

Race, Oppositional Politics, and the Challenges of Post-9/11 Mass Movement-Building Spaces

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Abstract

In the absence of a critical race analysis that is aimed at informing and shaping political practice in the United States, the prospect for revolutionary renewal and movement building will not be able to reach its full potential in the post-9/11 period and beyond. This paper examines the race-informed developments of the 9/11 attacks, the racial politics of reparations, the spring 2006 immigrant rights protests, and the February/March 2011 protest action in Madison, Wisconsin, for illustration. In addition, it interrogates the issues of race and racism within the labour movement and the wider American society, and the manner in which they are deployed to prevent the emergence of an anti-oppression collective consciousness and a broad-based political movement.

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In the post-9/11 world, the struggle against White supremacy and racial oppression must be of strategic importance and consideration to White social movement organizations. The lack of clear anti-racist commitment and solidarity tend to trip up the claims that are made about constructing popular resistance and an emancipatory agenda against the neo-liberal phase of capitalism. In the context of the post-9/11 United States, the possibility of a sustained and mass challenge to capitalist oppression is near impossible if White supremacy and the deployment of the instrument of White solidarity are not interrogated and rejected by White political actors. In the post-9/11 environment and the larger context of the political defeat of state socialism in Europe and elsewhere, the relevance of race and anti-racist activism to mounting a sustained resistance to the racist, patriarchal and capitalist hegemony is not seen as significant within the White majority societies in North America and Europe. Du Bois (1996) attributes the preceding state of affairs to the manipulation of perceptive reality and engendering of an anti-racialized people bias by the ruling groups to “undermine the ability and the desire of Americans and Europeans to include peoples of colour as fully entitled members of the human family and thus deserving of the same human dignity, the same social justice and the same human rights advocated for themselves” (p. 186).

The salience of race in making the “War on Terror” possible, and the difficulty in facilitating an inclusive alliance of the “wretched of the earth,” is lost on most people who would see themselves as a part of progressive opinion. Whiteness in dominant spaces attempts to get away with pretending that race does not matter by cloaking itself in the “façade of ignorance, innocence and naïveté in the face of claims of its destructiveness” (Dyson, 2003, p. 122). Dyson (2003) posits a similar version of White innocence among many self-consciously anti-racist White allies who are thoroughly taken aback by critique of demonstrated behaviour that upholds or perpetuates White supremacy. hooks (1992) has observed similar responses in classroom spaces where White students who locate themselves as “liberals and anti-racist” instinctively react with “disbelief, shock and rage” when whiteness is interrogated and uncovered under the spotlight of the oppositional gaze of the racialized Other (pp. 167–168). White progressives being oblivious to racial oppression does not provide the fertile soil for the germination of broad movements of resistance in the United States and elsewhere. One does not need to be reminded that it was the Civil Rights Movement in the American

South that facilitated the radicalization of consciousness and brought into motion the multiplicity of new social movements that characterized the 1960s and 1970s (Hargis, 1996; Price, 2001). A small ripple may give rise to wave-like movements, especially in cases where the agenda of the former has the potential to tear asunder the calculus of repression within the particular political economy of a state.

I intend to examine the race-informed developments of the 9/11 attacks, the racial politics of reparations, the spring 2006 immigrant rights protests, and the February/March 2011 protest action in Madison, Wisconsin, to interrogate the matter of race and racism within American society, and their prevention of the anti-oppression collective consciousness that is needed to create a unified movement against oppression. I will briefly address the work that class struggle anarchists may want to carry out in support of a principled and committed anti-racism agenda. In the absence of a critical race analysis that is aimed at informing political practice in United States, the prospect for revolutionary renewal and movement-building will not be able to reach its full potential in the post-9/11 period and beyond.

Anarchism and Its Engagement With Race and Racism

There have been multiple anarchists' movement voices (individuals and organizations) that have challenged its adherents to centre white supremacy in the work of emancipation inside the United States (Balagoon, 2001; Ervin, 1993; Olson, 2009). It is not a coincidence that some of the most strident voices calling for the problematising of race and racism are from racialized individuals and organizations within the anarchist movement (Olson, 2009). The challenge to the movement to take race seriously beyond written and verbal pronouncements may be complicated its membership being largely White within the United States (Ervin, 1993; Olson, 2009). Balagoon (2001) exhorts White anarchists to support the struggles of colonized racialized and indigenous peoples inside the American empire irrespective of whether they "endorse nationalism as the vehicle for self-determination or agree with anarchism as being the only road to self-determination" (p. 76). According to Balagoon (2001), for anarchists not to stand in practical and principled solidarity with these oppressed peoples is racist and supportive of the genocidal action of the oppressor.

Ervin (1993) calls on the anarchist movement to demonstrate solidarity in action with racialized peoples through the type of educational, mobilizational, organizational and resource-sharing activities that it does every day. Olson (2009) asserts that white supremacy in the United States plays a critical role in the development of its capitalist political economy and as such the fight to eliminate it must assume “strategic centrality that other struggles lack” (p. 1). These voices have a movement-like tone and tenor in their exhortation and insistence on fighting White supremacy so as to facilitate the struggle for anarchist movement-building. It is quite instructive that the groups that are centred in the work of building mass movements within the struggles of oppressed people tend to see the relevance of anti-racist engagement as a principal part of the liberation process (Ervin, 1993; Olson, 2009). The same direction and stridency is not so evident within the academic anarchist circles and their publication record.

If the quantity of scholarly output by anarchist scholars on White supremacy, race and anti-racism should be taken as an indicator of where the heads of these actors are on the relevant subjects, one would have to wonder aloud about the extent to which White anti-authoritarian forces are infected with the social disease of White “ignorance, innocence and naïveté.” A survey of the titles of the featured papers in the nineteen volumes of the journal *Anarchist Studies* betrays a lack of attention to race and racism within its pages. A review of the titles of the articles in each issue of the publication *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* uncovered a similar result. This situation ought not to be the case given the fact that anarchism stands in opposition to all forms of social hierarchies and privileges the cause of the oppressed (DeLeon, 2010; Williams, 2007). The disturbing reality is that of a limited scholarly engagement with White racism, race and anti-racism discourse among self-identified anarchist scholars. Why is that so? The anarchist movement’s presence within academia and the wider society is generally populated by Whites. It is the unfortunate reality that it takes the presence of the outsiders in a movement to give urgency and centrality of focus to phenomena such as racism, heteronormativity, and sexism. The evident paucity of anarchist scholarship on race and racism confirms the veracity of the preceding assertion. It is not a coincidence that Abraham DeLeon (2010), an anarchist academic worker, would locate race in his exploration of the contours of autoethnography, lived experience, knowledge production and anarchist theory and praxis. He is

a racialized man from the United States with all that implies with respect to the social, cultural and political imposition of whiteness.

Yet one does not need to experience racialization or be deemed the racial Other to write about race in the United States and bring an anarchist lens and sensibility to the project. Wayne Price (2001) has written on the subject of anarchism and the struggle of African Americans, while Dana Williams (2007) undertakes an examination of the racist nature of using the names and images of indigenous Americans in sports culture. Hobson (2004) brings a critical investigation of the role of *The Negro Quarterly* among African Americans in developing and defining a civil rights position during World War II that was independent of the Communist Party. The decision not to give due attention to the role of race and racism in structuring oppressive conditions for millions of people in the West and throughout the globe is unconscionable in anarchist academic circles. A look at the magazine *The Utopian* would show that it does a better job of providing the space for articles dealing with race and racial oppression. It may be attributed to the publication's explicit recognition of the United States as "[t]his racist, authoritarian society" and role of African Americans in the freedom struggles by expressing the hope that the labour movement and "U.S. Black movement, have – we hope – new utopian phases ahead" as outlined on the "About *The Utopian*" page on its website (<http://www.utopianmag.com/whoweare/>).

