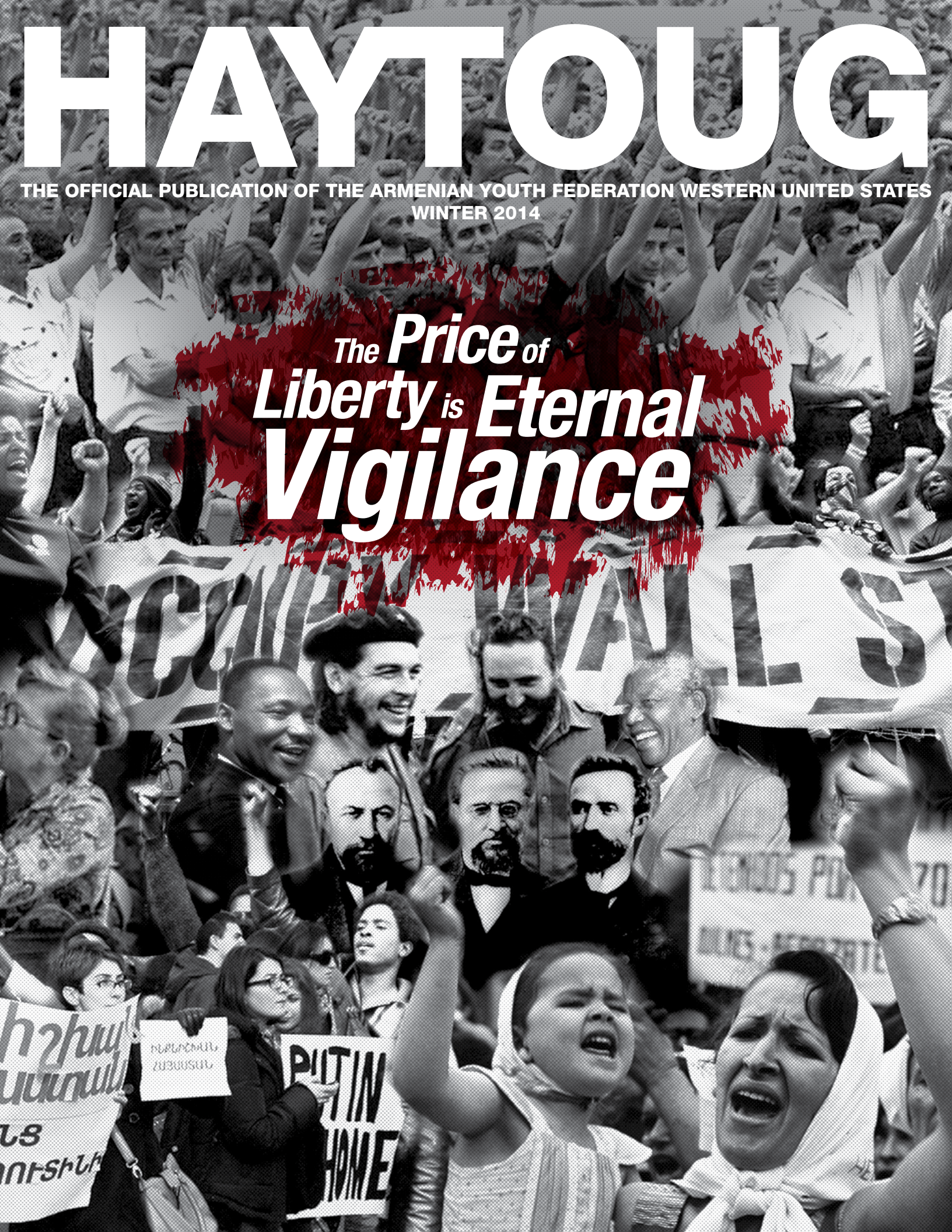


HAYTOUG

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ARMENIAN YOUTH FEDERATION WESTERN UNITED STATES
WINTER 2014

The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance





Հայդուկ / Haytoug

www.Haytoug.org

Contributors

William Bairamian
Rupen Janbazian
Sarkis Degirmenjian
Sanan Shirinian
Talar Malakian
Simon Moya-Smith
Serouj Aprahamian
Narine Esmaili
Shant Mirzaian
Garik Alexanyan
Razmig Sarkissian
Tiffany Esmailian

Editors

Gev Iskajyan & Sanan Shirinian

Layout & Design

Shoghak Kazandjian

Haytoug is published by the Armenian Youth Federation Western US and distributed free of charge within the community. The opinions expressed in Haytoug are not solely and necessarily the opinions of the Armenian Youth Federation. Haytoug encourages all Armenian youth to express their thoughts in this publication. Financial contributions may be made to the following address:

104 N. Belmont St. Suite 313
Glendale CA, 91206

If you would like to contribute to Haytoug, please submit your articles to haytoug@ayfwest.org. You can also submit your material directly on our website at:

www.haytoug.org/contribute.

The Armenian Youth Federation claims no credit for any images posted on the Haytoug website or print unless otherwise noted. Images are copyrighted to their respectful owners. If there is an image appearing on any Haytoug medium that belongs to you and you do not wish for it appear on this site, please E-mail with a link to said image and it will be promptly removed.

Message from the Editors

"The responsibility of social progress belongs to us all; to the wage-laborers, the entrepreneurs, the realists and the dreamers. The common man is of utmost value to the pursuit of social justice."

