

# RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

## Homelessness: Front Line in the Fight for Class Unity

The destruction of the capitalist economy is eliminating the economic and social privileges historically extended to a large section of the American working class. The hitherto unknown breadth of equality of poverty is creating the basis for real class unity across lines of color, gender and geography. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the growing movement among and around America's homeless. Because they are destitute, the homeless are the most economically equal of all. This makes their subjective political unity an immediate practical possibility.

Computerized production is replacing human labor, which is creating an entirely new class of workers – those partially or completely separated from the productive economy. This began with the introduction of the micro-chip into industry in the 1970s and 1980s, causing permanent unemployment to spread across the Rust Belt and beyond. The appearance of mass homelessness at that time was the first clear sign that capitalism was creating something new, a section of the working class the system no longer had any use for. This new class grew incrementally over the decades and rapidly expanded in the 2000s, when overall US workforce participation began to fall rapidly. The leap in automation projected over the next twenty years signifies an even larger and more accelerated expansion of this class in the immediate future.

### FROM DIVISION TO CLASS UNITY

The future of this new class depends on whether it can become conscious of its objective position in the economy and in society, its power, and its independent class interests. The movement today is more or less at the level of social awareness – that is, the general understanding that something is wrong in society, that it is a social and not a personal problem, and that it requires some kind of organizing to achieve a social solution. Simultaneously, an embryonic stage of social consciousness is beginning to emerge. Social consciousness is the understanding that the root of our problems is not just a social condition, but is our class position, our relationship to the means of production. Class identity means moving beyond the appearance of the problem, whether it be gender, color, immigration status, or any other secondary feature. Class identity is the understanding that the underlying reality that determines our existence is our class position in society, and our exploitation as a class based on that position. Revolutionaries raise consciousness by explaining the roots of the problem and by defining a vision for the future, along with a strategy to get there.

The battleground around homelessness is an immediate opportunity and a critical arena where revolutionaries can carry forward the fight for this class identity. Throughout

its entire history the American working class has been controlled, divided, and thoroughly dominated through the politics of all-white unity. The growth of the new class, especially its most destitute and visible section – the homeless – creates the opportunity for a decisive break with this history. With fewer and fewer jobs for anyone, the question of a competitive advantage for one or another section of workers becomes relatively insignificant.

The clear economic equality of the homeless makes their political unity, and the unity of people around them, much more readily achievable than the unity of other sections of the working class. The homeless are physically thrown together in the same streets, shelters, and encampments. They are pushed toward each other by the fact that they experience common conditions: common lack of housing, common police oppression, common criminalization. Their shared situation creates ties that can become stronger than the subjective or historical differences that may have divided them in the past.

Political class unity among the homeless is also made possible by the fact that the causes of homelessness are indisputably economic: according to the National Coalition for the Homeless it is “the result of poverty and a lack of affordable housing.” The homeless themselves are extraordinarily diverse, a fact that in itself proves the broad effect of these economic causes. They are approximately 40% white, 40% African American, 11% Latino, 35% in families, 20% children, 72% urban, 21% suburban, and 7% rural (National Coalition for the Homeless, National Alliance to End Homelessness, US Interagency Council on Homelessness). As a result, homeless people who begin to understand class identity are well positioned to be able to take it into an incredibly broad cross-section of the new class as a whole, across lines of color, religion, and region.

### PRIVATE PROPERTY CANNOT END HOMELESSNESS

The very existence of homelessness in modern America directly challenges the historic ruling class myth, that the American private property system makes a better life for everyone, regardless of class. The homeless are the visible proof that this has become a lie: the new class in America today is a section of the working class that the corporations have no use for and in fact do not care if they live or die.

The accelerated increase of homelessness over past three decades, along with the official abuse, the failure of the shelters and the failure of government plans to either eliminate or reduce homelessness is evidence of a systemic breakdown and proof that modern homelessness is not an accident or isolated occurrence. This fact by itself causes not only the homeless, but broad sections of the working class to question and challenge the myths

they were taught about the viability and fairness of the capitalist economy.

A private property economy cannot solve homelessness any more than it can solve the problem of technological unemployment. As the demand for workers declines and disappears, builders cannot and will not construct housing for people unable to pay for it. Corporations will not pay taxes to subsidize housing (and other necessities) for workers that they simply do not need. According to the laws of private property they cannot invest money in anything that does not increase their profits. Homelessness continues to increase. A recent study in Los Angeles found that despite the best efforts of service providers, 13,000 new people become homeless there every month. A recent media report revealed that many bus drivers for Apple Computer, the wealthiest company in the world, are forced to sleep in their cars because the monthly \$2900 salaries they earn cannot pay the \$2-3000 a month rents in the area.

Society's polarization of wealth and poverty, caused by the destruction of value, is forcing the ruling class, along with federal, state and local governments to act increasingly hostile against the poor. The homeless represent an Achilles heel for the ruling class. This is why they have unleashed a propaganda war to depict them as lazy, crazy, immoral, and unworthy. It has enacted anti-homeless laws, bulldozed camps, destroyed personal property, and set off a wave of police repression and brutality. The sickening murders of homeless people by law enforcement in the last few years alone include James Boyd in Albuquerque, Kelly Thomas in Fullerton, Charly Keunang on Skid Row in Los Angeles, and Michael Tyree in San Jose, to name just a few. Because homelessness cuts across color lines, it is not a condition that can be treated as a color issue. In fact, government policy and propaganda is increasingly depicting the homeless as a separate grouping of humans or “race” to be isolated and hated based on economic and social status.