An anarchist voice from the past that surprised me on her apparent lack of concern about racism during her American years was Emma Goldman. The broadness of Goldman's social concerns and her courage in taking on issues such as birth control, emancipation of women, the institution of marriage and a woman's freedom to express or share her sexuality, made her public silence on Jim Crow apartheid in the South and racist oppression and segregation in the North rather puzzling (Goldman, 1969). It most certainly was not the case that she was unaware of racism, because on recalling a prison incident she made this declaration: "I myself never had any prejudice against colored people; in fact, I felt deeply for them because they were being treated like slaves in America" (Goldman, 1970, p. 138). She just never felt sufficiently moved by this suffering to include it as a topic on the lecture circuit and in her activist work. At least Lucy Parson, a contemporary, wrote and spoke on the subject of lynching and argued for armed self-defense by African Americans (McKean, 2006). However, later in life and after developing a warm and close friendship with Paul Robeson and Essie

Robeson she acknowledged that she “never realized the cruelty to the Negro race quite so much as I have since I met the Robesons” (cited in Wexler, 1989, p. 117). Goldman’s lack of solidarity with African American’s fight against White domination should be taken as an objective lesson that merely embracing a revolutionary ideology against domination is not enough. Partisans of that outlook must be seen as and be active participants or advocates for the particular freedom claims of the relevant oppressed groups.

However, there was one nineteenth-century anarchist who had a close encounter with the servitude of enslaved African workers in the Deep South state of Louisiana. The French anarchist Elise Reclus was employed as a tutor on a plantation, and he was clearly affected by the fact that he was benefiting financially from the enslaved labour of African people (Fleming, 1988). Reclus was a supporter of the cause of abolition and he had this to say on the campaign against chattel slavery:

It is beautiful to see this relentless war of the press; the discussion, the conversation day and night, all the moments against that elusive phantom of human freedom; every [N]egro, every white who voices protest in favour of the rights of man, every word, every line in the south affirms that man is the brother of man. (Fleming, 1988, p. 43)

Reclus walked away from his contractual obligation before the end of his term, because of his awareness of the benefit he derived from the labour of enslaved Africans.

Given the way that race is being used in this “post-9/11” period of struggle to maintain domestic oppression, while being deployed abroad to maintain control over racialized peoples and their land and resources, the expression of support for anti-racism resistance will need to be visible and consistent from all anarchist forces. The State’s response to the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States revealed the deep reservoir of sentiments that enable racially deferential suppression of civil liberties.

Race, Civil Liberties and Limited Solidarity

The attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11,

2001 (date will hereafter be referred to as “9/11”) are being used by the political establishment in the United States to constrict the circle of dissent. These two affected assets are symbols of the power and world dominance of this sole superpower, and the presumed message of the attacks is that America and its people are vulnerable to retaliatory violence (Middle East Research and Information Project, 2011). On the question of the motive behind the attacks, Marable (2002) states that he knew that the actors “who had obliterated the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon were attempting to make a symbolic political statement about links between transnational capitalism and U.S. militarism” (p. 294). While many American citizens are used to seeing images on their television screens of people killed or wounded as a result of political violence in lands occupied by the racialized Other, it is not something that they expect on their soil and at the hands of the “barbarians” outside the gate. The almost three thousand deaths in the 9/11 attacks were experienced as a startling and dramatic spectacle to citizens of the lone superpower state. But loss of life on this scale occurs frequently in the Global South, and often with the collusion or direct support of the United States and other major liberal capitalist democracies, as evidenced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Pakistan, Haiti, Colombia or Afghanistan.

While hundreds of thousands of racialized people have died in those conflicts where the United States is clearly implicated, its 9/11-related deaths were treated as exceptional and worthy of the severest forms of punishment against the perceived perpetrators. Yet in the period 2007–2010, 9,759 Afghani civilians were killed, with 2,723 of the killings being committed by NATO’s, the United States’ and their local allies’ military forces, according to the United Nations and Human Rights Watch (Middle East Research and Information Project, 2011). The estimated civilian deaths of the Afghans since the invasion is 12,000–14,000 individuals, while the number of internally displaced people stands at 415,000 and the refugee population in Pakistan comes in at 1.8 million individuals according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (Niland, 2011). In 2010, about 10 per cent of Iraq’s population, or 3.5 million Iraqis, fell within one of the following categories as a result of the 2003 invasion of their country: “internally displaced persons (IDP),” “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” “returned refugees,” “stateless persons,” and “returned IDPs” (Dewachi, 2001, p. 4). At least 125,000 Iraqis have died from the violence that accompanied the American-led assault on the Iraqi people

(Dewachi, 2011).

The death toll for Iraq is likely higher than the one being promoted by the United States and the Western media. In 2006, an epidemiological study from John Hopkins University found that 650,000 Iraqis had died as a result of the invasion, a number that is probably in the region of one million deaths today (Tirman, 2011). While the people in the United States have been engaging in publicly demonstrative wailing about their casualties from the 9/11 attacks, it is the Afghans and Iraqis who have and are suffering the numerically, materially and psychologically more damaging effects of the West's unnecessary war on them. In the judgment of Tirman (2011), "racism surely accounts for some of the cavalier disrespect the public and press show toward the civilian suffering in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The irony of using brutal military force on racialized people abroad to promote America's political ends was lost on the war planners. The death of the wretched of the earth abroad was seemingly of no significance to George Bush and his "coalition of the willing." According to Spann (2005):

In a very real sense, foreign civilian casualties are not counted, because such casualties appear not to "count" in the United States war on terror. The United States tends to regard those deaths and injuries as inevitable casualties of a war that is necessary to preserve United States liberty and security. However, viewed from the perspective of those who actually suffer the civilian casualties inflicted by the United States in foreign countries, United States military action must look very much like the terrorism that is abhorred in this country. It must appear to be politically motivated violence that is inflicted in a largely random manner, in a way that instills widespread fear and anxiety so as to undermine the liberty of its victims to engage in the normal activities of everyday life. (p. 95)

The callous disregard for the taking of the lives of racialized peoples in foreign lands should not be a surprise given the lack of concern for their counterparts' social and economic well-being within the White supremacist culture that is the United States.

While the scale of the 9/11 mass political killing was unprecedented in America, it was not unexpected in the realm of conservative opinion that had been making the claim that "the clash of civilizations" would be the norm with the ending of the Cold War (Ji,

n.d.). Samuel Huntington (1993), the prophet of the clash of civilizations thesis, singled out the Islamic world as the one that would be in a primal and existential conflict with Western civilization. As a settler-colonialist society, the United States does not need an excuse or a vigorous prompting to severely compromise the liberties or human rights of the racialized outsiders, or, to borrow Audre Lorde's (1984) term, the "outsider within." The United States is used to the practice of genocidal action and land confiscation against indigenous peoples and the enslavement, Jim Crow imposition and mass incarceration of Africans within its border.

Therefore, it was not much of a surprise to see this imperial state's mass assault against its racialized Arab, South Asian and Muslim citizens, and the racialization of the conflict at home and abroad. According to Abu-Laban and Bakan (2008), "global relations have been reduced to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations', where race and culture are first rendered synonymous, and then simultaneously obscured in racialized stereotypes" (p. 637). Culture is often used as a stand-in for race in American academic, political or public discourse, when dealing with race. This tendency is evidenced in terms such as "culture of poverty," "urban culture" and "urban music." Many activists and people on the Left have lost sight of what was really at stake with the United States' response to the 9/11 attacks.