A strong awareness of Armenian national identity often means inheriting a heavy load of responsibilities as well as a deep sense of rights. The challenges faced by our nation seem insurmountable, while our victories are few and far between. Yet, the persistent effort to claim our entitlements and live up to our obligations never seems to tire. Diaspora organizations and individuals continue championing causes for genocide awareness, sustaining Armenian communities, and partaking in the development of the homeland. Most recently in Armenia, there has been an upsurge in public participation and almost daily reports of protestors mobilizing around a multitude of issues. From post-election upheaval, to environmental activism and demonstrations against the Russian led Customs Union, Armenia has been no less caught up in the worldwide wave of contentious politics that started trending in 2011.

Yet, both in the Diaspora and Armenia a valuable resource that we have neglected to turn to enough is the experiences of the global community. The plights faced by our nation are extremely troubling, and the day-to-day oppression of Armenian citizens by a corrupt regime further handicaps the ability to

develop as a newly independent state. However, these challenges are not unique to us. We can build our capacities by understating Armenian causes not in a vacuum, but in a larger global context. While championing our own national agendas, we should take the opportunities to learn from and work with the many outsiders who have been catalysts in historical movements still unfamiliar to us.

The few social movements discussed in this issue can only provide a quick glance into the world of contentious political participation. They should serve as a springboard for a new initiative that calls on us to identify with a wider range of activists, learn from their successes and shortcomings, and develop our global consciousness. This is not an entirely new concept, as the founders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation themselves were inspired by their 19th century contemporaries. Today, in this modern technological society, our ability to connect is greater than ever. No fight occurs in complete isolation from the rest of the world. Although the diversity of peoples experiences are enriching, so is our universal humanity.

While the movements mentioned throughout this issue take place in different times and places and might

seem to be completely detached from one another, they all share a universal formula of oppressed rising up against oppressor. Many different tactics and organizing methods have been employed to obtain a target goal. Most were peaceful, others violent, some led by mothers, others by students or laborers. Despite these variations, all those involved were hard-workers, agitators, risk-takers, and transformers. All offer a story worth hearing. Let us be stimulated by the richness of the outside world and learn from the lessons offered by proceeding struggles. Social justice is not a distant and abstract concept that belongs to politicians, academics and elites. The responsibility of social progress belongs to us all; to the wage-laborers, the entrepreneurs, the realists and the dreamers. The common man is of utmost value to the pursuit of social justice.

In late 19th century, Armenian revolutionaries went into remote villages and organized peasants to defend themselves against Ottoman repression. Today, there is similar organizing being done in low-income communities throughout America, in an effort to empower the most marginalized citizens and help them defend themselves in an exploitative society. The history of genocide and land occupation suffered by Native-Americans resonates deeply with our own claims to historical Armenian territories. These are just a few examples of how our struggles run parallel to one another. Looking beyond artificial and sometimes intentional divisions among ordinary people claiming their basic rights is a strategic tactic to its own end.

As progressive and young organizers, we should be knowledgeable about movements of the past, stay engaged with the movements of our time, and become leaders of the movements to come. ■

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: Where Are They Now?

By William Bairamian

A social movement can look like and be called many things. Whatever their appearance or name, the goal of all social movements is presumably the same: a change for the better. If this is indeed the ultimate objective of a social movement, it is well worth considering how successfully a movement achieves that objective.

In the past ten years, several social movements have grabbed the world's attention for the change they promised. Deemed successful for achieving their goal of change, though not necessarily change for the better, further evaluations have been sparsely performed. However, in judging social movements, what happens afterward can often be as important in evaluating success or failure.

The social movements discussed here – the Rose Revolution of Georgia, the Orange Revolution of Ukraine, and the Arab Spring in Egypt and Libya – are popular and well-known reference points in the past decade and that is why they were chosen. They also straddle a spectrum that includes nonviolent protest (Georgia and Ukraine) to violent revolution (Libya) and that in-between (Egypt).

There is no question that these movements achieved some success, if only brief or superficial. The question, rather, is whether they secured change for the better, as promised, and as determined by what followed.

First in the course of social movements discussed here is Georgia. The country had a similar experience with its post-independence government as many of its Soviet-era cohorts like Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and the Central Asian states. Strongmen more familiar with politburo than parliament took the reins of countries in disarray, less interested in attending to the people than looking out for themselves and doing the bidding of outside influences – Moscow, in the Soviet case – as they well knew how. In Georgia, that strongman was Eduard Shevardnadze.

In 2003, Shevardnadze, a Soviet leftover, was forced from office during a pro-West and anti-Russia movement called the Rose Revolution. The country welcomed Mikheil Saakashvili, a Western-educated and

backed lawyer who promised much in the way of removing the country from the Russian yoke and setting it on a path toward European integration and economic development.

About one year later, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine promised similar changes to the Russia-oriented government of the former Soviet republic.

When Viktor Yanukovich, the candidate backed by another Soviet leftover, incumbent Leonid Kuchma, ran for president in 2004, he was challenged by Viktor Yushchenko. Allegations of rampant voter fraud led to a political tug-of-war, called the Orange Revolution, which ended in the courts awarding the presidency to Yushchenko, the pro-Europe, anti-Russia candidate. The court's decision was hailed as a progressive victory.

Georgia was indeed successful in implementing some reforms and setting its sights on Europe, although the latter may have made for better external publicity than internal stability.

Four short years after the euphoria of Saakashvili's victory, Georgia saw a familiarly brutal crackdown on the opposition by the Caucasian darling of democracy, complete with curtailment of free press, tear gas, beatings, raids, and water cannons. Furthermore, despite promises of policies more inclusive of Georgia's several ethnic minorities, little changed, including the lot of the country's severely discriminated-against Armenian population in Javakhs. The coup de grace of Saakashvili's poor governing was the decision to attack his own citizens in South Ossetia, antagonizing Russia and consequently procuring a loss of Georgian territory.

