



Newsletter, April 201

USA: One Battle at a Time



Sarah Jaffe

In 2013, radical attorney Chokwe Lumumba was elected mayor of Jackson, Mississippi on a platform of economic self-determination for the people of Jackson, a plan that as Kali Akuno explained aims at transforming the economy, creating a democratic economy leading towards the creation and construction of a socialist economy, but through a democratic bottom-up process. Lumumba's untimely death less than a year into his term put some of those plans on hold, though the movement continued its work outside of political power, founding the organization Cooperation Jackson to create a network of worker cooperatives in the city. Now, Lumumba's son, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, is running for mayor of the city, to expand on the work that began years ago.

When people ask, "How did you feel the Wednesday after the election?" I said, "Well, I woke up in Mississippi." What that means to me is that no matter whether Trump is president or whether Obama was president, in Mississippi if you were poor before Obama, you were most likely poor after Obama. Mississippi has not had the opportunity to feel great booms or big busts in the financial market of our country, because no matter whether the country was excelling or on a decline, we still were at the bottom. We have always been at the bottom. Mississippi has been largely neglected by everyone. The real opportunity to win Mississippi or to organize in Mississippi is to address the needs of the people in this space. I think it is a real opportunity to develop, because if you take a place like Mississippi, which has been the haven of oppression in many regards, whether we are talking about racially, culturally, socially, or even economically. It is a haven for bad employment practices. If you can change the conditions in Mississippi, right here in the belly of the beast, then it speaks to what we can achieve across the globe. We no longer want Mississippi to be the refuge for companies that want to pay low wages and create conditions

in which employees are treated in a devastating fashion. If we can change that dynamic here, then it makes it unsafe for them to go to any place to do that. We start creating an agenda and creating the model for what we can achieve as a people and what principled leadership can achieve, so there is no safe space for that type of oppression.

Sarah Jaffe¹

Welcome to Detroit

Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) and their allies announce the second annual International Gathering of Social Movements on Water to be held in Detroit Michigan June 8-11th. You are cordially invited to join social movements from across the globe as we analyze the problems and draft; grassroots solutions for clean, affordable, accessible water and sanitation in addition to solutions for guaranteeing the commons and universal human rights.

For more information on the gathering see the attached flyer or visit the website socialmovementsonwater.info

Hey, water warriors!!

2ND INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ON WATER
INCLUDING THE 2ND
LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT ON WATER
THU-SUN, JUNE 8 - 11, 2017 • DETROIT, MICHIGAN

- June 8: Opening Day Reception, Panel and Keynote
- June 9: Legal & Legislative Summit on Water
- June 10: Grassroots Reports, Analyses & Documentation
- June 11: Closing Water Ceremony; Grassroots Strategies & Solutions

A multi-day gathering of social movement groups, allies and advocates analyzing problems and drafting grassroots solutions for clean, affordable, accessible water and sanitation, in addition to protection of the commons and universal human rights. Plus, a one-day summit of reports and strategies on legal and legislative initiatives promoting affordable water policies and human rights frameworks to support social movements on water and sanitation.

**Water Rights
REPORTS
ANALYSES
DOCUMENTATION
SOLUTIONS
STRATEGIES**

In conjunction with
SWAA's Rumble for Human Rights
SocialWelfareActionAlliance.org
and the
New Poor People's Campaign
PoorPeoplesCampaign.org

For more information contact these coordinators:
Social Movements on Water: Maureen Taylor: chuteh7@hotmail.com
Legal & Legislative Summit: Alice Jennings: ajennings@edwardsjennings.com
SWAA Rumble: Mary Bricker-Jenkins: mbricker@temple.edu

**Registration required. Get more info, sign up at
SocialMovementsOnWater.info**

Sponsored by Michigan Welfare Rights Organization | Lyda Pro Bono Legal/Legislative Committee
People's Water Board Coalition | National Coalition for Legislation on Affordable Water

¹ Originally published on Sarah's blog, <http://sarahljaffe.com/2017/04/18/self-determination-in-mississippi-with-chokwe-antar-lumumba/>

New Labor federation in South Africa

A new workers' trade union federation has been launched under the name of the South African Federation of Trade Unions, on 21-23 April 2017, or a change of name. This is a milestone in the history of the South African Trade Union Movement and paves the way for the birth of a vibrant, independent, democratic and militant workers' champion, which will turn the tide against exploitation, mass unemployment, poverty and inequality and take us forward to the total liberation of the working class.