The ruling class has always attacked workers, but has learned to prevent a united response by targeting them based on color, nationality, or social feature rather than explicitly by class position. The Sensenbrenner Bill of 2006 provoked a mass spontaneous uprising

when it attempted to brand immigrant workers as felons – but because it targeted Latinos, the response tended to be limited to Latinos. The military-style occupation of Ferguson in 2014 singled out African Americans because their community was segregated. Although people of all colors responded, polling revealed dramatic differences in understanding by African American and white workers of the role of law enforcement. Attacks on the homeless necessarily cross America's historic color lines and therefore offer a unique opening to propagandize around a response across these lines. This is an important and necessary step toward the class identity necessary to effectively resist and ultimately turn back these attacks.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF REVOLUTIONARIES

The outcome of the battle depends in large part on the role of revolutionaries. Capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries needed workers to populate its expanding industries. There is no such expansion of employment in the future of today's economy. It literally and objectively no longer needs hundreds of millions of workers. This changes everything. The ruling class will use every hateful ideology in its arsenal, developed over centuries of slavery and genocide, to justify its current and growing fascist assault on our very right to exist.

Revolutionaries understand this danger, and they understand that society does not have to be organized this way. The true role of government should not be to secure profit and privilege for the exploiters, but rather the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of the masses.

The role of revolutionaries is to unleash the struggle by introducing an alternative vision to the poverty and desperation projected by corporate rulers. Freed from the oppressive laws of private property, computerized means of production make an abundant, cooperative economy an immediate practical possibility. In addition, revolutionaries also outline the political line of march necessary for the new class: political organization, political power, and transferring the means of production from private corporate property into public property.

## CONTENTS

Inside: We Have Been Naught We Shall Be All

Defend the Leaders of Our Class

Strategy and Political Power in America: The Role of the South

Nelson Peery: American Revolutionary, 1923-2015

Break with the Past, Prepare for the Future

On Syndicalism: An Interview with Nelson Peery

# Inside: We Have Been Naught We Shall Be All Defend the Leaders of Our Class

*Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun  
ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With the love of comrades,  
With the life-long love of comrades.*  
— Walt Whitman, “For You O Democracy”

Nelson Peery, was a founding member of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America and of the *Rally, Comrades!* Editorial Board, who continued to contribute until the very end of his life, when he died on September 6, 2015. It is fitting that we publish two of Nelson’s talks that he gave just weeks before his death. It is also fitting that we begin with a fragment of one of his favorite poems, one that spoke to the revolutionary character of America.

The commemorative statement from the League on the significance of Nelson’s life and contribution, “Nelson Peery: American Revolutionary,” will introduce new readers and refresh the memories of others, as to Nelson’s contribution to the world communist movement. His was a contribution spanning some 75 years that engaged with every major upheaval and struggle in America and the world during those times. A contribution that yielded philosophical, theoretical, political, and literary works that sought to clarify events, to teach the workers their interests, with an aim to fit them for their historic mission of leading humanity to a cooperative, communist society. The statement speaks of how Nelson dedicated his entire life to building an organization of revolutionaries worthy of the American people. All of his work, including these talks, were products of a collective process that reflect the meaning, purpose, and program of the League

of Revolutionaries for a New America.

The talks we publish here, “Break with the Past, Prepare for the Future,” and “On Syndicalism,” are not unique in their expansive knowledge of history or philosophy, or of the emerging questions of revolution in a new epoch, nor in the objectivity of their approach to causality, investigation and conclusion. They are in fact, typical of Nelson’s work overall, reflecting to the end, the openness of a true scientific mind in his examination of the qualitative changes taking place in the real world and the potential these changes hold for our class to achieve what it has long fought to achieve.

Taken together, the two talks provide revolutionaries with an outline to key questions they face, including the character of the revolutionary process, the history of America and those ruling class ideas that impede the impulses toward class toward unity, while illuminating strategy and tactics to help prepare our class for the future stages of development of the revolutionary process. The talks emphasize the reality of an objective communist movement. Despite the disorientation, hate and division, with which the ruling class saturates the class, the weak flank of the ruling class is that it cannot provide for the suffering and poverty-stricken millions. These talks show that this arising new class – if made conscious of itself as a class – will become the social force to overturn the existing state of things to create a peaceful and cultured existence for all.

In this issue, we also include two articles written by others, which apply the themes sketched out in the talks. “Strategy and Political Power in America: The Role of the South,” shows how the ruling class has historically used the South to political-

ly control all of America. It shows how the most impoverished and exploited section of Southern workers – Black and white – is an integral section of the new class throughout America and as such, its pivotal role in overturning the historical formula of rule, as the new class forms itself to be the force to contend for political power. Central to this is the process of class unity.

Our cover article, “Homelessness: Front Line in the Fight for Class Unity,” shows how clear the equality of poverty of the homeless is, and how that makes their political unity and the unity of the people around them more readily possible today. Their shared economic situation creates ties that can become stronger than what may have divided them in the past. Reaching revolutionaries among the most exploited section of white workers is decisive to succeeding in uniting this section of the class.

As we do with every issue, we place *Rally, Comrades!* before the world communist movement, mindful always that our international responsibilities lie in the fight with our own ruling class. We raise once again the rallying cry for which Nelson devoted his life, to which millions have committed their lives, and to which millions more will someday see the full fruits of that devotion.

*Arise ye pris’ners of starvation  
Arise ye wretched of the earth  
For justice thunders condemnation  
A better world’s in birth!  
The earth shall rise on new foundations  
We have been naught we shall be all.*

*So rally comrades  
’tis the last fight we face  
The International  
Shall be the human race.*

## Defend the Leaders of Our Class

The Rev. Edward Pinkney, courageous and heroic fighter for the working class of Benton Harbor, Michigan was unjustly convicted on absolutely no evidence and sentenced to prison, possibly for as much as 10 years. He has now been transferred hundreds of miles from his base of support and away from his family, and his communication privileges have been curtailed.