Ultimately, widespread discontent with Saakashvili resulted in Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire opposition candidate, winning the premiership. This was followed by the recent victory of the presidential candidate supported by Ivanishvili, Giorgi Margvelashvili.

In Ukraine, Yanukovich, the man on the losing end of the Orange Revolution, became prime minister in 2006 and has been president of Ukraine since 2010 amid infighting and power struggles in the "Orange" opposition. His opponent during the Revolution, Yushchenko,

Image © Associated Press

got 5.45% of the vote in the 2010 presidential election and Yuschenko's Our Ukraine party got 1.11% in the 2012 parliamentary elections. Yulia Tymoshenko, one of the leaders of the revolution, has since been convicted of abuse of power and embezzlement and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Although the victory of an opposition candidate does not necessarily translate into the failure of a social movement – and, indeed, might prove its success – it begs the question of whether the people for, and with whom the movement was taking place believe the resultant change was for the better. In the case of Georgia and Ukraine, the answer points toward an unambiguous no.

More recently, another wave of revolutions struck, this time across the Middle East. Collectively called the Arab Spring, the ostensible objectives in each country varied, ranging from regime change to political and economic reforms. Egypt and Libya, two heavyweights in the Arab world, fundamentally changed as a result of mass protests in the former and armed revolt in the latter.

Egypt, the crown jewel of the Arab Spring because of the country's size and central role in the Arab world, deposed its resident authoritarian, Hosni Mubarak, and held an election where Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was chosen as the country's president. There was jubilation but it was short-lived.

Shortly after Morsi tried to implement constitutional

reforms, the military conducted a coup d'état, Morsi was removed, and military rule was instituted. The revolution that was supposed to usher a new era of Egyptian politics became a mockery.

To the west, Libya, led by the eccentric Muammar Gaddafi, fell to groups of ragtag rebels who chose force as the primary agent of change, aided by NATO bombings. The rebels fought Gaddafi into submission, eventually capturing and killing him.

Now apparently forgotten when it comes to post-revolution analysis, Libya, unable to form a sustainable government for going on three years, is flirting with the ignominy of becoming a failed state. The glee-ridden removal from power, and execution, of Gaddafi & Co. has not guaranteed a better state of affairs.

Social movements are often thought of as a panacea for societal ills. For precisely that reason, a distinction must be drawn between social movement as feel-good exercise where change is the solely discernible goal and social movement as vehicle, meant to put society on the right trajectory. Frankly, they cannot be an end unto themselves.

Many social movements have been successful but what differentiates them from the failures?

Simply put, the most successful social movements, the agreeability of their goals notwithstanding, have been based on principles that were clearly outlined in

speech or writing in the time before society was moved, as it were, toward action. Thereafter, those principles guided the post-movement leaders.

In what might be the only instance where a similarity between them can be noted, the commonality of guiding principles was integral to the initial success and long-term sustainability of the American and French revolutions; the socialist-communist revolutions of Russia, China, Cuba, parts of Central and South America, and southeast Asia; and, the Islamic jihad movement.

Successful social movements continue beyond the streets to become a part of the target society's fabric and collective mindset. Their ideas become ingrained in the belief systems of the people: American society largely believes in the principles outlined in the texts that readied the people for the Revolution; socialism and communism created vehement believers of those philosophies, some who exist until today; jihadists believe in the righteousness of the terror they wreak upon their enemies.

In contrast, too easily do some social movements devolve into power struggles where one bad system is exchanged for another, where the inheritors of the movement's spoils seem more concerned with the guise of revolution than adopting a new value system.

The examples of Georgia, Ukraine, Libya and Egypt all include revolutionary successors of the deposed who

purported support of democracy and change but acted with a disdain for those who disagreed with them, much like the people they replaced. With society unable to believe that their new leaders had their general wellbeing in mind, the goodwill granted the new leaders upon their arrival was irreversibly corrupted.

The greatest social movements begin not on streets but in minds. They may end in public gatherings or violence but they can only be successful with leaders devoted to ideas in which the people can trust – and that they do trust. That is what carries them beyond chants and marches to meaningful and sustainable change.

If any more poignant example is needed, it can be found in modern Armenian history: long before a bullet was fired to liberate Artsakh, a social movement led by intellectuals prepared the groundwork through the proliferation of ideas for what evolved into a victorious fight for liberty. ■

Image © Ben Lowy



The greatest
social movements
*BEGIN NOT ON
THE STREETS
BUT IN THE
MINDS*

Սիրելի ընկերուհիներ և ընկերներ,

ՀՀ Երիտասարդականի պատուիրակությունը 30 նոյեմբեր, 2013-ին, մասնակցեցաւ Թուրքիոյ քրտամէտ Խաղաղութիւն եւ Ժողովրդավարութիւն կուսակցութեան երիտասարդականի խորհրդաժողովին՝ Տիարպէքիի մէջ: Պատուիրակութեան անդամներն էին Ռուբէն Ճանպազեան եւ Սարգիս Տէկիրմենձեան՝ Հայաստանէն: Խորհրդաժողովին մասնակցելու հրաւիրուած էին Ընկերվարական երիտասարդներու միջազգային միութեան անդամ կազմակերպութիւնները: ՀՀ Երիտասարդականի ներկայացուցիչները իրենց կողմը ուղղեցին ներկաներուն՝ նախ հայերէնով, ապա՝ թրքերէնով: Ստորեւ կը ներկայացնենք ելոյթի հայերէն բնագիրը:

Առաջին հերթին, Հայ Յեղափոխական Դաշնակցութեան Երիտասարդական եւ Ուսանողական Միութիւններու անունով, կողջունենք, «Խաղաղութիւն եւ Ժողովրդավարութիւն» կուսակցութեան Երիտասարդական Խորհուրդին անդրանիկ խորհրդաժողովը: Մեծ պատիւ կը զգանք ըլլալու այստեղ՝ Ամէտ, Տիգրանակերտ. Քաղաք մը որ աշխարհասփիւռ հայ ժողովուրդին համար ունի պատմական խոր եւ մեծ նշանակութիւն:

20-րդ դարու սկիզբը, Օսմանեան Կայսրութիւնը կազմակերպեց եւ իրագործեց հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը, որուն զոհ գացին մէկ ու կէս միլիոն հայեր: Ցեղասպանութիւն մը, որ Թուրքիոյ նորաստեղծ պետութիւնը շարունակեց, ու երբեք չ'ընդունեց. Ցեղասպանութիւն մը, որուն հետեանքով տեղահանուեցաւ եւ սփիւռքացաւ հայ ժողովուրդը: Այս տարիներուն ընթացքին էր նաեւ, որ հայ-քրտական պատմութեան տխրագոյն էջերը գրուեցան:

Երբ հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը կը շարունակուէր Արեւմտահայաստանի մէջ, Մայիս 28, 1918-ին, հայոց

Ազգային Խորհուրդը յայտարարեց Հայաստանի առաջին Հանրապետութեան անկախութիւնը, որպէսզի հայ ժողովուրդը ապրի ազատ եւ անկախ իր սեփական հայրենիքին մէջ:

Հայ Յեղափոխական Դաշնակցութեան ղեկավարած՝ Հայաստանի առաջին Հանրապետութեան տարիներուն, քրտական բնակչութեան տրուեցաւ քաղաքական եւ ընկերային ամբողջական իրաւունքներ. Հայաստանի ազգային ժողովին իբրեւ պատգամաւոր, ընտրուեցաւ քիւրտ ներկայացուցիչ մը, հայոց բանակը ունեցաւ քիւրտ սպաներ, որոնք կազմակերպեցին ու կազմաւորեցին քրտական կամաւորական զունդեր, եւ այլ բնագաւառներու մէջ քիւրտ բնակիչներուն տրուեցաւ ազատութիւն եւ լայն իրաւասութիւններ: Թէեւ հայոց առաջին Հանրապետութեան անկախութիւնը եղաւ կարճատեւ, միայն երկու ու կէս տարիներ, սակայն ազատ ու անկախ ապրելու ոգին միշտ կենդանի մնաց Սփիւռքի եւ հայրենիքի ժողովուրդի սրտերուն մէջ:

1920-ական եւ 30-ական թուականները կը

նկատուին հայ-քրտական միջ յարաբերութիւններու ամէնէն աշխույժ եւ փայլուն տարիները: Տերսիմի, ու մանաւանդ Արարատի շրջանի քրտական յեղափոխութիւններու ընթացքին, Հայ Յեղափոխական Դաշնակցութիւնը մեծապէս օժանդակեց քրտական ազգային շարժումին, տալով քիւրտ ազատամարտիկներու եւ ժողովուրդին բարոյական հսկայ աջակցութիւն՝ մանաւանդ քրտական «Հոյսուն» կազմակերպութեան:

Այս օրերու, Միջին Արեւելքը շատ հետաքրքրական եւ յարափոփոխ անկիւնադարձի մը դիմաց կը գտնուի: Շրջանի արհեստական սահմանները վերափոխուելու հսկայական ճնշման տակ կը գտնուին, իսկ քիւրտ համայնքը այս խառնակ դրուածքին եւ փոփոխութեան կիզակէտը կը կազմէ: Հայաստանի Հանրապետութիւնն ու իր բնակչութիւնը, ինչպէս նաեւ աշխարհասփիւռ հայ ժողովուրդը հետաքրքրուած է այս փոփոխութիւններով ու մեծապէս կրնայ օգտակար եւ զօրաւիզ դառնալ այս գործընթացին: Հայ-քրտական համաշխարհային նոր զինակցութիւնն ու համագործակցութիւնը հիմնուած փոխադարձ յարգանքի վրայ կրնայ մեծապէս օժանդակել մեր երկու ժողովուրդներու իտէալներուն եւ ընդհանուր շահերուն իրականացմանը, հաստատ այն համոզումով որ յետագային ան կրնայ ծամբայ

բանալ աւելի յառաջդիմական եւ բոլորին կողմէ ընդունուած կայուն Միջին Արեւելքի մը:

Սիրելի ընկերներ եւ ընկերուհիներ,

Մենք պէտք է մեր պատմութեան էջերը զարդարող քաջագործութիւններէն օրինակուինք եւ գործուած սխալները երբեք չկրկնենք, չհանդուրժենք մեր դէմ ցցուած անարդարութիւններուն, ու երբ արտաքին ուժեր փորձեն մեր մէջ թշնամութիւն ստեղծել՝ մէկ բռնուցք դառնանք՝ վասն մեր անկախ հայրենիքներու տենչերուն եւ վասն մեր ժողովուրդներու յաւերժութեան:

Անգամ մը եւս, մեծապէս կը շնորհաւորենք ձեր անդրանիկ խորհրդաժողովը: Մեծ պատիւ կը զգանք ձեզի հետ գտնուելով մեր պապենական հողերու վրայ: Այս պահուն թող մեր նախահայրերու անյաղթ կամքն ու նուիրումը վարակիչ դառնայ մեր սերնդակիցներու հոգիներուն մէջ, եւ լուսապայծառ օր մը ազատ անկախ տեսնենք մեր հողերը պապենական:

Արտասանուած Թուրքիոյ, «Խաղաղութիւն եւ Ժողովրդավարութիւն» կուսակցութեան Երիտասարդական Խորհուրդի կազմակերպած անդրանիկ խորհրդաժողովին՝

Նոյեմբեր 30, 2013 - Տիգրանակերտ, Արեւմտահայաստան ■



SOLIDARITY OF WOMEN

By Sanan Shirinian

Usually, when histories of uprisings, social movements and revolutions are told, it is not uncommon to visualize a charismatic and powerful man as the leading figure. He is the one we envision standing elevated above a massive crowd of desperate or angry citizens, reassuring them of their abilities to make change. He is the one we envision making important tactical decisions and representing the will of the people throughout the corridors of power. It seems that this heroic prototype comes to mind because, case after case, it is him who is presented as the face of the struggle. In the Cuban revolution, he was Ernesto "Che" Guevara; In the American civil rights, movement he was Martin Luther King; In anti-apartheid South Africa, he was Nelson Mandela; and in late 20th century Poland, the leading figure of the Solidarity labor movement was Lech Walesa. These men truly are extraordinary and deserve to go down in the pages of history. However, the often overlooked stories of women also need to be told. The contribution of heroines has been as important to the success of social movements as those of leading men. In an effort to bridge the gender gap that has rendered women practically invisible in great efforts of social change, this article will examine the contribution of women in the Polish trade union federation, Solidarity.

In 1980, the Gdansk Shipyard strike of 17,000 struggling ship builders echoed throughout the rest of Poland and paved the way for the formation of Solidarity, in which millions joined. The primary objective of protestors was to create a trade union independent of Communist Party control.¹ Anna Walentynowicz was recognized as a leading figure in the workplace strikes. Walentynowicz was a fifty one year old crane operator at the Gdansk Shipyards who had worked there for thirty years. In August 1980, she was arbitrarily fired a mere five months before she was scheduled to retire, making her unqualified to receive retirement benefits.² Due to her involvement and activism with the illegal trade union, it became clear that she was let go from her job to serve



Image © Jean-Louis Atlan/Sygma/Corbis

as a warning for others not to partake in similar forms of dissent.

Walentynowicz's coworkers were outraged that she had been fired and staged a strike to demand for her return. These strikes were significant in the buildup of the Solidarity movement. Protestors did not acquiesce until an estimated one million workers had laid down their tools across the country and joined in the effort. However, Anna's candid nature and devotion to certain unwavering principles proved to be inconvenient for the Solidarity strategists. Male organizers of Solidarity moved quickly to sideline Walentynowicz.

In communist Poland, women made up 50 percent of the labor force and 50 percent of the membership in the Solidarity movement. However, they were disproportionately underrepresented within the political platforms and comprised less than 8 percent of Solidarity's decision-makers.³ Anna Walentynowicz was a simple crane operator, with a passionate conviction for working-class justice, and her contributions are a valuable part of history.

The active participation of intellectual women also played a critical role in ensuring Solidarity success. After martial law was declared on December 13, 1981 and Solidarity was banned, the movement had to go underground.⁴ Approximately 10,000 men were detained, among whom were a majority of the union's leadership. This was cause for a serious risk of losing momentum from the strikes. As a result of martial law, female organizers had to step up and make important tactical decisions. By January 1982 the Polish female lead-

ership had pulled together to organize unions and volunteer groups, hide and protect Solidarity leaders who had evaded arrest, move equipment such as typewriters into attics and back rooms to conceal from authorities, etc.

In addition to all this work, a team of educated Polish women accomplished one of the most significant tasks for the Solidarity underground. As bright, passionate and dedicated members of Solidarity, they established an underground press called *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, with a uniquely all-female editorial team. The publication quickly became the voice of the underground. It is not a far reach to conclude that this group of revolutionary women saved the political movement during its most vulnerable time. Despite the threat of imprisonment, women worked tirelessly behind the scenes with no recognition or appreciation. They were completely dedicated to the cause and, within a year, circulation was up to 80,000. The newspaper's language was straightforward and plain, a conscious decision on behalf of the journalists to break from the idealistic and romantic language used in most publications at the time.⁵

The ability of women to successfully run this operation for years without arrest speaks volumes for what they might have accomplished had they been equal players while Solidarity was legal. The team of all female editors and publishers was completely unexpected, even after they had uncovered themselves. In addition to being overlooked by communist leaders, the women also went unnoticed by western media. Western

"THE CONTRIBUTION OF HEROINES HAS BEEN AS IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS THOSE OF LEADING MEN."

press mostly covered stories coming from the top levels of action, and ignored the grassroots organizing in which women were mostly active.

The daily grind of publication, the strategic thinking and messaging helped preserve a strong resistance for the next seven years. This information network created by a group of brilliant women was absolutely essential for raising the political consciousness of Poland. It helped set the foundations for a new social order and challenged the status quo among a population that had been subjected to years of communist propaganda. This press helped shape the institutions that would fight for civil liberties and human rights in decades to come.

The women of Poland were reluctant to adopt feminist causes, to challenge patriarchal power norms and fight the gendered oppression they were subjected to. However, their full dedication to a national cause allowed them to push the boundaries of traditional female participation. In order to have a more holistic understanding of how Poland was able to achieve a certain level of democracy and independence, the stories of women like Anna Walentynowicz, and the editorial board of Solidarity's underground newspaper must not be pushed to the margins of history. ■

1. "The Story of the Solidarity Movement." Solidarity Gdansk Poland. Lifeboat, 2007. <<http://www.gdansk-life.com/poland/solidarity>>.
2. Szporer, Michael. "Anna Walentynowicz and the Legacy of Solidarity in Poland." Project MUSE. Journal of Cold War Studies, Winter 2011. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_cold_war_studies/summary/v013/13.1.szporer.html>.
3. Penn, Shana. Women in the Solidarity Movement, Polish Underground: The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest. Blackwell Reference Online, 2009. <http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781405184649_yr2012_chunk_g97814051846491585>.
4. Donovan, Jeffrey. "Poland: Solidarity -- The Trade Union That Changed The World." Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 24 Aug. 2005. <cubmail.cc.columbia.edu>.
5. Simpson, Peggy. "The Role Women Journalists Played in Poland's Freedom." Nieman Reports. Nieman Foundation, Winter 2005. <www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100607/The-Role-Women-Journalists-Played-in-Poland's-Freedom.aspx>.