The initial signs from the new federation are positive. It was a Workers Summit last year that agreed to set up the federation. One of the principles it agreed to was: “Financial self-sufficiency, accountability and opposition, in word and deed, to business unionism, corruption, fraud and maladministration within its own ranks and in society as a whole.”

Amandla Magazine²

² Amandla, March 28, 2017, < <http://aidc.org.za/editorial-new-federation/>>

Our Europe³



Walter Baier

Europe exists in a global context, which we were reminded of, through the advent of the refugees: 1,5 million people searching shelter; which the European Union, one of the global centres of wealth and power and home of 500 million people, is reluctant to provide. What a paradox and what a shame. For Europeans, it's necessary to learn that the crisis does not consist of how 500 million people accommodate 1,5 million, but rather how this 500 million, enjoying still privileged conditions will find a place in a world which, in a foreseeable future will be the home of 10 billion humans; and this will be the world of our children and grand-children. The next century neither will be an US-American as Mr Trump seems to believe, nor will it be a European one. Europe is ill-prepared to cope with this transforming world of ours.

The challenge is ours

However this is not only about external challenges. Europe societies are living in contradiction with itself. The Brexit vote has showcased how angry people react to the erosion of welfare state arrangements and the destruction of the prospects of virtually whole generations after three decades of neo-liberal 'counter-reforms' and austerity. The European Union has become an easy target of right-wing populists and nationalists; not only because they are bad and cynical persons, what they of course are, but because the EU does not deliver what it has promised. What Europe requires is a social and economic recovery program, an agenda for transforming its mode of production and living towards gender justice, ecological sustainability and social equality. Such a program is both, conceivable and it is feasible. So, what's the problem?

Democracy?!?

What is preventing us from achieving what is necessary and doable? The most astonishing thing about the White book recently published by the European Commission is that in all the 35 pages it contains, the word "Democracy" is not mentioned once! How can we accept

³ Extracts from a text published by [Transform](http://www.transform-network.net)! 27 March 2017. Transform is published by a network of 29 European organizations from 20 countries, active in the field of political education and critical scientific analysis, and is the recognized corresponding political foundation of the European Left Party (EL).
< http://www.transform-network.net/index.php?id=446&L=0&tx_newstransform_newstransform%5Bcontroller%5D=Blog&tx_newstransform_newstransform%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_newstransform_newstransform%5BnewsItem%5D=6930&cHash=b6cbde0919b07761944d3a4d1d4e368d>

this? What is needed is an idea of democracy which respects both, the right of democratic self-determination of citizens, states, nations and national minorities, may they be autochthonous or recently arrived. And this is not in contradiction to that we simultaneously need transnational democracy materialized in a fully-fledged European parliament, elected on a universal suffrage by all men and women living on European soil; a parliament which supervises the European Central bank, the European stability mechanism, decides on the Union's budgets and elects the European commission as its executive body. Our Left places itself in the tradition of the all movements for human rights and democracy which form part and of Europe's culture and history. We must re-appropriate the idea of European Unity from the 1% who have high jacked it for the sake of their power and profits.

Walter Baier

Elections in France: What's up for the Left?⁴

The result confirms three things. Firstly, yet another example of the crisis of political representation of mainstream political parties – the PS (Socialist Party) and the LR (Republicans) received less than 30% of the vote and these two forces have normally been in the second round run-offs since the beginning of the Vth Republic in 1958.