This continued attack on the movement and its leaders in Benton Harbor – those fighting for justice against the corporations – is not an isolated case. What is happening in Benton Harbor, the Rust Belt in general, and across the country, is part of a larger process that is taking place in America today. The fascism we are facing, most evident in the cuts in social programs and the rise of a militarized police State, is the result of the changes that are taking place in the economy and the inability of the rulers to provide for the people. The purpose of their attacks is to prevent the workers from uniting around their common cause.

A powerful movement is arising to challenge the fascist attacks taking place around the country. This movement is striving for a new society, one where true democracy, equality and the welfare of all are the guiding principles. When we defend the leaders of our class, we defend that movement, that vision, and we take another step toward building the forces that will one day make that vision a reality.

*To help with Rev. Pinkney’s legal defense,  
make donations at bhbanco.org.*

## EDITORIAL POLICY

**Rally:** to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

**Comrade:** a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

*Rally, Comrades!* is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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## League of Revolutionaries for a New America WHAT WE STAND FOR

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League’s mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, healthcare and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement. A new fascist State form, the naked rule of corporate power, has arisen to oppose this motion.

Society must take over these corporations or these corporations will continue to take over society. The new class must have political power to achieve

these goals. In the effort to achieve this political power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war.

Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new class and to secure humanity’s imperiled future.

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# Strategy and Political Power in America: The Role of the South

The question for revolutionaries today is, how does the introduction of robotics affect the question of political power? And what are the strategy and tactics for today? From slave-labor to wage-labor to laborless production, and the rise of a new class that has nothing to gain from aligning itself with the ruling class – these qualitatively new times demand that society be reorganized to be compatible with its new means of production.

The ruling class will use every means at its disposal to protect private property and to maintain itself as the ruling class. It will draw upon the worst aspects of American history, including white supremacy and other forms of racism, and it draws upon the lessons of a fascism born in the womb of Southern history, to sacrifice bourgeois democracy and put in place a new fascist State to maintain its control nationwide. It is a fascism rooted in the merger of the corporations and the State and the direct intervention in the economy in the interests of protecting private property; it is the erection of a police state antagonistic to a growing new class which it no longer needs; it is the cultivation of a fascist social base to consolidate and support fascist rule.

The new class created by automation is objectively moving into a position from which it can begin to overthrow the shackles that have chained it to an economic system and a political order, that has never been anything more than an instrument of class domination. The material ties that have bound the American worker to the ruling class are being taken away. But as we will see, it is really a matter of contending for political power, for the power to be able to remake society in the interests of humanity.

## THE SOUTH KEY SINCE AMERICA'S FOUNDING

Every nation, every country constructs its society, its social and political life, upon its economic base, its mode of production. When that economic base changes, changes in society must follow. This means every society is compelled to build a political, legal and social superstructure that is compatible with its economic base and that guarantees the political hegemony of the ruling class.

At America's founding, the task was to construct a bourgeois democratic republic that facilitated the domination of the agrarian economy based in slave labor of the Southern states and which assured the political hegemony of a slave-holding agrarian bourgeoisie.

While slavery was never mentioned in the Constitution, the three-fifths clause provided that the Southern states would receive 60 votes for every 100 slaves possessed by the slave-holders. The very first president of the United States was a slave-holder, as was every president save one until Lincoln in 1860. The Southern-dominated ruling class controlled the Congress as well as the Supreme Court for the better part of the first 80 years of the

country's history.

The Civil War eventually decided the question of slavery in favor of a wage-labor system, but it was a battle between two sections of the bourgeoisie over how society was to be reorganized to be compatible with a rising industrial capitalism in the North. A new Union dominated by finance capital was to emerge victorious.

In the Civil War, even as the matter of who was to exercise ruling class hegemony ended in the subordination of the Southern ruling class, the critical question that emerged was how to organize the Southern economy to guarantee its profitability to Wall Street, especially in relation to the production of cotton. In this regard, how was the dominant class to control the Black workers, straining to exercise their newly found freedom, and their restive counterparts, millions of impoverished white workers?

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The most impoverished and exploited section of Southern workers, Black and white, is an integral part of the new class in the nation as a whole, and plays a key role in the development of the new class as a force that can contend for political power. Central to that process is the question of class unity.

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## THE BLACK BELT SOUTH: AMERICA'S FIRST COLONY AND FIRST FASCIST STATE

During the brief period of Reconstruction, both Black and white workers began to make initial efforts to fight for labor rights, working conditions, education, health care and voting rights. The 1877 Hayes-Tilden "compromise" represented a deal that would stop that process in its tracks. The Southern states were to regain the state's right to deal with their own workers in their own way. Reconstruction was abandoned and the Redeemer governments were the instrument to establish the Black Belt South both as the first colony of U.S. imperialism and as its first fascist state. The Southern worker had no rights the ruling class was bound to respect.

The share-cropping system and rule by terror under the banner of white supremacy drove the Southern people back into near-slavery. This guaranteed the super-exploitation of the colonial worker and the profitability of the South. White supremacy came to be even more integrally entwined with the exercise of political power in America. The ruling class used white supremacy to divide the workers. However, this white supremacy was used to achieve and maintain the supremacy of the capitalist class.

## THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY

The white worker, even the most destitute, came to be tied to the ruling class, driving a deep wedge within the Southern working class. As such, the control of the Southern working class, Black and white, was guaranteed. Just so, was the control of the South the key to political power for the nation.