You & I, *scum of the world*

By Talar Malakian

When you, oppressors, talk about us, the oppressed, you should talk about the preconditions for your own national consciousness. It is a question worth thinking about when you talk about

those DAMN DIASPORA ARMENIANS

in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, when you celebrate an officer who killed an Armenian with an axe, when you deny genocide in Der Zor, when you commit genocide in Rwanda, when you traffic women in Bosnia, when you leave children without the tools to filter water in Africa. In essence, I am asking you to define the grounds that constitute your national identity & your claim to sovereignty & culture. I ask this question because of the way Frantz Fanon asks it, when considering his ancestry as an African man who was born and raised in Martinique, colonized through oppression by French colonizers. He asks the question in anger, mid-revolution, when you smoke your cigars and disapprove of extremists. And I ask you too, oppressor, in the spirit of Fanon and Freire, the wretched of the earth, the scum of the world, the corpses that lie on the desert sands of Syria. I ask you because you are doomed. You are doomed not because we will shed your blood and use our weapons. You are doomed because we have huddled around our own fires as brothers for too long, reached out our hands across national boundaries, reclaimed and repatriated to a land we call home, and turned our violence into words that

populate television and computer screens, screaming the truth about who you are, the history that is coded in the DNA that is your national consciousness. This is what you should find when you ask yourselves who you are as a people. This is the truth. You are inextricably linked to us, the oppressed. You taught us the ways of your violence and your anger. You taught us how to be men, and to be men, we revolted because the only thing we knew of men, was that they were oppressors. Trapped between this truth and our rebellion, you must understand that this isn't just rebellion stemming from resentment towards you. It is not anger, it is not a savage instinct to react to you as revenge, it is not fear, it is not a merciless attempt to take your children and kill your wives. It is a people trying to reconstruct themselves for a century through the shards and broken pieces you, the oppressors, have left behind. Offsprings of violence, we turn to words and negotiation, and become men. But you, you will always be linked to us.

OUR UNITY WILL BURN A RAGE INSIDE OF YOU,

so deep, that you will deny our history when you see our union, and in return, deny your own. You already have. You teach falsehoods, you lie to your

youth, you react, you stretch yourselves to cover every ounce of truth even remotely related to us, so that you can remove the link between you and us, finally rid of a dialectical struggle that storms on. But we won't let you go, because the struggle is not over in our minds. It is not over until you realize the humanity of the dehumanized, until you realize that

IN DEHUMANIZING US, YOU DEHUMANIZED YOURSELVES.

And in turn, your consciousness is buried in the same time and place ours is buried. Neither you nor I will ever be liberated because you deny us and yourselves the right to be fully human, the right to have a consciousness independent of the struggle that ties us so closely together. So we will fight. We will cry out against your injustice, we will raise our pens and write for revolution and conquest, we will be the men you are, and you will be men we are, until the time when you reach out into the layers of untruth, and recover your humanity and ours. ■



Image © Viki Eagle

By Simon Moya-Smith

8:56 p.m. Oct. 23, 2013 – New York City: On the 1 Train now. A woman wearing gold sneakers has lost herself in a tattered romance paperback, and she smirks at a sentence I'll never read. No wedding ring on her. I notice these types of things. I can't say why, at least not today.

I begin to eavesdrop on the conversations around me. A group of women just there, to my right, are going on about a guy who never called. Two men nearby ramble about the price of drinks and why they'll "never go back" to whatever pub they stumbled out of moments ago. Everyone's in coats and scarves and gloves – the autumn chill is upon us now, and our bones will soon ache and warn us of the coming snow. Yes, I can feel it already.

We've stopped again. The sliding metal doors whisk open and more rail riders flood the car. One has fixed himself in front of where I sit. I can see he has a glistening pin on his lapel, goading my curiosity. What does it read? I detected the shiny bauble when he came in, like a jeweler spotting a diamond, but he's standing diagonally, and I can't see the thing – it's just out of my line of sight, and that begins to bother me, so I call out to him:

"Sir," I say, "would you like to sit down?"
"Oh, no. Thank you, though," he remarks, wearing a pleasant smile.

Facing me now, I can see the pin, and immediately I get the tick to pick his brain. ... The pin reads, "COLUMBUS DAY NYC 2013."

"Did you get to see the (Columbus Day) parade?" I quickly ask.

"Oh yeah," the nameless man with the pin says. "I haven't missed one in years. Did you get to go?"

I look up at the man from my seat, chuckle for a moment. "Well," I snap, "I'm Native American and it would be quite wrong of me to celebrate that holiday, wouldn't you agree?"

The man eyes me warily. A moment ago he was speaking to this nice young man who, earlier, offered him his seat. Now he's faced with a confrontation with a bona fide Native American heavy in a seedy subway car filled with eyes looking into the blackness of the car windows – eyes worn on faces beleaguered from the day.

Has he ever met a Native American? Does he even believe we still exist?