Highlights of the results

- Macron (Centre-right): 23.86%
- Le Pen (Extreme Right) : 21.43%
- Fillon (Conservative Right): 19.94%
- Mélenchon (Left): 19.62%,

Secondly it confirms the overall political shift to the right that we have seen elsewhere with the election of Trump and Brexit. If you add the votes of the pro-austerity parties running from the far right to the more centrist Macron you have nearly 70%. Thirdly, there is a radical polarisation both on the right with the FN (National Front led by Marine le Pen) and on the left with France Insoumise (France Unbowed) led by Melenchon).

Challenge for the left

Melenchon's score was eight percentage points better than in 2012. On the one hand this can be seen as progress of a radical anti-austerity left. The movement was very centralised and controlled by the Melenchon team but there were hundreds and hundreds of local committees drawing in experienced and newer, often younger activists.

⁴ Extracts from an article published by Left Unity, April 23, 2017, < <http://leftunity.org/macron-president-a-continuity-candidate-amid-the-rubble-of-a-political-earthquake/>>



His vote is more than double that of the PS. Just this vote can give confidence to people identifying with the left. On the other hand how much of the progress in his score can be explained by the significant shift in the politics of his campaign from that of 2012? It could be defined this time very much as a left populism. Even though there were excellent progressive policies that are unacceptable to the ruling class nationalist tones dominated. This is part of his post-results speech: *“My fine country, my beautiful homeland and you all the people can be proud of what we have undertaken and achieved. We are a conscious and enthusiastic force. I call on you to stay organized, to keep the movement going, to be a movement because the challenges remain (...) You, the people, well-loved country, you are a bright new morning which is dawning. Let’s keep our faith with the values of the Republic – Liberty, Equality and fraternity – long live the Republic and long live France.”*

Next Round

The second round of the elections is on May 7. Macron will be president. The conservatives (Fillion) and the PS have already called for a vote against Le Pen. Melanchon has not made a call, he says he is going to consult his base. The revolutionary left are calling for opposition to Le Pen but not making a clear call to vote Macron. Polls on Sunday gave him 62% in the second round. But it is likely that Marine le Pen will improve on her father’s second round score which only increased by about one percent. She may approach 40% which would be another boost to the racist FN. Again given the electoral system it is not easy for the FN to win parliamentary seats so a progression of this sort does not mean she will have a parliamentary group. Of course if the left cannot provide a serious opposition to Macron, the FN will adopt demagogic anti-austerity positions and be in a position for further progress in future elections. The major question now for all the left is how to respond to the continuing de-demonization and progress of the FN and to build resistance to the pro-austerity policies of a Macron government.

Dave Kellaway

Gearing up to the Next World Social Forum

In the IC, after the Social Forum of the Resistance 2017, political ties between the various social segments articulated in the WSF process were strengthened around the theme of resistance, reinforcing the need for unity among social movements and organizations to face the new neoliberal wave that plagues all continents. The Bahia WSF Collective

presented a proposal for a world-wide event, which could be transformed, if the political, operational and financial conditions were created, in the centralized and worldwide edition of the WSF. This proposal was endorsed by the IC that has pledged to support and get involved in the mobilization process, including with agendas in Bonn and Buenos Aires in 2017 and in several cities in January 2018.

Since then, the Bahia WSF Collective has held several consultations, including two plenary sessions, one in Salvador with social movements in Bahia and another in São Paulo with Brazilian movements, having received more than 200 members. As a result of this process, the "Pro-WSF in Bahia National Collective" was created. A national plenary is being held at the beginning of May in Salvador to continue the discussion process.

The "Pro-WSF in Bahia National Collective" will articulate the proposal of the WSF 2018 with organizations and movements gathered in two Latin American events at the end of April, one in Mexico, on the occasion of the Assembly of the Mesa de Articulación – National Associations and regional NGO networks in Latin America and the Caribbean that brings together the National Platforms of NGOs in Latin America, and another on the occasion of the Panamazonic Social Forum in Peru.