Race politics was raising itself in a way that would co-opt support from a broad swath of the America public, and the political elites are accustomed to using this valuable currency when they want to demonize a minority within (Marable, 2002). Interned Japanese Americans can certainly speak to what it felt like to be the target of a state that found itself at war with a foreign adversary (Saito, 2010; Shun-jie, n.d.). It is quite instructive that African American and Hispanic respondents to a poll immediately after the 9/11 attacks demonstrated solidarity with their White counterparts in holding the view that "profiling of Muslims or Arabs was appropriate" (Cashin, 2010, p. 130). According to Marable (2002) African American and Latina/o "patriotism" was on full display:

I began noticing the large number of American flags, for example, displayed on the fronts of [B]lack homes and businesses. On the New York City subways immediately following the attacks, I saw more [B]lacks and Latinos wearing red, white and blue buttons, caps and other patriotic paraphernalia than at any other time in my memory (pp. 309–310).

However, major African American religious and civic leaders such as Cecil Bishop of the National Congress of Black Churches, Reverend James Forbes, Jr. of the Riverside Church in New York, and Hugh Price of the National Urban League either raised questions about the racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims, drew analogy to their people's historical and contemporary experience of state and civil society terrorism, or called for an interrogative "prophetic patriotism" (Marable, 2002, p. 311). There were critical and oppositional voices from within the American hip-hop community such as Sage Francis, Immortal Technique and Paris, who critiqued the hysteria about the racialized Arab and Muslim Other and laid bare the politics of U.S. imperialism.

Open, public political dissent thrives best in an environment where the citizens do not fear brutal crackdown, intensive and intrusive surveillance, detention or imprisonment, loss of their livelihood or use of their neighbours as informers or snitches by the State (Ivie, 2004). The crackdown on specific civil liberties by the American (and Canadian) political authorities in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 assault had popular support, which was informed by an anti-Muslim and anti-Arab animus enclosed in the veil of patriotism against the perceived outsider-groups (Cashin, 2010; Falconer & Mathai, 2006). In the mass panic over terrorism, a November 2001 poll carried out by three mainstream organizations revealed that concerns about "security" trumped those of "civil liberties" among a majority of U.S. citizens. Ji (n.d.) reveals that Americans were willing to give abnormal power to the secret police infrastructure and other agents of the State to ferret out putative terrorist suspects. The wiretapping of telephones, reading one's mail, monitoring use of credit cards, surveillance of internet correspondence and activity, reviewing of tax records, accessing the educational history of targeted individuals, and detaining suspects without charges had majority support that ranged from 57 per cent to 82 percent (Ji, n.d.).

Why would so many American citizens who are generally zealously protective of their civil liberties be so willing to surrender them to the forces of "Big Brother" or "Big Government"? The experience of the internment of Japanese Americans (Saito, 2010) and McCarthyism are still within living memory, so restriction on personal freedoms should have triggered the proverbial alarm bells and inspired collective resistance. Unfortunately, it is not at all unusual for the citizenry to accept or tolerate limitations on the exercise of fundamental freedoms during wars or national crises. However,

after the outrageous assault on civil liberties during World War I, many Americans, in the immediate post-Wars years, took exception to such a state of affairs. According to Ivie (2004):

Out of this onslaught on the Bill of Rights were the American Civil Liberties Union and an emergent precedent of Supreme Court dissenting opinions that evolved into a fleeting majority position of the 1950s and 1960s which temporarily bolstered civil liberties. Yet each war or crisis has brought with it renewed violations of civil rights and displacement of democratic practices, including the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, Cold War blacklisting and political intimidation during the McCarthy era of guilt by association, and exclusion of the press from direct reporting on U.S. military action in Grenada, Panama, Kuwait and Kosovo followed by the strategic embedding of reporters in the second war on Iraq. Indeed, threats to civil liberties and the curtailment of political dissent after 9/11 may yet develop into the most assaulting on democratic freedoms since the founding of the republic, reducing American citizenship to the consumption of “freedom fries.” (p. 22)

It should be noted that the above cases of abuse of civil liberties were directed at racialized or political minorities under the guise of protecting the realm from dark, dangerous forces at home and abroad. Even the repressive measures used against political movements or organizations such as the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, The Black Liberation Movement, the American Independence Movement (AIM) and the New Left during the 1960s and 1970s by America’s secret and regular police forces could be interpreted as aimed at political or racialized minorities (notwithstanding the resonance of the issues being advocated within or for a wider constituency) (Churchill & Wall, 1990).

The level of tolerance that we have witnessed, or are witnessing, for the smothering of civil liberties is tied to the fact that the people who are being targeted under the law enforcement and secret police actions are largely members of religious and racialized minorities. According to Spann (2005), “the present sacrifice of minority liberty for majority security is simply a form of racial discrimination . . . The nation’s history suggests that the sacrifice of racial minority interests for majoritarian gain is simply a defining characteristic of United

States culture” (p. 90). White America has long tolerated differential, discriminatory, and excessively punitive policing, prosecution and imprisonment of African Americans for centuries (from the enslavement period to today) (Alexander, 2011; Davis, 2007; Davis, 1999; Roberts, 2007). The legislation that gave effect to the post-9/11 trampling of civil rights is popularly known as the USA PATRIOT Act, but its official name is *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act*. Its provisions confirmed the level of negation of civil liberties that Americans are open to supporting, although they are applicable to citizens and non-citizens living inside of the United States (Saito, 2010). Western states, including the United States, made the claim that Arabs and Muslims were not being racially profiled under the national security agenda of the post-9/11 period, in spite of it being the reality in practice (Cashin, 2010; Falconer & Mathai, 2006; Spann, 2005).

One does not need to be among the most discerning of citizens to be cognizant of a post-9/11 environment that was tolerant of framing Arabs and Muslims as a threat to the security of the liberal capitalist democracies in the West. The case of the rendition of Maher Arar from the United States to Syria on the grounds of dubious intelligence provided by Canada, and his detention and torture in that Middle Eastern state, stands out as one of the most outrageous of the disagreeable cases of post-9/11 racial profiling (Falconer & Mathai, 2006). Detention of groups of people deemed as threatening to law and order, and the use of aggressive surveillance, have long been instruments of the state. America shamelessly incarcerated Arab and Muslims, sought “voluntary” interviews with 8,000 subjects on the basis of age, region of origin and gender, and by late 2003 forced about 300,000 foreign nationals, from predominantly Arab, South Asian and/or North Africa countries, to register themselves with a national security programme (Ghazali, 2008; Saito, 2010). In July 2004, the federal government announced that it was going to launch another round of interviews of Arabs and Muslims (Ghazali, 2008). The race, religion and/or ethnicity of the detainees and the country with which they were linked spoke to a racialized and race-informed reality. Their existential state of being was congruent with that of the Other: not White. White Americans and even many non-Muslim and non-Arab Americans knew that they were not the likely targets of these extraordinary security measures and went along with them (Ji, n.d.; Spann, 2005). A very telling case of Americans’

intolerance for liberty-denying strictures that would cover the full citizenry was their opposition to a national identity card (Ji, n.d.). The protest marches against the draconian security measures were mainly generated by grassroots elements and were small scale events (Johnson & Hing, 2007).

