.

You can almost expect a long Black limousine pulling up outside the president-elect's transition office in Chicago. Before the limo door opens, the bourgeoisies, standing on either side of the walkway, are cheering wildly. The door opens and out steps King George (most notorious criminal #1) followed by Darth Vader (most notorious criminal #2) carrying his and the King's resume.

"Be careful of the people's gods," warned Black activist and thinker, Hubert Harrison.

Who is speaking? Who is allowed to speak? Who is allowed at the meeting table? Most important, who defined "change" and who discussed what it would look like?

You can't image an assembly of the people, the nurse, the teacher, the factory worker, the Walmart clerk, the home care worker, the homeless, and the returning disillusioned Iraqi vets. Father Bourgeoisie won't be there. Activists for peace and justice won't be there.

The intellectuals like Professor Cornel West say we are coming out of the Reagan era where indifference to the poor was the order of the day. His language is conciliatory: "Brother" Barack Obama and "brother" Larry Summers. "Brother" Eric Holder, good friend, Eric Holder. Dr. West is not aware of Holder's involvement with Chiquita Brand Corporation, but he will ask "brother" Holder to explain to him why Brother Holder is defending the corporate thugs (*Democracy Now*). Dr. West's mixed message to those below: We need a movement outside the State, but - but, but, but, let's wait. Let's hope some more! Let's quiet our voices; tone down the anger down there! In the meantime, mellow out to the beat of my hip hop CDs while *you* wait. I'll met and eat with my band of bourgeoisie *brothers*.

And, in the background, the young consumers of everything that glitters appear on the

corporate airwaves chanting: *We aren't like our parents. Not their generation. We're different. We've everything in common with the American mainstream, with our white friends and their parents. And the white youth and parents are grateful. Elated! Change has come!*

In this current capitalist crisis, these class-conscious people will struggle - but struggle to purchase the latest gadget, produced in part by mutilating women and children or by people paid pennies on the dollar. *That's depressing. We want happiness and a piece of the American pie.*

Barack Obama, what do you mean by change? Did your followers ask? Were they permitted to ask?

Change today is pretty much the same as yesterday because those in love with reform are afraid of changing the status quo. Change is "urban renewal" (better known as gentrification) in which assisting Black politicians, intellectuals, and middle class citizens shoved poor and low-waged earning Blacks aside. Change is the Black declared first Black president's "welfare reform" and "crack-cocaine" (incarcerate-as-many-young-Blacks-as-possible bills.)

"They have a new gimmick every year," Malcolm told us. A Black, "one of their boys," walks around Washington with a cigar. "Fire on one end and fool on the other end."

And because his immediate personal problem will have been solved he will be the one to tell our people: "Look how much progress we're making. I'm in Washington, D.C., (sic) I can have tea in the White House. I'm your spokesman, I'm your leader..." But how many sitting here right now feel (sic) that they could [laughs] truly identify with a struggle that was designed to eliminate the basic causes that create the conditions that exist? Not very many. They can jive, but when it comes to identifying yourself with a struggle that is not endorsed by the power structure, that is not acceptable, that the ground rules are not laid down by the society in which you live, which you are struggling against, you can't identify with that, you step back...it's hard for you to cut that dollarism. When they drop those dollars on you, you'll fold though.

(*The Prospects for Freedom*, Jan. 7, 1965). This year saw the biggest gimmick with the biggest amounts of money dropped right back in the pockets of the corporate-backed Democrats.

The current African American president-elect is no more a member of the masses of Black Americans than the first. Like the first, he doesn't represent the incarcerated, the undereducated, the undernourished, the under insured, the unemployed, overworked, and overwhelmed. He is not a member of the oppressed class in the U.S. His interests are necessarily, by virtue of his status in a racially oppressed country, the interests of the capitalists. The personal is political. He wants *history* - that is, history to record his rise among the "great" American people. The president-elect will "save" the Black and white middle class, the corporate Wall Street class, and the government of the U.S. - but from what? Clue: His ascendancy to the Head of State will assure that the unread narratives of the "little" people and their struggles will be left - unread.