I don't know, but what I do know is that his expression has changed. His grin has faded. His eyebrows seem to have collided. He even appears taller, as if he involuntarily stretched his spine, readying for a confrontation with another one of New York's social deviates.

"Ah ... I see," he says after a moment of piercing awkwardness.

"Yeah," I respond, staring directly at the man with the pin. "So, why don't you? ..."

Jesus – did he really just ask that? I thought. Where to begin? Where to begin, indeed.

I often ruminate over the most appropriate response to such a question. ... Where to begin?

In moments such as these I find myself eager to respond with mostly Did You Know ... and continue on that way: Did you know that in 1492 North America's population was 100 percent Native American and now, today, we make up a mere one percent of the entire U.S. population? Did you know that Native American reservations were once prison camps? You remember, after Pearl Harbor, when the U.S. rounded up all the Japanese-Americans? Did you know that the government relocated many of these citizens to Indian reservations? Did you know there is third world plight in the U.S.? Of course. On my reservation, in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, many homes have no electricity or running water. Our elders die in the winter from hypothermia or in summer from heat stroke. I wonder if Brad Pitt and George Clooney, the pair of famed philanthropists, know of these American realities? I certainly hope not, because if they did they'd have no justifiable excuse to ignore the abject poverty of this country's first peoples who suffer under their snouts...

Well this kind of talk could continue for hours, really, but, at this moment, Dear Reader, I feel I've failed to explain to you the curious subject of a reservation and the idea of borders, i.e. the "Indian Problem," as the U.S. government liked to call it. (Indians, our physical presence, was thought to be in the way of progress, hence the term "Indian problem." The problem being how to eradicate the Native American race or, at least, assimilate us into western culture.)

Oh, and yes: we'll get back to the man in the subway wearing the shiny pin shortly.

But first, borders: The U.S. government loved (loves?) to control Native Americans with borders – some of them we couldn't see, the elders would say. Others we could. They were invisible. The white soldier on duty would often bark, "You cannot go over there!" and point in certain direction.

"But why not?" an elder would reply. "We've been traversing these lands since time immemorial – long before you and yours ever arrived. So why can't we go over there." "Because this is no longer your land," the man in the yellow handkerchief would roar. "It is the property of the United States Government."

"OK," a Native American elder once replied. "If this is truly your land, then take it with you when you leave. If you cannot, then it does not belong to you."

Yes. I remember that story, told to me years ago, as a boy. Yet my favorite, above all, is as follows: One of the first white men to come from the east visited an Oglala Lakota elder. She was of the women's council.

"Do your people own this land?" the white man asked angrily. He had demanded to speak to a man, but in Oglala Lakota society women are equal to a man; and, in some situations, even superior.

"No," she said.

"Ah, well then I claim this land for ..."

"Wait," she said quickly, interrupting the man's swift speech.

"I said I don't own it, but that doesn't mean this isn't our home."

The white man appeared confused. Then, the elder spoke again: "I can own this land as much as I can own the air or the water."

The white man didn't understand. Years later, the elder would be murdered by the U.S. Cavalry and her children taken to Christian boarding schools in the east. So ... where to begin?

The man with pin and I gazed fixedly at each other for a moment – neither of us looking away, evidently perplexed by the other.

We were at the 66th St., Lincoln Center stop. Once the train began to move again, I broke the silence.

"I don't celebrate the holiday because Christopher Columbus is responsible for the genocide of the Native American – my people, and to celebrate a blood-thirsty tyrant who would test the sharpness of his blades on defenseless women and children and then hang the men 13 at a time – one for each of the 12 apostles and one more for Jesus Christ – is a testament to American ignorance and an affront to history as it truly occurred."

He nodded and grinned and scoffed and walked toward the middle of the car, shaking his head as he scurried like a rat escaping the rising tide.

Then, at Columbus Circle, where a monument to the man stands high above the yellow and black zipping bees, I got off and had some celebratory cheese. Dinner be damned, I thought. And yes, why not some wine, too. I am a fat kid at heart with a taste for many things, especially narrow minds double dipped in dimwitted dipshittery. Indeed. Cheers. ■

"I said I don't own it, but that doesn't mean this isn't our home."

By Serouj Aprahamian

RADICAL ROOTS: *On the Origins of the ARF*

In Mikael Varanian's classic biography of Simon Zavarian, he asks how it came to be that a people who were as downtrodden, divided and passive as Armenians ended up creating a movement as revolutionary as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF).

His answer: remember the founding generation. Varanian implores his readers to get to know Zavarian, Kristapor Mikayelian, Stepan Zorian (Rosdom) and others who built the organization.

So, just who were the founders exactly? What were their philosophies and backgrounds? What brought them to form and propel the ARF the way they did?

These are complex questions with no single answer. But over the years, I've found that there is a glaring, overwhelmingly important factor that's rarely discussed.

Namely, all three founders were active in Russian revolutionary circles prior to their involvement in Armenian affairs. They were members of Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), a Russian revolutionary group that shook the world with its assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. They were followers of the federalist, non-Marxist wing of the socialist movement. This involvement had a major impact on every aspect of what would later become the ARF.

Let's start first with the initial mission of the ARF, which was to organize all groups concerned with Armenian liberation and channel their energies into a unified force. This was essentially the same mission of the Russian revolutionaries who, as propagated by people like Mikhail Bakunin, sought to unify fragmented peasant uprisings in the countryside into a single calculated popular revolution. The founders clearly took inspiration from this strategy and transferred its core tenets to the Armenian plane.