But the citizens of the United States are deluding themselves when they pretend that the enhanced investigative and enforcement power given to the State was not significant to their dissent and activism (Marable, 2002). The definition of domestic terrorism is so encompassing that it covers the activities of certain environmental and animal liberation groups and could be used against indigenous nations in the territorial United States, who may use armed resistance to pursue their right to self-determination (Saito, 2010). At this time across America, some Palestinian solidarity activists are being arrested and heavily monitored by the secret police and other law enforcement agencies. But it is the corrosive impact of government secrecy, restrictions on the disclosure of law enforcement information, wide-scale monitoring, spying and surveillance of the citizenry on vigorous political dissent and activism that should be of concern to all citizens (Ivie, 2004). White Americans ought to realize that the same measures that are used against racialized residents today could be easily used against White people if they become politically active in oppositional social movement organizations. The struggle for racial justice and positive measures that address structural inequalities rooted in racism are not receiving much sympathy from White Americans.

Reparations, Race and Social (in)justice

The movement for reparations among African Americans could certainly be counted as one of the race-based activist initiatives that suffered from the patriotic, White solidarity atmosphere of the 9/11 moment. Coming out of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, the issue of reparations for the enslavement and oppression of Africans in the United States was on a roll. A commentator on the reparation movement had the following to say on its immediate pre-9/11 status:

Just a few years ago, at roughly the turn of the millennium, slavery reparations seemed the coming thing. A June 2001 New

York Times article reported that the movement to obtain compensation for slaves' descendants had "taken on substantial force" and was "gaining steam" both in the nation's universities, abuzz with rallies and study committees, and in the black community generally. All the major black organizations had signed on, including the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Randall Robinson's *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* had hit bestseller lists in 2000, announcing in impassioned tones the need to rectify "America's crime against us," a "black holocaust" that was "far and away the most heinous human rights crime visited upon any group of people in the world over the last five hundred years." True, whites outside the campus remained heavily opposed, but after the United Church of Christ became the first big multiracial denomination to endorse the notion and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called for the creation of a national reparations committee, it was only a matter of time before more whites came on board. Many state and local Democratic politicians started to talk up the idea. (Olson, 2008)

The repressive and patriotic atmosphere, domestically and internationally, surrounding 9/11 eroded the political will and enthusiasm for reparations beyond the activist circles (Black Workers League, 2008; Olson, 2008).

Although the House of Representatives approved a resolution that apologized for the enslavement of Africans in America and their oppression under Jim Crow laws, this legislative body was silent on the question of reparations. According to Hutchinson (2008), "Reparations is simply too risky, divisive, and distracting for Congress to seriously consider." It was such a politically suicidal issue with American voters that both John McCain and Barack Obama opposed it during the 2008 presidential race. An October 2005 survey of African Americans revealed that 81 per cent of them supported reparations (Herrera, 2005). The payment of reparations is a legal facility that is used by states to seek or disburse compensation for undue injury or harm to their interest or that of others. White America had no problem in demanding and getting \$1.5 billion in reparations payments from the Libyan state for the Americans who were killed on Pan Am flight 103 in 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, as well as in a Berlin night club in 1986 (Weaver, 2008). Interestingly, the United States committed itself to paying \$300 million in reparations to the victims

of its 1986 bombing of Libya. The government also paid reparations to the Japanese-American survivors of World War II internment and their descendants (Marable, 2002).

However, White public opinion is adamantly opposed to compensating African Americans for the enslavement and Jim Crow oppression. A 2002 poll of African Americans and Whites in Alabama revealed that while 67 per cent of the former are in favour of the government paying reparations only 5 per cent of the latter were so inclined. Only 15 per cent of White Alabamians were in favour of corporations that benefited from slavery paying reparations to the descendants of the enslaved, but 69 per cent of African Americans gave their approval (Trophy, 2004). It may be easy for one to think that one would not have expected anything else from a former Deep South state that participated in plantation slavery. However, a 2003 nationwide study of Americans by two Ivy League universities showed that a mere 4 per cent of Whites support reparations, but 67 per cent of African Americans approved the proposition (Trophy, 2004). The Caucasians United for Reparation and Emancipation (<http://www.reparationsthecure.org/AboutUs>) is one of the few vocal solidarity groups among Whites that has pushed the question of financial compensation, and it also raised the question of African American national self-determination. The latter point is significant. It could be argued that the nationality of African Americans is still unsettled, because they did not give their explicit consent to being made citizens by the Fourteenth Amendment. As a people who were captured and taken from another land, they ought to have been presented with options about their nationality. Each choice (citizenship in America, a national community carved out America, or repatriation to another country) would be accompanied by reparations for their enslavement.

Where are the voices of White social movement activists on the question of financial compensation to African Americans for their oppression and exploitation during slavery and Jim Crow and the deleterious economic, social and cultural impact of those institutions of domination? The over two centuries of unpaid, enslaved labour and the post-emancipation sharecropping system, and their contribution to the development of America cannot be invisible to progressive and leftist opinion. Glick (2001) challenged progressive Whites on the question of reparations and their predisposition on this matter:

The real question for those of us who are white who claim to be about justice and equality for all is whether we can deal with the racism within us that prevents sober-minded, rational consideration of popular demands emerging out of black or other communities of color. We shouldn't blindly support demands we don't fully understand or with which we disagree. We should investigate, ask questions, listen and learn. It is just plain wrong to attempt to beat these demands down or "advise" our sisters and brothers of color what is the "practical" way they can achieve their objectives. Of all the things that are "divisive," this has got to be up there at the top of the list.

When Whites are disinclined to support financial compensation for the enslavement of African Americans, or do not step up on other pertinent issues related to race, gender and/or class oppression of racialized people in the United States, one should not be surprised at the difficulty in the emergence of a unified, broad alliance to challenge capitalist hegemony. Reparations payments to African Americans would mostly likely be used to advance their collective economic and social development (Marable, 2002).

Mass Spring 2006 Marches for Immigrant Rights

The class struggle and the forces against oppression in the United States need more solidarity and movement-building to be effective. Many activists are currently celebrating the mass protest that occurred in Wisconsin over Governor Walker's attack on unionized public sector workers and social programmes. But before addressing the response of public sector workers and the citizenry in Wisconsin, I would like to remind readers that in spite of the post-9/11 atmosphere that has not been favourable to mass protest action, Spring 2006 saw hundreds of thousands of people on the streets in support of immigrant rights.

In March 2006, a number of cities across America had massive turnouts of supporters standing in solidarity against a proposed immigration bill in Congress, which would have "made the mere status of being an undocumented immigrant a felony subject to imprisonment as well as deportation from the United States. Arguably, it also would have imposed criminal sanctions on persons who provided humanitarian assistance to undocumented immigrants" (Johnson &

Hing, 2007, p. 100). The following cities mobilized large numbers of people into the streets: Los Angeles (500,000); Denver (50,000); Phoenix (20,000); Milwaukee (10,000); Charlotte (5–7,000); and Sacramento (5,000) (Associated Press, 2005).

On May 1, 2006, over one million marchers (mostly Latina/os) walked away from their jobs or studies to demonstrate in support of the rights of immigrants, and their action clearly demonstrated the impact of these groups of workers on certain sectors of the American economy (The Economist, 2006). Johnson & Hing (2007) reflect on the implication of the above marches for a new multi-racial civil rights movement that would encompass “wage and labor protections in the workplace, safe and affordable housing, equal access to education, and fair treatment by government and employers” (p. 136). The preceding issues are clearly ones that are of concern to the broad working-class in American society. They also take on a race-informed character, because of the racialized poverty and exploitation and the greater insecurity of undocumented and documented racialized workers or residents. It is clear that racialized America is mobilizable, given the Spring 2006 series of marches and even the Million Man March of October 1995. Racialized people need to see their issues of concerns being centred in mass organizing and mobilization and they ought to be a strategic part of the decision-making process.