Pro-WSF in Bahia National Collective

The WSF: Looking Back and Looking Ahead



Ronald Cameron

Looking back at the results and importance of the WSF 2016 in Montreal, I argue that the renewal of the WSFs process requires more political action, beyond the establishment of inclusive spaces. The project to move the World Social Forum (WSF) into a northern country motivated its holding in Canada. Also, given the climate in January at the time of the World Economic Forum in Davos, it was held in August in 2016, seven months later

than usual. Many hopes have been put into mobilizing the unorganized. The challenge of participation was thought to be met by the spontaneous presence of tens of thousands of citizens. The involvement and role of social organizations and movements were thus less valued. The nature of the host country and the political context, however, were major obstacles on which the organizing committee had little control. The fact of being summer season ended up having an impact on local participation. Like many national and international participants, we observed by far the lowest presence of all similar gatherings. In fact, the figure of 15,000 people is probably the maximum reached at the level of participation, instead of the 35,000 announced in the Collective's assessment. From this point of view, the Montreal WSF did not have the impact that could be expected.

The importance of the Montreal WSF

However, we cannot judge the event by trying to compare it, in its results, with the previous editions of the WSFs. Its holding was crucial to avoid a greater dispersion that would be critical for the future of the process. In particular, it helped to eliminate the hypothesis of burial of WSFs which had been circulating for some time within the networks. It has also succeeded in mobilizing a diversity of civil society organizations in Quebec, as well as activists from all regions of the world. It has again demonstrated the importance of the establishment of inclusive spaces, as a factor of reinforcement of the movements' resistance. Thus, the Montreal WSF also highlighted the limits and difficulties of the process, fifteen years after the first gathering in Brazil. The Montreal WSF was a relay in a long way to rebuild the WSFs, which continued in Porto Alegre in January 2017. In short, the importance of the WSF in Montreal lies much more in what it reveals to us about the state of the alterglobalist movement than in its immediate results. If the idea of setting up "sharing spaces" is a necessary condition for the development of "another possible world", the WSF in Montreal tends to show that it is not enough to adequately respond to the economic situation which is currently developing on the planet.

New Situation, New Challenges

The first WSF was born in a context of rising social struggles in Brazil and with the popular support mobilized for the Workers' Party. There was a desire to export energy from local mobilizations at the global level. At the same time, the international context required a broad unified response in order to propose an alternative to neo-liberal globalization ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today, the context is no longer the same. The questioning of democratic reforms in Latin America, the rise of extreme rights in Europe, and the increase of austerity policies all over the world and the recent election of Donald Trump require a more daring political response. Without sacrificing the political independence of the movement and its inclusiveness, several trails for renewal were announced in December. To go beyond the one dimension of sharing experiences, to encourage the renewal of the process and to reinforce the relevance and the scope of the event.

Popular education and the future of the WSF

The movement for the right to education is a founding movement of the WSFs process. Today, with the demands for renewal imposed by the political context, the movement for

the right to education can participate in the debate on the future of WSFs, notably based on the advances made in popular education. According to the Charter of Principles, a WSF creates open and inclusive spaces on key themes for the development of another possible world. The movement for the right to education for all shares this methodological approach to "bottom-up" pedagogy, but goes further and puts forward an emancipatory action of social transformation. The education dimension remains essential to the development of the objectives of social justice and sustainable development, but the future of education depends on its assumption by all the components of civil society. The movement for the right to education must maintain its commitment to the WSF processes.

Ronald Cameron

Canada, Past and Present

Capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism

Montreal, August 17-19, 2017

The Canadian State celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. It's the only territory of the Americas that didn't fight for its independence or reinvent itself to resemble a republic. Yet Canada has had a distinct and ongoing history of conquests and plunder, including the stealing of 98 % of the First Nation's lands. This is not our State and we have nothing to celebrate. However, this year represents an opportunity to better understand the long-lasting capitalist, colonial and patriarchal power system that has oppressed and violated people across the land, at the hands of a benefitting small elite. Time and again, this power has been shaken by uprisings. This history of resistance is our history. And it's from here that we can map out our movements and struggles. Join us at the NCS People's University next August as we retake our history, invent new tools for liberation and imagine another world, a post-capitalist, post-patriarchal and post-colonial society.

www.cahiersdusocialisme.org

Intercoll is an open space for the development and confrontation of social and citizen movements. It is run by individuals linked to those movements, and by anyone who is involved in social struggles and mobilizations. Intercoll aims to contribute to the gradual emergence of a new "international collective intellectual" from the reflection of movements and networks of research and public education. Intercoll aims to create an international and multicultural space. The website operates in six languages.