And the "beloved" man, the current African American president-elect has been compared to - the "beloved" man the State and some ingenious Black intellectuals

employ to tame the desperate and despairing - isn't heard or read by anyone now:

There is nothing but a lack of social vision to prevent us from paying an adequate wage to every American citizen whether he be (sic) a hospital worker, laundry worker, maid, or day laborer. There is nothing except shortsightedness to prevent us from guaranteeing an annual minimum-and livable-income for every American family. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities. (From [*The View from the Painter's Ladder, A Collection of Essays by Roland Sheppard: A Lifetime Socialist Human Right's Fighter*](#), Roland Sheppard, 16 January 2005).

Again from the unheard and unread Martin Luther King:

You can't talk about solving the economic problem of the Negro without talking about billions of dollars. You can't talk about ending the slums without first saying profit must be taken out of slums. You're really tampering and getting on dangerous ground because you are messing with folk then. You are messing with captains of industry... Now this means that we are treading in difficult water, because it really means that we are saying that something is wrong... with capitalism.... There must be a better distribution of wealth and maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism. (Frogmore, S.C., November 14, 1966).

"There must be a better distribution of wealth and maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism."

Democracy means "the majority rule," writes Roland Sheppard. The word is from the "Middle French *democratie*, from Late Latin *democratia*, from Greek *demokratia*, from *demos* 'common people,' (see *demotic*), + *kratos* 'rule, strength.'" Sheppard continues,

Socialism was first defined to me as the extension of democracy into industry and all areas that affect our lives. Since the working class is the majority, we should rule and thereby control the means of production.

The majority controlling the means of production is contrary to waiting like spectators for the politicians to trickle down to the bottom wage earner and the salaried worker a 300 dollar check!

The majority doesn't rule when 1 percent of the population controls government and owns the wealth and resources of the land.

In the United States, wealth is highly concentrated in a relatively few hands. As of 2001, the top 1% of households (the upper class) owned 33.4% of all privately held wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and small business stratum) had 51%, which means that just 20% of the people owned a remarkable 84%, leaving only 16% of the wealth for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers). In terms of financial wealth, the top 1% of households had an even greater share: 39.7%. Table 1 and Figure 1 present further details drawn from the careful work of economist Edward N. Wolff at New York University (2004).

Table 1: Distribution of net worth and financial wealth in the United States, 1983-2001

	Total Net Worth		
	Top 1 percent	Next 19 percent	Bottom 80 percent
1983	33.8%	47.5%	18.7%
1989	37.4%	46.2%	16.4%
1992	37.2%	46.6%	16.3%
1995	38.5%	45.4%	16.1%
1998	38.1%	45.3%	16.6%
2001	33.4%	51.0%	15.5%

From *Wealth, Income, and Power*, G. William Domhoff, September 2006 (updated December 2006). And this is now 2008. How many more lives will capitalism be allowed to stifle and outright kill?

If you have been forced to see yourself as a consumer, a *new* generation of the Black man and Black woman, then your mind has been stunted! I would argue that *you* are back in the days of the Civil Rights era, content with sitting, white and Black, at the lunch counter and never moving forward! I'm talking about the future of people of color, poor, homeless, and working class in the U.S. The struggle that people died for wasn't about situating a Black face at the head of a capitalist-militarist State!

A *Black Commentator* reader responded to my "[Socialism: The Movement of the Majority](#)," November 20, 2008. He asked if I had written a book. That's it! I thanked him for his inquiry, but I added that in the last twenty-years, I had been too busy working as an adjunct professor (when not writing or working in the community). Universities, many of which are anything but democratic or liberal, function as plantations, where adjuncts, often, like myself with PhD's and Black skin, receive poverty or below poverty level wages. Black and white faculty intend to uphold the all too *profitable* plantation hierarchy, even while they come to represent and profess the advancement of the Black American in the last 40 years. But maybe my reader was suggesting that I'm not "academic" enough to qualify to speak on the subject? I needed to have a book out there in the world about my article's subject? Elitism? Where are your credentials - that is - your three-piece suit (stockings and heels)?

My subject was and is about the majority, the proletariat class, the working class, the poor, the homeless. I don't have to pen a book to have an *informed* opinion about this subject!

I can't think of anyone I know who flies around the country or the world, for that matter, in their personal or commercial jet. I do know riders of public transportation who travel with me, and I see them and hear the talk. They are job commuters just off work from one job on their way to another. I know some of these people stand in long

lines on Fridays at cash checking stores to cash checks and purchase money orders to pay bills because they don't have a checking account at a bank, let alone a 401K.