Enter Madison, Wisconsin and the Possibility of Resurgent Labour

The uprising in Madison, Wisconsin in early February 2011 may have given organized labour — or the labouring classes — a hint at the possibility of resistance in the streets of America. Or should the credit go to the children of Caliban¹ in the streets and squares of Egypt? Can you imagine the role reversal implied by the prospect of the children of Caliban teaching those of Prospero, the great civilizer, the art of being human or striving for moral autonomy or collective personhood? The racial composition of Wisconsin’s population in

¹ Caliban is a character in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and is the epitome of the demonized Other in the Western literary imagination, political economy and imperialist project. While Prospero is the superordinate, privileged and cultured counterpart, who is the giver or representative of “civilization” and progress.

2010 was Latina/os (5.9 per cent), African Americans (6.3 per cent), Native Americans (1 per cent) and Whites (86.2 per cent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Many commentators have asserted that if there had been no revolt in Egypt, and the forced departure of the pharaoh-like Hosni Mubarak, there would not have likely been the mass protest action in that oh-so-white of a state, Wisconsin. Kroll (2011) cites Scott Graham, a teacher from Wisconsin who made the Egypt-Madison/Wisconsin connection:

Watching Egypt's story for a week or two very intently, I was inspired by the Egyptian people, you know, striving for their own self-determination and democracy in their country. . . . I was very inspired by that. And when I got here I sensed that everyone's in it together. The sense of solidarity is just amazing.

It is simply amazing to think that the fair citizenry of Wisconsin would require an external political stimulus to challenge their exploitation. The racialized section of the United States' working-class has been bearing the brunt of the racist, sexist and capitalist battering of the welfare state structures since the 1980s without much sympathy from their White working-class counterparts.

But predominantly-white Wisconsin was up in arms after their apparent awareness of the implication of pandering to right-wing populist policy propositions, which led to the election of Republican Governor Scott Walker and his counterparts' success at gaining majorities in both chambers of Wisconsin's legislature in the November 2011 elections (Goldner, 2011). Governor Walker unleashed a number of anti-working-class legislative proposals, such as the removal of collective bargaining rights from public sector workers, the annual re-certification of bargaining units, the transformation of unions dues deductions so they would no longer be deducted at source by the employer, the requirement that wages cannot exceed the rate of inflation unless dictated by the results of a referendum, and the requirement that employees pay 5.8 per cent of their wages to the pension plan and 12.5 per cent of the cost of employer-provided health care (Drum, 2011). Most of the 173,000 public sector workers would be affected by the legislation, but not firefighters and cops who tend to support Republican candidates and are mostly White men (Battistoni, 2011; Drum, 2011).

Martin Luther King was quite right when he declared, "Injustice

anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (quoted in Washington, 1986, p. 290). We can only hope that White workers come to realize that White supremacist beliefs and practices only weaken the working-class, to the advantage of the small capitalist elite. The material interests of the racialized and unionized members of the working-class are affected by the shedding of jobs in the public sector. About 25 per cent of African Americans with a college education work in the public sector, and a “disproportionate number of public-union members are African American” (Holloway, 2011). African Americans have the highest figure for workers who are members of unions or who work under a collective agreement. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) reveals the extent of union membership by race:

In 2010, among major race and ethnicity groups, [B]lack workers were more likely to be union members (13.4 percent) than workers who were [W]hite (11.7 percent), Asian (10.9 percent), or Hispanic (10.0 percent). Black men had the highest union membership rate (14.8 percent), while Asian men had the lowest rate (9.4 percent).

The proportion of Africans Americans whose workplaces are governed by a collective agreement is higher than any other racial or ethnic groups at 14.9 per cent, while the figures for Whites, Asian and Latina/os are 13 per cent, 12.1 per cent and 11.1 per cent, respectively (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2011b). Race is a part of the discourse of the attack on collective bargaining rights, so it should be of concern to organized labour when African Americans and other racialized people had a token presence at the protest action in Madison. The rapid growth in public sector unionization is inextricably linked to the Civil Rights Movement and African Americans’ employment with the different levels of government in the United States (Ford, 2011; Martin, 2011). Public sector jobs have allowed African Americans and other racialized people to access middle-income jobs and relatively good workplace benefits (Martin, 2011). Therefore, it is critical for White workers and the labour movement to take the indivisibility of justice stance of Dr. King in fighting racism, because of the connectedness of issues of social emancipation. Ford (2011) has it right in his assertion, “Racism has always been the Achilles

Heel of the U.S. labor movement, the insurmountable obstacle centered in [W]hite American hearts and minds that has prevent the United States from forging any kind of real, lasting compact between its peoples.”

It is not only jobs that are implicated in the attempt of right-wing forces to reduce the capacity of the State to finance and deliver social services, or to expand the coercive capabilities of State agencies to extend the prison-industrial complex. The support for cutting public income security and social programmes by Whites, because of its association with the poor, and especially the racialized poor, does not generally elicit robust resistance from organized labour. Yet the impact of retrenchment in public services disproportionately affects racialized people, because of their higher levels of poverty and dependence on income security and social programmes (Ali, Huezo, Miller, Mwangi & Prokosch, 2011; Battison, 2011). While there is strong public support for the imprisonment of Americans, it should be clear to organized labour that the prison-industrial complex is swallowing large sections of the racialized working-class into its bowels. According to Marable (2002), “The driving ideological and cultural force that rationalizes and justifies mass incarceration is the white American public’s stereotypical perceptions about race and crime” (p. 157).

Great Recession as Pretext for Class War

The political and economic elite in the United States is ruthlessly using the effects of the Great Recession as a pretext to further weaken the economic, social and political conditions of the working class. It was the actions of the captains of industry and commerce and their politicians who were responsible for the massive job losses, near-collapses of major financial firms, housing foreclosures (which largely affected racialized urban communities) and overall ‘bust’ of the capitalist business cycle in 2008 (Brescia, 2009; National Urban League, 2009; Palley, 2009; Taibbi, 2011).

One of the effects of the above events was a massive reduction in revenue flowing to the coffers of the different levels of government. It should be noted that prior and ongoing tax cuts — granted by the political class to corporations, wealthy individuals and high income earners — were also critical factors in the deficits now faced by state governments. But it is the working class in the public sector and the

members of our communities who are dependent on public services and income security programmes who are being called upon to sacrifice their already tenuous or precarious standard of living to slay budgetary deficits across America. From the federal government under the Pied Piper leadership of President Barack Obama, to two-bit governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin, to multi-millionaire Governor Rick Snyder in Michigan, the rich get tax-cuts, the working class gets disciplined, and social programs get slashed (Fletcher, 2011; Ford, 2011; Moore, 2011). Hopefully, this bitter medicine from the neo-liberal or monetarist black bag will alert workers to their true class identity and interests. The fox (capitalist class) and the chickens (workers) cannot have a community of interest. It is in the nature of the former to desire the latter for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Many members of the United States' working class have been mislabeling themselves as "middle class" as a result of the relentless ideological and social conditioning by the combined forces of the media, school, family, politicians, religious institutions and even union bureaucrats. Goldner (2001) problematizes this development among the Wisconsin protesters, "Widespread talk of defending the 'middle-class' way of life also strikes us as an American ideological muddle that must be overcome." The capitalist or corporate elite are also implicated in the mental slavery or false consciousness of workers. According to Funciello (2011), the capitalist elite, in its capacity as bosses of the wage-slavery regime, plays a critical role in keeping workers distracted or servile:

Here in America, it has been difficult for rank-and-file Americans to see their own yoke. That's how sophisticated is the hand of the very small elite that has controlled how many jobs we will have, where we will live, whether we will have a house or an apartment, how our children will be educated (or mis-educated?) and, even, what and how much we will eat.