The Democratic Party in the South openly proclaimed itself the party of white supremacy, establishing the white-only primary and a Solid South. Every Southern state voted as a solid bloc, and the political party that received that vote was virtually guaranteed political supremacy.

From the Roosevelt Coalition to Ronald Reagan's Southern Strategy the South has played a pivotal role in the exercise of political power in America. Southern politicians stood as a reactionary brake against progres-

sive reforms. Social Security was passed, but to this day the U.S. does not have universal health care. Progressive labor laws were passed, but Taft-Hartley was amended to allow for Right-to-Work, which every Southern state adopted, and which today is making inroads throughout the nation.

political program that has come to dominate the political scene of America. Still today key Congressional posts are headed by Southern politicians, and they continue to block any progressive reforms and to pass anti-worker and reactionary laws. The Supreme Court is essentially a states' rights court, and the road to the presidency runs through the South. Even Obama had to split the South in order to win. The candidate who can sweep the South is guaranteed victory.

The process of how political power in America is and has been exercised emerges as a historical formula, a law of development of political power in America. What we have described here illuminates that those who control the worker in the South, Black and white, control the South, and those who control the South control the nation. Wall Street controls the South and the nation.

## THE STRUGGLE TO UNITE A SECTION OF THE NEW CLASS

Only a class at least partially outside of the economy can overthrow a system. The new class, because it is being forced out of the system, is the only social force that can lead in the construction of a new society. If united and conscious of its historic mission, it has the potential to lead society to a new cooperative society organized in its own interests and in the interest of all of humanity.

Because the new class is objectively revolutionary, the ruler's strategy is to stop the revolution from proceeding on this class basis. Their tactic has been to pit one section of the workers against the other. They have used racism, their historic weapon of control, to do this. However, as the environment and needs of capitalism change, the form of the rulers' control must change to accommodate their goals.

Yet every action brings about a reaction. An already volatile situation is being stirred up. On the one hand, the new class will only get larger as a result of automation, further undermining private property. Many are already working low-paying, dead-end, part-time jobs or none at all. The South remains the poorest part of the nation. On the other hand, the changes under way are bringing about an upsurge in the fascist movement.

The most impoverished and exploited section of Southern workers, Black and white, is an integral part of the new class in the nation as a whole, and plays a key role in the development of the new class as a force that can contend for political power. Central to that process is the question of class unity. The racism of the past period that served to divide the class is now being supplanted by a new form of racism that is directed squarely against the new class. Class unity is paramount, and our strategy relies upon the new class in its fight to gain the necessities of life and to reorganize society in its interests. As the new class goes, so goes the nation.

# Nelson Peery: American Revolutionary

## June 22, 1923-September 6, 2015

At particular moments, history creates possibilities for humanity to progress toward its liberation. But those possibilities can become reality only if masses of people recognize them and act on them. In such periods, outstanding individuals who understand what history has made necessary and possible can make a decisive contribution to liberating humanity. Nelson Peery was such a person.

We celebrate the life and contribution of comrade Nelson Peery. His experience, his deep, life-long commitment to the revolutionary movement, and his grasp of the meaning and content of these times enabled him to make the kind of contribution that marks him as a great revolutionary thinker of our time.

Nelson was an American revolutionary. He was born of African American parents in St. Joseph, Missouri, the second of seven sons. His mother was the granddaughter of Kentucky slaves. Nelson's father was a World War I veteran, and his great-grandfather joined the Union Army during the Civil War. Nelson was himself a World War II veteran with three campaign ribbons and four battle stars, having enlisted in the army in 1941 to fight fascism. After the war, Black veterans became the foundation of the modern Freedom movement, and Nelson was among them. Nelson had some 75 years experience in the communist movement, and was a member at different times of a number of revolutionary organizations. He was a founding member of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

We cannot separate Nelson from the historical epoch that gave rise to him. He was shaped by, and helped shape, the times in which he lived. The world in his lifetime was marked by the transition from production based on electro-mechanical industry to production based on electronics. This profound economic change, which he and others compared to the discovery of fire, was reflected in an equally profound change in the nature of the communist movement. Where the movement had been based primarily on ideology in the industrial period, electronics – which is labor-replacing technology – has given rise to an objective communist movement embodied by millions of workers who have been pushed out of the economy as jobs have been eliminated. The problems of this new class of workers created by electronics can only be resolved by creating a cooperative society.

Although Nelson joined the communist movement in a qualitatively different historical epoch, his response to the advent of electronics demonstrated his ability to change with changing times. He was among the first to recognize the earthshaking historical significance of electronics and the formation of this new class, and its implications for humanity. He understood that electronics not only makes communism possible, but makes it absolutely necessary if humanity is to save itself.

What enabled him to make the contributions he made? Above all, Nelson was both a collectivist and a scientist. His mastery of the science of society – dialectical and histor-