<http://intercoll.net/?lang=en>

Food for Thought

The Bifurcation Point

Álvaro García Linera¹

The physicist Ilya Prigogine, studying non-equilibrium (unstable) systems, realized that, after a time, these systems can lead to a new order, and he called the point at which an unstable system can move to a new equilibrium the “bifurcation point” (Nicolis and Prigogine, 1977). State structures in crisis (in non-equilibrium) are characterized by instability and political confrontation and genuine and generalized moments of struggle for political power. But inasmuch as no society can remain in a state of generalized and antagonistic struggle for power forever, it will sooner or later stabilize or construct a state order that restores certainty to the structures of domination and political administration.

This historically specific moment after which the state becomes stable is what I call the “bifurcation point.” This is a concept that I have been working with, perhaps in other terms, for 20 years in order to describe the exceptional moment of military and moral strength and conservative consolidation of state power that occurred when the miners in Bolivia organized their March for Life to protest the mine closures undertaken by the Paz Estenssoro administration. The miners had made one last effort to reconstruct the agreements made during the 1952 Revolution, but when they mobilized they were received by a military siege. There were no clashes and no deaths. The government was so superior militarily and the miners’ political and moral stance so vulnerable (given that they were making demands on a government that had buried the social pacts of 1952) that no bullets were necessary to ensure their retreat. This defeat, with the miners heading home unable to mount resistance and accepting their displacement from the mines, marked an era of social abandonment.

Later on, the middle and working classes, teachers, all the elements of society reproduced this bifurcation point—a kind of foundational nucleus of the state correlation of forces. In this case, the same actors were involved in a struggle that had diametrically opposite results from those that gave birth to the 1952 state. After seven years of state crisis and a stolen electoral victory in 1951, the April 9, 1952, insurrection was the bifurcation point for the nationalist state. Its foundational nuclei were the workers and peasant militias whose triumphant unionism ensured the constant opposition of the masses in an alien but compromised state. The subsequent neoliberal state put an end to any sort of pact that was not one of the closed-minded and endogamous political elites. Thus, in September 1986, the miners returned home with the corpse of the 1952 state, and the neoliberal state was consolidated through a demonstration of military and political strength that would not be contested until 14 years later, in April 2000.

¹ Extracts from an article published in LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 173, Vol. 37 No. 4, July 2010

A look at the construction of new states reveals that they all have bifurcation points with several characteristics. First there is a moment of strength, not necessarily involving either dialogue or violence but rather a naked display of power in which conflicting forces are unmasked, take each other's measure, and in the process determine the outcome. A second characteristic is that the bifurcation point is the moment when the old forces accept their defeat or the rising forces accept that victory is beyond their grasp and withdraw. There is no room for equilibrium.

One social force or power bloc takes command among those who accept its authority, giving rise to a new understanding between governors and governed. Politics (paraphrasing Foucault) becomes the continuation of war by other means rather than the inverse, and in this Foucault is closer to being right than Rousseau. In other words, the bifurcation point is when resolution is achieved through the direct confrontation of the material, symbolic, and economic forces in conflict, without any mediating influences.

The current question is when we will have passed the bifurcation point of the actual state transition. It could be said that we are currently going through its most intense moments, and this suggests that soon either the new state will become consolidated, successfully adding a new political system to the new economic and symbolic structures, with a gradual reaccommodation, or the old powers will return with new faces, new mobilizing symbols, and the old political relations of domination.

We initially believed that the state could be reconstructed through dialogue and negotiation, and we continue to bet on a bifurcation point that is democratic and gradual in approach. However, reason and history suggest that instead there will be increasing tension between the forces involved, and we have little choice but to wait and see what happens. But I think that the moment of resolution is closer than it appears.