The consolidation of power over the people by those small elite has occurred over several decades, but just now the minions of Corporate America are coming out into the open and trying to administer the coup de grace. The minions are Republicans and, unfortunately, they have had help from many Democrats.

However, the current state-sponsored legislative initiatives aimed at destroying collective bargaining rights, decent wages, workplace

benefits and the ability of unions to financially support political activities — along with union-crippling “right to work” laws — should disabuse workers of their middle-class illusions (Rogers, 2011). If you sell your labour and do not exercise substantive control over the organizing, managing and directing of work or the labour process, you are a member of the working class, period!

Is Labour Ready for Resistance and Principled Anti-racism?

One may be forgiven for thinking that the pulse of resistance had disappeared from the body of organized labour in the United States. Other than participation in the farce that is electoral politricks², organized labour has been, for the most part, absent from political struggles against White supremacy, sexism and capitalism. With the attack on public sector unionism in Wisconsin and other states and the tentative fight-back posturing of the members of organized labour that has begun to emerge in response, a curious observer may be excused for wondering aloud: “Has this Lazarus now risen from its deathly sleep and re-discovered its historical mission?” Has Lazarus, the working class, finally remembered that its principal role ought to be the battle to free society from social oppression? We will know the definitive answer as the struggle unfolds.

The assault on collective bargaining rights of public sector workers by Governor Walker could be an undisguised gift to social movement activism. It has certainly been a long time since labour and its allies have mobilized tens of thousand of people into the streets over point of production or workplace issues. Andy Kroll (2011), a writer and an eyewitness at the protest actions against this potentially game-changing legislative attack on public sector unionism, states that “within a week there were close to 70,000 protesters filling the streets of Madison.” A major demonstration attracted an estimated 100,000 participants on the streets of Madison (Kroll, 2011). The writer was so moved by the spirit of resistance in the occupied Capitol building in Madison and events in the street that he declared, “Believe me, the spirit of Cairo is here. The air is charged with it” (Kroll, 2011b). While protests on the scale of Madison, Wisconsin may bring into

² *Politricks* is a Rastafarian word that refers to the tricks, manipulation, obfuscatory words, promises, lies, patron-clientele relations and exploitation associated with politicians and electoral politics.

motion forces that represent radical or revolutionary demands, I am not among the observers who are overly impressed with what I have been seeing and reading. I am reminded of the instructive refrain of the Mutabaruka, an African Jamaican dub poet, "A revolt ain't revolution." A revolution ought to be guided by revolutionary ideas and demands. It would be a stretch even to think that the preceding condition exists in Wisconsin, or even Egypt. We are currently at such a low level of movement activism or upsurge that even a ripple of protest may inspire fantastic declarations and expectations. We are witnessing potentialities with the people being in motion.

However, Larry Pinkney (2011) of the online publication *The Black Commentator* has a more sobering assessment of the Wisconsin protest than Kroll, which runs counter to the euphoric pronouncements that I have read in alternative media spaces:

While it is certainly heartening to see some people making and taking a stand in Madison, Wisconsin, this does not mean that Wisconsin has somehow become Egypt. It has not. There are numerous inherent contradictions that have yet to be forthrightly addressed in Wisconsin, U.S.A., and which strongly impact the *most* economically and politically dispossessed and despised of people in Wisconsin and throughout the United States.

Pickney is raising questions about the oppression of the racialized working class, inclusive of those with and without jobs. Their material interest does not garner substantive or broad sympathy from White union bureaucrats and rank-and-file members.

Pickney's above critique is a valid one. With respect to public sector employment, African Americans rely on the state as a major employer. The state employs 18 per cent of all African American male workers, which makes it the number one job provider, while it comes in at number two for African American women workers at 23.3 per cent of all jobs (Martin, 2011). African American workers are concentrated in the lower job classifications within the public sector and their lower wages rates relative to White workers reflect that reality (Battiston, 2011; Martin, 2011). When White trade union leaders and rank-and-file members do not give strong and unqualified support to affirmative action measures aimed at eliminating racist employment barriers, they are in effect weakening the basis for class solidarity in the labour movement and within the broader working-class in racialized communities. Affirmative action pro-

grammes in employment have generated multi-class White support for their demise and “in the minds of such [angry White] men (and their wives and daughters), [B]lack bodies occupy wrongful places of privilege in the job sector because of their color” (Dyson, 2003, p. 108).

Where were the protests when Presidents Reagan and Clinton assaulted the working-class by changing “welfare as we know it” (cited in Marable, 2002, p. 302) and demonized African Americans and the poor in the process? Where was the howling from organized labour when Clinton proudly declared his intention to put 100,000 additional cops on the streets of America (Chapman, 2001) and dramatically increased the number of Africans, Hispanic and poor Whites in the prison-industrial complex or penal colonies? Where was organized labour when affirmative action was being savaged for merely trying to weaken White supremacist employment and other structural barriers in the workplace and the wider society?

Organized labour is willing to move when it is faced with self-evident existential threats. Stephanie Bloomingdale, Secretary-Treasurer of Wisconsin’s AFL-CIO, seemed to confirm the preceding assertion when she noted, “[o]ur very labor movement is at stake and when that’s at stake, the economic security of Americans is at stake” (cited in Kroll, 2011). I wonder whether her visual image of “Americans” looks like the people on Fulton Street in Brooklyn, New York. On the contrary, when the “slings and arrows” fired at the racialized working-class provoke even the slightest bit of racial animus, union bureaucrats and White workers, through their inaction or silence, tend to support the initiatives of the ruling-class. Goldner (2011) raises a critical point about race and policing in Wisconsin, “We cannot imagine the NYPD or the LAPD, dealing with the occupation of public buildings by young [B]lacks and Latinos in similar circumstances, being so relaxed when similar cuts hit home elsewhere, as they will.” For some White Americans the police may be perceived on being on their side, but for those of us who are racialized and working class, and with those categories shaping our experience of gender, the police and other repressive apparatuses of the State are occupation forces or forces of social containment.

White supremacy has been a reliable tool, used to set White workers against African Americans and other racialized workers in the United States from the days of chattel slavery up to the current period of wage-slavery (Black & Red Revolution, 2000; Price, 2011). Marx’s 1867 assertion remains valid today: “In the United States

of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. *Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded*” (emphasis mine, Wikiquote). I hope White public sector workers are alert to the fact that their characterization as “greedy,” “lazy,” “freeloaders,” “bilking the taxpayers,” “not sharing the burden” or “welfare queen” is quite similar to the racist language to which many White workers and Whites in general pandered when politicians sought to victimize racialized peoples who are dependent on social assistance (Ford, 2011; Battistoni, 2011). White workers in particular and the working-class in general ought to heed the words of Mikhail Bakunin is fighting all forms of systemic exploitation, “The freedom of each is therefore only realizable in the equality of all. The realization of freedom through equality, in principle and in fact, is justice” (Dolgoff, 1980).

The class struggle and a united working class movement in the United States (and Canada) will remain “paralysed,” deformed and underdeveloped, if the commitment to eliminate White supremacy does not become a strategic goal of organized labour and the general working class. Would the outpouring of solidarity with Wisconsin’s workers be the same if the target was a group of largely racialized public sector workers? Ford (2011b) captures the issue at stake, the role of race and White supremacy in limiting the class struggle in the United States:

Wisconsin is, in a sense, a near-ideal terrain for a showdown with the Tea Party brand of Republicanism. The actors in the drama are overwhelmingly white, putting the raw class nature of capital’s aggression in stark relief. With relatively few Black scapegoats to complicate the issue, white folks must confront the bare facts of the way late-stage capitalism tramples ordinary *people* as it careens from crisis to crisis.