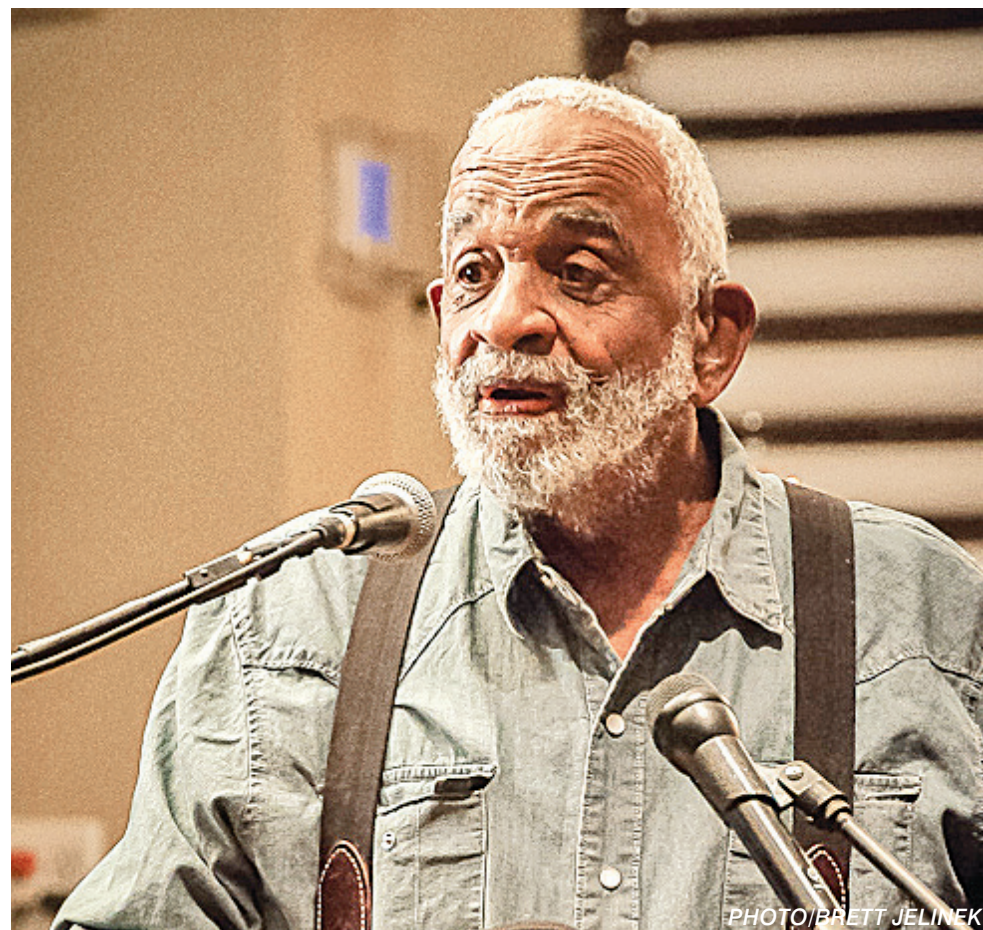
ical materialism – allowed him to grasp how and why society changes, and how and why revolutions occur. Understanding this process of change and becoming conscious of it allows revolutionaries and the revolutionary class to find the way forward. Nelson knew that the world has a reality independent of our thoughts, and he understood the necessity of revolutionaries using the science of society to grasp that reality and then act on the resulting knowledge. He would insist that the starting point for any political analysis and conclusions about the current tasks of revolutionaries be the simple question: “What is the real world?”

Nelson also understood that individuals can accomplish nothing acting alone, and he worked constantly with others to help train people as scientists, to help create collectives based on a scientific outlook, and to help build revolutionary organizations aimed at making the workers conscious of their revolutionary role. In whatever revolutionary organization he belonged to, he consistently put the unity and integrity of the organization first. He always said that organization and consciousness are the only weapons the workers have in their struggle for a new world. And if an organization he belonged to needed to change to conform to what history demanded at that moment, he was among the first to argue for the change.

Nelson stressed the importance of workers studying and learning how to analyze the world in order to change it, and he felt any worker could do this. He once wrote, “Nobody can tell me that a worker, a person of normal intelligence, can't become a proletarian intellectual. They can and they must.” He focused on making every member of the organization a leader. “We need to create an organization where every member feels responsible,” he wrote. “Being a leader is a division of labor. It is not any special thing.” He also said that “leaders are judged by how many new leaders they develop.”

His study of history and of the movement taught him that the essential role of the communist is to be a propagandist with the aim of making the workers class conscious so they can carry out their historical role in a changing society. He knew that humanity cannot liberate itself without the introduction of this consciousness, and he knew that the experience of the movement has confirmed that a revolutionary press is essential to the task of arousing and educating the people. “A movement,” he said, “is a cause and a press.” Thus he always placed tremendous importance on creating such a press in various forms.

While Nelson's contributions to advancing the theoretical, philosophical, and organizational foundations of the movement are too numerous to list, some should be mentioned specifically. He contributed enormously to groundbreaking works on the color (race) question, and was among the first to recognize that the economic changes wrought by electronics are making growing sections of workers equally impoverished and able to unite,



thus for the first time undercutting the rulers' ability to use color to divide workers. “I don't care whether you are Black or white or Latino. When the robot comes into your factory, you are laid off,” he said. But he also understood that while economic changes set the stage for working class unity, such unity would not come automatically and must be fought for.

In addition, his participation in producing the pamphlet *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution* helped create a document that was also groundbreaking, both in its conclusions and in the way it applied the science of society to answer major philosophical questions about social and economic change and the revolutionary process.

The combination of organization, collectivity, Nelson's particular features, characteristics, and burning commitment, and the possibilities created by history enabled him to make the contribution he did. We herald the tremendous contribution of Nelson Peery, but we do so echoing his own words about the necessity of building an organization of revolutionaries. He said, “I give credit to the collectives of which I have been a part. Individuals make history in unity with others.”

Nelson was a living example of the highest form of consciousness: self-consciousness, meaning understanding not simply that “something must be done,” but knowing that “I must do it. I am responsible.” He sacrificed everything for the revolutionary movement.

Despite the dark side of American history, Nelson believed that the American people are at bottom a moral people, and that under the right conditions they could be awakened. He recently wrote, “We are heading into revolution. The objective side of the revolution is way advanced and the subjective side is

way behind. The role of a revolutionary organization is to arouse, organize and develop that subjective side.”