I know a couple of people with small, two-bedroom, houses. Two people, a middle-aged couple now, raised seven children in that home. Like the others I know, this couple still pay the mortgage every month. I know many like myself living pay-check-to-pay-check, with the bulk of income sent off in an envelope to the property owner. I know of people opting every month to pay for necessary high blood pressure medicine rather than purchase enough food to get through the whole month. I remember my grandmother's story about how her young family ate sugar on bread for dinner, but I know people now who eat potato chips for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I see children and teens chewing away on potato chips for breakfast as they pass runners, possibly with health insurance, keeping fit and healthy.

Children go to bed hungry here in the U.S. At school, they are considered the losers, the worthless, bound for the streets or prison. "700, 000 children went hungry in America at some point in 2007," and this figure is up 50 percent from the year before, according to the ISDA. "13 million children in the U.S. go to bed hungry" (*Bread for the World*, 2004). You can image that number is higher now.

We know that the elderly now purchase cat food, and they don't own cats. Elderly citizens die each winter for lack of money to pay the gas company while oil CEOs are applauded for the "successful" big profit years they have squeezed out of the elderly, the low-wage worker, the single-mom. A *Market Watch*, "States Cut Services for Elderly, Disabled," reports that "15 states cut funding for programs that provided at-home services to elders such as cooking and cleaning" (November 14, 2008). Some of us know people without an address of their own, living with family and friends in one and two-bedroom apartments because they can't locate jobs or they have been laid off by their former employer.

For a minute, some politicians thought about the homeless - as voters for the democratic candidate. So there was a mad dash to locate and register the homeless to vote! Michael Stoops, Executive Director of the National Coalition for the Homeless sees first Persian Gulf War vets at his shelters as well as an increase of returning Iraqi vets. "All shelters reported more soldiers who have seen the horrors of war," Stoops told me. 30 percent of the homeless in their shelters are veterans. Stoops told me that he is hoping to "get our proposal to the Obama transition team." So far, the homeless don't warrant a homeless Czar.

I know how it feels to hear the rhetoric of the bourgeoisie society as it talks about the "irresponsible," the "immoral character" of failures, losers or those of us who "decided" to live as much as possible with an honest relationship with other humans and nature. Yet, the Bear Stearns, the AIGs, the Citigroups of Wall Street are not to blame for their failures. They are not considered irresponsible.

With a three-page request in hand, Secretary of Treasury, Henry Paulson, sits before the Washington politicians D.C. with an up-turned hat and no plan. I'm here for the money, friends, for my good friends, our good friends, on Wall Street. Alan Mulally, CEO of Ford Motors Co. and his friends, Richard Wagoner, CEO, General Motors and Robert Nardelli, CEO, Chrysler arrive without so much as a page let alone a plan! *Have*

you seen the bigger piggies/In their starched white shirts? Give us some money, too, or the workers will lose some more jobs!

Mulally alone received compensation valued at 39.1 million - in his four months on the job in 2006! Otherwise, his salary is tame: just 2 million a year! Is this enough statistics for you?

No, workers councils will not be allowed to form and become "permanent political bodies with the sole authority in the management of industry" ([Revolution In Hungary and The Crisis Of Stalinism](#)).

There are many, many people with plans and dreams, pages of narratives upon pages of narratives...unread!

Where's my book on the subject? My suit, stockings and heels? Capitalism is a failure - without my book, suit, stockings, and heels! It's not for and about human beings; it's about the bottom line and calculating schemes to amass profits.

I don't have to pen a book to know the narrative of greed when I see it in the body of a homeless person or hear the voices of mothers in the aisles at the grocery store, frustrated with the price of bread or milk. These are the people - the potential democracy to come in the future - held down now by the capitalist regime. There's a table to make and seats to be taken at that table, for these people and their struggles are the subject of democratic socialism!

MLK: Black and Proud:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Suw_CQ3zfTY

MLK at the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers, Local 1199

<http://www.blueoregon.com/2008/04/wages-and-war-.html>

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The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer, for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and facilitator of student-teacher communities behind the walls of academia for the last twenty years. Dr. Daniels holds a PhD in Modern American Literatures, with a specialty in Cultural Theory (race, gender, class narratives) from Loyola University, Chicago. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.

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