Or, maybe not. White supremacy is a dynamic ideology that has always been central to the domestic functions of American Exceptionalism, distorting not just race relations but all other social relations, as well. Once the foundational Nigger has been invented and given life in the public mind, with all his purported logic-bending and society-polluting defects, his[/her] characteristics can be imputed to other targeted groups — a ready-made demonization kit. Public employees in general and

teachers in particular now find themselves Niggerized as lazy featherbedders, no-count malingerers, fellow travelers with welfare queens and other human malignancies that must be excised so that the free market can work its wonders.

The task facing us class struggle and anti-oppression advocates is to be “ruthlessly” frank and firm in our commitment to challenge and eradicate White supremacy within the labour movement, the general working class, and the structures of the wider society. It was encouraging to know that the question of race and centring the interest of the racialized working-class surfaced within the conversations of the Madison resistance, albeit in a fairly marginal space (Connor, 2011). The objective reality facing organized labour and the working-class in general is the full integration of a principled anti-racist practice into the heart and mind of the resistance against capitalist domination.

Where Do Anarchists Go From Here?

The increasing economic and social insecurities that are being experienced by the working class in the United States, other centres of imperialism, and especially in the countries of the Global South predate the Great Recession of 2008. During moments of economic hardship and crisis, the most vulgar and violent expressions of racism are more likely to come to the fore. However, this state of affairs ought not to distract us from the fact that systemic and debilitating experiences and manifestations of racism are the norm for racialized people during periods of relative calm. Self-conscious or self-identified anarchists are a small part of the Left, but they tend to punch above their weight. Their influence on the global justice movement is often cited as evidence of this line of argument. The work of anarchist organizations and activists ought to prioritize anti-racist activism among the issues that are privileged and work with progressive racialized organizations and communities to challenge the structures of racist domination.

Historically, anarchism has had the weakest influence on African American struggles against White supremacy when compared with state socialist organizations and ideologies (Price, 2001). The same may be said for the anti-racism resistance of other racialized peoples inside the United States. However, when one examines the approach

to organizational leadership and decision-making of leaders such as Ella Baker (Ransby, 2003) and organizations like the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (Carmichael with Thelwell, 2003), they betray some degree of anarchist sensibilities or are “often anarchistic in structure and methods” (Price, 2001, p. 37). In the last few years, I have seen an increase in the number of younger racialized activists who self-consciously identify as anarchists, but invariably they are not members of anarchist organizations. Some of these activists view anarchist organizational spaces as White spaces. As anarchists, we have much work to do in burnishing our reputation as committed, selfless and consistent partisans against White supremacy.

In the late nineteenth century, the Chicago-based anarchist International Working People Association (IWPA) made an explicit commitment in its *Pittsburgh Manifesto* to eliminating racist distinction (McKean, 2006). When a socialist group offered a merger with the IWPA, a main member of the latter organization publicly rejected the proposition and called out the former group for excluding racialized peoples from its membership (McKean, 2006). This was a principled and noteworthy stance, because these Chicago anarchists were largely foreign born and White. But notwithstanding the preceding outlook, anti-racist propaganda and other activities were not “at the top of the anarchist agenda” (McKean, 2006, p. 19). It should be noted that the divergent views on how to seek the just and good society, and the means that should be used to attain it, made it difficult for the anarchist movement and the African American struggle to find common ground. But the failure to work together should not have prevented anarchist organizations from carrying out anti-racist initiatives within White communities and campaign against lynching and other forms of terror directed at African Americans.

The task of fighting racism and shaping the agenda for this struggle will in large measure be determined by the racialized people who feel the body blows of this exploitative system, at multiple points of interaction. Yet there is a role for anarchist allies in spite of the very White makeup of most of the organizations that march under the banner of anarchism. Anarchism stands in permanent opposition to all forms of domination and hierarchical rule and, as a result, is in robust solidarity with all oppressed peoples. Historically, anarchism has promoted a critical anti-racism and multiracial project as is evidenced among many of its major propagators, thinkers and movements (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009). However, according to Schmidt & van der Walt (2009), “The Eurocentric and North Atlantic

focus of most surveys of anarchism and syndicalism, and their tendency to ignore the question of race, has compounded the problem” of state socialist formations being seen as the only expression of socialism that advanced anti-racism politics and activism (p. 298). The above assertion about the race orientation and focus of North Atlantic anarchism may be gleaned from an examination of the anthology *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, which did not have one chapter on race and racism (Ehrlich, 1996). This book on the renewal of anarchism has a three-page essay on jazz and its relationship to an appreciation of anarchism, but other than the author’s shout out to Lucy Parson, Judy Mowatt, the blues, Bernice Reagon, Ma Rainey and “the folk and traditions from Africa to America,” (Clark, 1996, p. 290) this text was a literary and political White space. There is a section in this book on gender and anarchafeminism, and it has four essays, which is indicative the type of systemic oppression that is privileged. The default women in these essays are White women, because without situating race and racialized and indigenous women in the discourse of gender and anarchism, there cannot be any other logical conclusion.

Yet we must transform the above ideological predisposition towards obviating or marginalizing race within the movement. One cannot become paralyzed by the “sin” of omission, but must join the worldwide struggle against White supremacy in the territorial arenas in which anarchism is present. *Red & Black Revolution* (2000) is on-point with its exhortation for a commitment to actively working for the cause of racial justice:

Anti-racist work should occupy a high priority in the activities of all class struggle anarchists. This is important not simply because we always oppose all oppression, and because anarchists have long been opponents of racism. It is also because such work is an essential to the vital task of unifying and conscientizing the working class — a unity without which neither racism nor capitalism can be consigned to the history books.

At a general level, we can approach these tasks by active work in anti-racist struggles and campaigns, including work alongside non-anarchist forces (without, of course, surrendering our political independence), and by continual propaganda against racism in our publications, workplaces, unions and communities (p. 14).

The importance of engaging in actions or campaigns cannot be exaggerated. Words of solidarity are inadequate to changing the structures of racist oppression.

Further, these concrete struggles must take place in the spaces in which we carry out our daily activities, and not just in our heads, on the pages of academic papers, or in conferences and symposia. The preceding assertion is, in part, a call out to anarchist-academic workers to take a break from their computer screens, air conditioned libraries and the solitude of writing and become organic intellectuals in actual struggles over material advancement for the racially oppressed and the working class in general. Our workplaces, communities, homes and other places of social intercourse need to be utilized as terrains for education, organizing and mobilizing around eliminating racism within movement structures and broader societal institutions. In almost all cases where racialized people challenge the spectre of racism, material demands are implicated and are germane to the demand for access to and provision of resources to facilitate their daily social reproduction. The fight to remove racist barriers to jobs and representation throughout the job classification system, equal wages, better housing and schooling, public services and entrance into labour unions are clearly material questions of interests to the broader working class.