Nelson has walked with us up to this point, but the work is not yet done, and his example challenges every revolutionary to do what is necessary to complete the task, challenges each of us to become self-conscious. Revolutionaries need collective study and discussion, a mastery of the science of society, a deep knowledge of history, a willingness to sacrifice, and a common understanding of the world and what must be done. In a word, revolutionaries need to belong to an organization of revolutionaries in order to make a real contribution, and we call on those in our country who are fighting to end oppression and poverty, and who are committed to educating the people, to join the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. Just as history called Nelson forth, so history is today posing the question squarely to all revolutionaries – who is going to step forward at this moment to fight forward to the bright new world we can actually see on the horizon? Millions of revolutionaries are needed today to do what is necessary.

Nelson, we will miss your warmth, your wisdom, your humor, your humanity, your integrity, and your unfailing commitment to the working class and to the revolution. Rest well, beloved comrade. The fight will go on 'til we've won.

*Donations in celebration of Nelson Peery's life can be sent to LRNA, PO Box 477113, Chicago, IL 60647 or donate via Paypal at [rallycomrades.lrna.org/donate](http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/donate). Contact the League of Revolutionaries for a New America at 773-486-0028.*

# Break with the Past, Prepare for the Future

*Editors' Note: The following opening remarks, written by Nelson Peery, were prepared for a national LRNA meeting held in September 2015.*

First of all, comrades, what is a revolution? It is the process of reconstructing a social and political superstructure that is compatible with the new means of production. Revolutionaries don't make revolutions. Revolutions make revolutionaries. Of course, it is a back and forth process. But most of the revolutionaries in the world today think that if you just try hard enough, if you just fight back enough, if you are consistent enough, if you are just brave enough, if you are ideologically firm enough, you can make a revolution. No. A revolution comes from an antagonism between the development of the means of production and a static social and political superstructure that becomes more and more antagonistic to it. Where are we in history in this respect?

Recently, a team of engineers stated that in 20 years, 50 percent of labor will be done by robotics. We live in a country where our existence is based upon the exchange of money. Money is the universal equivalent of all labor. If our daily bread is based on money, and money comes from the sale of our labor power in production, and the robots are doing the production, it is obvious this system cannot continue. We are heading into revolution. The objective side of the revolution is way advanced and the subjective side is way behind. The role of a revolutionary organization is to arouse and develop that subjective side. Is this the outlook of the average revolutionary? No, not at all. Most revolutionaries still hold onto the idea that the revolutionary "marches at the head of the column."

## FROM ONE QUALITY TO ANOTHER

Revolution begins with the development of new means of production that becomes antagonistic to the existing social superstructure. All social activity proceeds from this antagonism. A good example is the African American Freedom Movement. It was clear that no matter how hard the African Americans fought for their freedom and equality they could not get it so long as they were hooked to the land. Freedom depended upon them getting free from the sharecropping system. They couldn't do it simply because they wanted to. They could only do it when Southern agriculture was mechanized, which was followed by the political repercussions and the movement. I

remember listening to some of the older guys back in the forties talking about International Harvester coming out with a cotton-picking machine. One of them said, "That is the liberator." As long as the African Americans had to work with that hoe and mule, they were not going to get anywhere.

Revolutionaries have to differentiate between two processes. One is the process of the quantitative development of the means of production, and the quantitative changes that take place in society to reflect that. The other process is the qualitative change that takes place with the introduction of the qualitative new means of production that replaces the old. Today that qualitative change is the change from industrial production to robotic production. These two processes are different.

Revolutionaries today are caught up in a dilemma. We developed within a revolutionary process based upon the quantitative aspects of industrial production within capitalism. Now we are suddenly faced with a qualitative change – electronic production. If we work with that qualitative change, using the political and organizational weapons developed within the quantitative aspects of the previous process, we will fail. We can resolve this dilemma if we understand that we can no longer deal with a qualitative change in society with the organizational forms and ideological and political aspects of the previous quantitative stages of development.

Every problem we revolutionaries face today is based upon the struggle to transform our activity based on quantitative stages within a process to qualitative stages between processes, that is, from one quality to another. This is expressed in the struggle to let go of the organizational structures and thinking that used to work in a quantitative stage of development within one quality, and create the new organizational structures and thinking needed for a leap between between two different qualities.

You can't use the same weapons, the same methods. You can't use the same organizational structure. You have to come up with something new, something that reflects the objective reality we are facing today. Revolutionaries have to change our tactics to reflect the objective reality, and stop trying to make reality conform to what we want or what we think.

## WE CAN ONLY WIN AS A CLASS

The revolutionary organization must understand that there is an objective line of

march from one quality to another. By line of march we mean dealing with the stages of development of a process. We have to look at it, it seems to me, as a series of quantitative stages of the leap that is taking place. We have to deal with each one of these stages. When we look at this question of the line of march we can see that our first stage of development is the question of a new class. It is a stage of development that we have to concentrate on.

This concept of the line of march tells us that there is this objective process that is going on and that you have to deal with every stage of the development of that objective process or you are not going to win. Where is that objective process today? It is that a new class is being created by the robot, by the computer, by electronics. I don't care who you are, where you live, or no matter what you call yourself, it affects you. You are getting laid off, and a new class is forming.

One thing that hasn't been dealt with properly in relationship to this is that no revolution has ever been successful by a class that is inside the existing society. A class has to be outside of the existing society in order to overthrow it. For example, the bourgeoisie was outside of feudal relations. The peasants couldn't overthrow a feudal structure. They were a part of it. They could only gain more for themselves within that structure. The bourgeoisie was free to revolt because they were outside of that structure. It is the same thing that we are talking about today. This idea that the working class could overthrow capital has never happened. Every socialist revolution that we've had has been a social upheaval by a class at least partially outside of that society followed by a military coup in order to seize power. I think the ruling class understands the danger of having a class outside of society that has no loyalty whatsoever to the wage labor system because they don't participate in it.