The call for anarchists to get involved in the struggle for racial justice comes with the reminder that this largely White movement ought to avoid colonizing racialized people and their work at eliminating racism. It is quite easy for superordinate bodies schooled in the subjugation of their subordinate counterparts to be oblivious to the ways in which a system of domination equips them with relative material advantages. These unearned privileges are cashed-in or manifested in instances of collaboration between the members of dominant and non-dominant groups. In many cases, the relatively privileged groups may have access to resources, which may serve as the basis for unequal organizational and political relations. Theoretically speaking, this should not be a problem for anarchists, because of their commitment to self-management and nonhierarchical organizational and societal relations (Olson, 2009). However, the fact thinkers such as Proudhon, Kropotkin and Bakunin held libertarian ideas, which co-existed with elements of patriarchal ideology, ought to be taken as a cautionary tale about people's ability to hold contradictory ideological positions (Leeder, 1996)

The emphasis placed on participation in anti-racist campaigns is

in no way discouraging work at the ideological through critical and interrogative education. The capitalist bosses and the dominant institutions in society relentlessly educate the working class and the oppressed into the former's worldview. It will take a counter-narrative of emancipation to win the oppressed to a revolutionary, anti-oppression politics. White anarchists ought to carry out educational initiatives within White communities that are likely to be more willing to be educated about racism by people with whom they can racially identify. In the initial stages of the educational projects, this approach would help in reducing the defensive dynamics and even latent hostility that may emerge from Whites when the educators are racialized. However, Ervin (1993) calls on the White anarchists to facilitate racialized anarchists effecting educational work within White communities, and they in turn doing the same within racialized communities. Given the reality of racial residential segregation in many urban communities and the distrust or concern about the reliability of Whites parachuting into racialized neighbourhoods to "educate" or "save" them, it may be prudent to approach this option with caution or to let the context dictate the course of action.

It also important for the movement not to make a fetish out of anti-racism education as is found in the labour movement and the workplace. Education cannot degenerate into education for education's sake, so as to give the impression that substantive anti-racist work is being done or that consciousness-raising is all that is needed to address racist behaviour and organizational practices. This prescription on carrying out anti-racist and anti-oppression educational work does not negate the need for multi-racial anarchist organizations that will work to destroy all forms of hierarchies and build the embryonic structures and organizations of the future emancipated society. A recent public symposium by labour movement actors demonstrates the fact that education about racism is not enough. There must be a change in people's behaviour and anti-racist consciousness of White progressives.

On June 23, 2011, the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3902 — Education Workers, Ryerson University's Centre for Labour Management Relations, The Society of Energy Professionals, IFPTE Local 160 and Workplace Fairness Institute — Conflict Management Institute organized a public symposium entitled *The Madison Moment: North American Public Sector Collective Bargaining* at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. The organizers'

objective was to explore the anti-working-class attacks on collective bargaining rights inside the United States and Canada, and to do so through “a distinguished panel of speakers” comprised of Elaine Bernard, Labor and Work Life, Harvard Law School; Robert Hebdon, Faculty of Management, McGill University; Elizabeth Shilton, a labour lawyer and academic; and Sam Gindin, Packer Chair in Social Justice, York University. The problem with the composition of the “distinguished panel” of four experts was its all-White character, although the organizers made sure that it was evenly balanced from the standpoint of gender. Toronto is one of the most racialized major metropolitan areas in North America with 47 per cent of its population being racialized peoples. About 43 per cent of the residents in the Greater Toronto Area are racialized. Further, given the above-mentioned importance of the public sector to African Americans and other racialized people as a major employer and provider of income security and social programmes, one would have expected the sponsoring organizations to include racialized voices as a part of the panel.

On becoming aware of this event, I alerted all of the sponsoring groups about my concern with the message being sent with an all-White panel. I received the following response from an agent of one of the sponsoring groups:

Thank you for your message regarding the upcoming symposium. I completely agree with you that the attack on public sector unions disproportionately disadvantages racialized groups. In fact, this is an issue that I (and I'm sure others in the audience) will ask the panelists to discuss. I want to assure you that I, as a racialized woman who studies discrimination, am very much aware of the importance of that side of the issue. I was on the planning committee for this event and will act as the moderator for the evening. In deciding on the panelists, we focused on choosing experts who could present a variety of facets of the topic. I am confident that the panelists will address the importance of the issue for disadvantaged groups, and in particular, racial minorities (email correspondence, June 21, 2011).

What was instructive about the above response was the statement “we focused on choosing experts who could present a variety of facets of the topic.” The implicit assumption was that racialized

panelists were too parochial and do not have the intellectual breadth to cover issues that were not explicitly racial. It is quite obvious that whiteness conferred on the selected presenters the capacity to speak to the experience of the racialized on collective bargaining and public sector issues. It is this type of arrogance of whiteness that has caused racialized people to be suspicious of the commitment to fight White supremacy by White labour movement actors.

The type of racial exclusion demonstrated above and ensuing defensiveness displayed by union leadership are standard fare in many labour and progressive social movement settings. These types of behaviour serve to breed cynicism, foster organizational or movement alienation or lead to deep distrust and well-deserved antagonism from racialized peoples with respect to White leaders and their leadership. The White innocence and naïveté to which Michael Dyson referred above is usually trotted out to explain away racial transgression or oppression. When that tactic fails to pacify the discordant voices for racial justice, threats of sanction or acts of co-optation are explored. The default to whiteness is the hardwired option in the minds of many Whites in North America and it is unfortunately present in leftist and progressive spaces, which does not contribute to the trust and comradeship that are needed for mass movement-building.

Conclusion

The post-9/11 period does not have to be a wasteland for mass movement organizing and resistance. It is obvious that a lot of people are suffering from the insecurity brought on by capitalist neoliberalism restructuring in the public and private sectors. The current state of affairs is not helped by liberalism and capitalism appearing as the only workable alternatives with the implosion of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European state socialist states (Olson, 2009). In the context of the United States, systemic racism has served to thwart concerted action within its racially divided working class. Racism is a tool at the disposal of the ruling class for dividing the working class and maintaining the infrastructure of capitalist oppression (Ervin, 1993; Olson, 2009, Price, 2001). Much too often and for much too long this instrument has been effective. The progressive social movements of the day need to assess the lessons embedded in the ways that race was deployed after the 9/11 attacks,

to realize that the ruling class is quite confident that it can appeal to White racism and patriotism to carry out political repression. The overwhelming White hostility to reparations for the enslavement, imposition of Jim Crow and continued oppression of African Americans should make it clear that much work is needed in the area of anti-racist education and behavioural change. The Spring 2006 mass mobilization and marches for migrant workers should point to the possibility for mass movement organizing in spite of a post-9/11 period that is attendant with the State's attempt to place a chill on oppositional political resistance. The level of alienation experienced by the racialized working-class in the United States makes it relatively easy to appeal to them about the incongruence between the country's ideals and actual practice. They live the hypocrisy on a daily basis. But many racialized people are just as susceptible to the middle class ideological conditioning that is abroad in society, and may actually believe that they are already a part of the middle class. In spite of the preceding possibility, mass movement building within the post-9/11 milieu is likely to have the strongest appeal within the racialized sectors of society. Materially speaking, their grievances and alienation are quite stark.

The largely White anarchist movement in the academy and community-based organizations has to give full effect to its political commitment to end all forms of hierarchical domination. It will have to give organizing against White supremacy the "strategic centrality" suggested by Joel Olson, because of the role that race and racism plays in maintaining the structure of state and capitalist domination in the United States. If anarchism is going to make rapid progress in winning over increasing numbers of racialized people under its banner of emancipation it will have to prioritize movement-building and work shoulder-to-shoulder with the racialized oppressed around the issues that they deem of immediate importance to their survival and capacity to resistance oppression (Ervin, 1993; Olson, 2009). Resistance is more than possible in the post-9/11 period, but progressive and socialist forces will have to do a better job of centering racial oppression and racialized peoples in the leadership of the movements for social emancipation.

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