When I was a kid we talked in school about the American melting pot even if we realized that the Native Americans, the Blacks and others were outside of the melting pot. Nobody even talks about the melting pot today. America has been divided up with their hyphens; they are Irish-American, they are Norwegian-American, they are African-Americans. There aren't any Americans I guess. This thing has been set up now where people are demanding that this nationality leads the class struggle, or that nationality does. This just won't work with this new class.

The new class is not a conglomeration of hyphenated groups. They are one class. The

color of their skin is no more important than the color of their eyeballs. Unless we understand this, we are not going to be able to win this fight. Again, it has to be done quantitatively. It can't be done all at once and we can't do it by fiat. We have to do it in practice.

I was reading this article by this lady from West Virginia. It could have been sent in by a Black, or Latino or Native American, by anybody. She was talking about the cancer that is destroying her family; the poisoned water that they have to bathe in. This is different than trying to use a grouping as a base in order to get a bigger cut of the pie – because that is what this hyphen was all about, getting a bigger cut of the pie. Today, there isn't any pie. If we are going to get anything at all, it is going to have to be done on the basis of our relations to the means of production, that is to say, as a class.

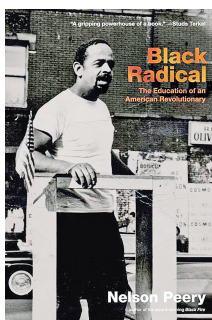
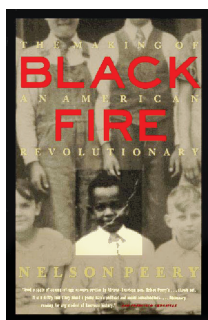
It is clear that the first point on this line of march is that there has to be some form of unity of that section of the class that can be united. The basis of their unity is their common economic condition. They cannot proceed forward as a "bag of marbles." How do revolutionaries go about the process of uniting this section of the class that no longer gets anything out of the disunity? This is the line of march that we are dealing with.

## A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION FOR TODAY

When the quantitative development comes to an end, and the leap from one quality to another begins, the revolutionary organization has to reorganize itself to reflect the new conditions. Changing organization means qualitatively changing ourselves and our thinking. This is very difficult to do.

Somehow we have to get across the idea that the communist movement today is not a group of communists. It is a group of disoriented workers that cannot exist under the existing conditions. There is a huge difference between an ideological and political outlook that says the communist movement is the sum total of communists, and one that says that the communist movement is a growing mass of people outside of the capitalist relations.

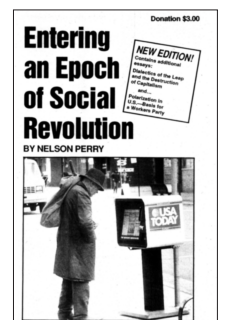
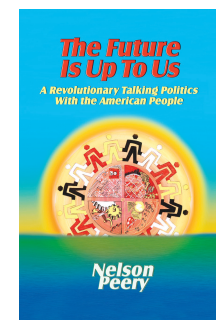
If we understand these things – the qualitative changes in content of our time, the emergence of a revolutionary new class, and the need to develop new strategies, tactics and organization – and can plan based upon this kind of reality, we can do something in history, we can truly contribute to the history of humankind.



## A New Epoch of Revolution: The Writings of Nelson Peery

The theme that threads its way through Nelson Peery's writings, and which is the foundation of all his work, is that we are living through a time of epochal change, that we leaving behind one epoch of human history and making the leap to another. In his writings, Nelson always stressed that a class united around a common program is an unstoppable force. It is the task of revolutionaries to imbue the class with a vision of this new world that is both possible and a practical necessity – a cooperative, communist society, based on distribution according to need.

*These and other writings by Nelson Peery can be purchased through Speakers for a New America, [www.speakersforanewamerica.com](http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com).*



# On Syndicalism: An Interview with Nelson Peery

*Editors Note: This interview was conducted by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers Media Project in July 2015.*

First of all, syndicalism was the foundation of the trade union movement. As unions consolidated, they were syndicates. In Europe they were actually an outgrowth of the bakers, who would get together and form a “syndicate” to keep other bakers out, in order to stop others from challenging them. The foundation of the trade union movement was the syndicate. That is to say it was there to protect the people from the outsiders, rather than an inclusive thing. The word syndical was a correct term.

These syndicates were acceptable in the early stages, but as industry developed and manufacture by hand declined and industrial production took over, you had the shifting of millions of peasants and smalltime manufacturers out of the countryside and into the cities where you had to be more inclusive. This concept of protecting your members against the outsiders maintained itself. That’s why today we’re still talking about syndicalism. But instead of a union, we’re talking about a Puerto Rican group or a Black Nationalist group or the Irish or whatever, taking care of their own. This is an extremely deeply-rooted thing in American history.

If I can give you an example of how syndicalism isn’t simply white supremacist. It ends up being that in fact, but let me give you an example. When I left college, I watched what was happening. The Black leaders were necessarily coming from the Black intelligentsia. By the time they achieved a position of leadership, they could take their choice: either become agents for the ruling class or else they weren’t going to go anywhere. The vast majority of them ended up absolutely being traitors. I came to the conclusion that if I was going to make a contribution, I could not do it in the intelligentsia.

I had to be an intellectual, but I had to be a proletarian intellectual, and not a petty bourgeois Black intellectual. The first thing I had to make up my mind about was how am I going to earn a living? There is an old tradition in the Black community that you’re going to be a slave unless you have your own means of existence. That means to say you have to become a craftsman.

In my generation there was a saying: “What is your hand?” “Well, I’m a carpenter by hand.”

“What is your calling?” “Well, I’m a preacher by calling.”

If you didn’t have a skill, something that belonged to you, you were going to be at the mercy of whoever you had to beg your bread from. I decided I should become a bricklayer. It’s hard work, but it’s open. I could be working for a week then off for two weeks or whatever. I would be my own boss, more or less. I went down to the bricklayers union and said I wanted an apprenticeship. The guy looked at me and he said “You want what?”

I said I wanted an apprenticeship in the bricklayers union. He smiled and said, “I don’t think you’re eligible.” I said “I am doing this under the GI Bill of Rights and you are not allowed to discriminate against me.” At this point in time [right after World War II] there was not one Black craftsman in the state of Minnesota who belonged to a union. There were some carpenters and whatnot who were Black but they didn’t belong to a union, they wouldn’t let them in. I got a lawyer and the lawyer sent a letter and the deal was settled overnight, but then when I got inside the union I realized one thing. The people who had created this union had fought like hell to build this union. It was formed to do away with the wages system.

The bricklayers up until the late 1800s worked on piecework. They’d say, “OK, I’m gonna lay a thousand bricks for five dollars or ten dollars or whatever it was.” The bricklayers didn’t work on a wages system; they worked on a piecework system. When they began the transition to being paid by the hour instead of being paid by the brick, the bricklayers formed a really militant union. They fought like hell to build that union. So naturally when they had a new generation of bricklayers coming in, they made sure that their sons got in the union. They couldn’t understand why I was yelling about race. “It’s not a race thing! My goddamn kid is not gonna come in. If there’s only one slot open, it’s gonna go to my child. I built this union.”

I could understand exactly what he’s talking about. It’s the very nature of the structure of the working class in the United States, that if you’re going to protect your own, you’re going to exclude somebody. So exclusion always comes on the basis of color in America.

The first union meeting I attended in Minneapolis was conducted in Swedish. I didn’t understand a word they were saying. I want to emphasize that I didn’t have any problem with the bricklayers. But I do think that they resented the idea that I got in the union and their kid did not get in the union and that they suffered like hell to build that union and they should have first choice. So race and the capitalist system and how it functions are intertwined. The bricklayers had to make up their mind if they were going to build a union that’s inclusive or a union that’s exclusive. The trade union movement in this country is built to protect its members, not to protect the class. So these hangovers of syndicalism make complete sense. It was translated, and couldn’t help but be translated, into a racial thing.

And of course the minorities also fought back also on that basis. They fought back as Blacks, as Puerto Ricans, as this and as that, rather than as workers. So the struggle against these syndicalist hangovers was, and is, of extreme importance.

There is going to be a meeting next week in Cleveland of Black Lives Matter. Of course, Black lives matter. Certainly mine does. But how are you going to win a battle, win this

war, if we fight it out on the basis that one tenth of the population is going to exclude nine tenths? The first law of war is that you have to concentrate the maximum amount of force at your enemy’s weakest point. People don’t have to love each other, but you’re not going to get anywhere if you’re going to exclude nine-tenths of the population. There are tons of Latinos, Anglos, whatever, who are just thoroughly disgusted with this slaughter of Blacks that’s taking place.

If I could use Jesse Jackson as an example of syndicalism. He has 43 million dollars in the bank. He formed PUSH when he was flat broke. Today he has 43 million dollars. How did he get the 43 million dollars? He wanted a good job for his oldest kid. A good job in Chicago back then was to be the head of a beer distribution area. So Jesse goes to Budweiser and says you’re going to have to have a Black for head of distribution in this area. Budweiser says: “We’ll make that decision. You don’t make that decision for us.” Jesse said: “If I put ten thousand Blacks on a picket line around this building, you’ll determine it.” So his son became the head of distribution for an area and became a multimillionaire overnight. This is the way he got that money, and this is the reason there are such strong syndicalist tendencies within the Black movement.

The common Black is *begging* for unity. They understand very well that one-tenth of the population can’t defend itself against nine-tenths. You can’t allow a potential enemy to consolidate. These questions of syndicalism and opportunism are very closely united and interwoven. How we’re going to do it, I don’t know. My brother lives in Cleveland and he sent me a picture of this demonstration they had last week in Cleveland. Kathleen Battle, this wonderful opera singer, was lead-

ing that demonstration, singing this song that was written by a Spaniard in commemoration of this little child who was shot there in Cleveland. When the parade ended, Kathleen Battle stood up and motioned to the coffin – the child wasn’t in the coffin, it was symbolic – and just says: “Good night, little brother.” How you going to fight this? I can’t fight Kathleen Battle. And yet at the same time, if it becomes a Black issue, we’re going to lose. This question of syndicalism and how we’re going to fight it is of *immense* importance.

How do we do it? How do we put the fight on a class basis? I’ve always felt that the mechanics of capital are going to create a situation where we can win, but that requires that the whites be pushed down to the level of the Blacks. Because the Blacks are not going to rise to the level of the whites, the whites have to be pushed down. It’s now happening. That doesn’t mean there isn’t syndicalism even in this. If you go eight blocks, ten blocks to the north of where we are right now, you will find all the beggars are white. Now we have to unite. So we are reaching a juncture where we need to have a serious discussion within our organization – how do we go about this? Never mind the all that about white/Black and so forth and so on. Looking at the real world, how do we go about uniting all that can be united in order to achieve a common goal?

Syndicalism was a huge problem for the communists in the CIO, it was a huge problem for the liberation movements, and it’s a huge problem today.

*Videos of the rest of the interview with Nelson are available at <https://vimeo.com/revblackworkers>.*

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