The decentralized organizational structure of the ARF is an even more telling example. At a time when most revolutionary movements operated in a top down hierarchy, the founders emphasized local autonomy and initiative from below. They adhered to the socialist model of free and independent organization "from below upward", "not by the orders of any authority... but as a result of the natural development of all the varied demands put forth by life itself." This was the prerequisite for revolution espoused by Bakunin, Alexander Herzen, Peter Kropotkin, and other influential Russian

revolutionaries. And it was this decentralization that made the ARF stand out and attract members throughout the Armenian world.

Even the name Dashnaksutyun (Federation) itself is emblematic of where the founders drew their influence. The Russian socialist movement was known the world over for its emphasis on federation as a principle—as opposed to the statist, top-down approach of the Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat. They envisioned a new society where agricultural cooperatives, workers' associations, voluntary communities, and provinces would be federated up into nations and then, in the more distant future, joined together under international brotherhood.

The ARF adopted this principle of federation not only for its internal structure, but also for its external policy. The founders called for local autonomy and democratic federation within the Ottoman Empire and Transcaucasia. They did not define independence as forming a separate state. They advocated for an autonomous Armenia federated together with other nations under a constitutional, democratic order. In fact, national independence did not even officially enter the platform of the ARF until 1919—one year after the First Republic had already been established.

What about the ARF's famous call to go "depi yerkir" (toward the homeland)? Again, this was an appropriation of the Russian Khozhdeni v narod (going to the people) movement. In the summer of 1874, thousands of Russian youth left their homes, schools, and universities and went to the countryside to make direct contact with the peasantry. They lived among the people, studied their problems, integrated into their lifestyle, and tried to foment revolt. The movement ultimately failed, but it had a major demonstration effect. Nearly all of those who later founded Narodnaya Volya came from this movement.

Its philosophy also affected Mikayelian, Zavarian and other founders who went back to their villages and communities after graduating school in Russia. They worked with the Armenian peasantry, served in schools and organized revolutionary groups. The concept later carried over to the fedayee movement in Western Armenia and has resurfaced in more recent times, with the Artsakh movement and re-independence of Armenia. Another important concept that influenced the activities

of the ARF was "propaganda by the deed." This was the idea that daring revolutionary actions are important not only onto themselves but also for awakening consciousness. In a closed authoritarian society, getting your message across is a difficult task. Events such as the assassination of the Tsar proved that direct action could do more for inspiring resistance than thousands of pamphlets. Such acts were seen as important supplements to oral and written propaganda in order to bring about transformation in society.

"The founders were not afraid to draw from outside experiences to deepen their own people's struggle"

The early years of the ARF were characterized by such actions, including the attempted assassination of Sultan Abdul Hamid, the takeover of the Ottoman Bank, and the Khanasor Expedition, to name a few. ARF leaders regularly referred to the importance of action in waking up the masses and the concept carried on into later activities such as Operation Nemesis and Zinyal Baykar (Armed Struggle).

The parallels are countless (too many, in fact, to cover in such a short space). From its structure, to its political program, to its actions, and even its slogans, the ARF was heavily shaped by Russian radical currents. In the words of the prominent ARF figure Vahan Navasartian, "There is no denying that our organization has on it the stamp of the Russian liberation movement."

More important than the actual similarities, however, is the point that the founders were not afraid to draw from outside experiences to deepen their own people's struggle. Their involvement in non-Armenian activism helped inform their worldview and led them to make pivotal contributions to their nation. In fact, even after forming the ARF, they stayed engaged with other revolutionary movements their entire lives.

It is worth asking how relevant these roots of the ARF are for us today. Over a century later, as we grapple with similar problems of oppression, division, and passivity, we should ask ourselves what we can learn from the example and principles set forth by that revolutionary founding generation. ■

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

By Narine Esmaeili

With widening income disparities in the United States severely damaging the livelihoods of a majority of Americans, anger manifested through social upheaval seemed inevitable. America proclaimed to be a champion of equal opportunity and democracy yet, in recent years failed to live up to these principles. The Occupy movement sought to reestablish these ideals, and reclaim the country that had been arguably hijacked by the top 1% of earners. Occupy in the United States was born in the financial district of the city of New York, where the heart of American capitalism resides. Activists had become outraged by the governmental bailouts of big banks that were responsible for the financial crisis. This outrage quickly spread throughout many cities including London, Athens, Cairo and even lesser known cases such as Yerevan, where people were pouring into public spaces to protest corporate greed, corruption, unemployment and economic austerity measures.

While there were and continue to be strong critics of the Occupy movement who believe it failed because of its horizontal structure and lack of clearly defined goals, Occupy was critical in changing the political debate. It quickly disseminated statistics about the growing rates of income inequality and the irresponsible decisions made by top executives of the banking industry. It also significantly raised a class-consciousness and class-solidarity, which are important for a stronger and more unified effort of the worlds' oppressed. The occupiers seemed to have come to a realization that the "democratic" governments of the world did not truly represent the interests of the masses, and instead had been bought out by elite interests including, top banks and corporations.

The movement adopted the basic action of occupying public space. People from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds came together in public spaces to peacefully make demands for change. They camped together and made decisions together, rejecting hierar-

chical structures and leaders. The atmosphere however was not always so *kumbaya*. Occupiers were repeatedly beaten by police, thrown out of the campgrounds, abused, shoved and arrested. The tactic of occupying caused tension and confusion among authorities because they were unsure about how to disperse people non-violently inhabiting public spaces. Questions like who owns public space and who can use it, stirred. The very fact that the occupiers were legally and peacefully taking up public space in order to voice their concerns was confusing for the authorities trying to silence them. The issues of who can use public space and what can be said freely seemed to represent the very institutional problems that occupiers were challenging. It demonstrated that free space and free speech are constantly being policed and controlled. Mainstream media often twisted these issues by depicting occupiers as lazy hippies and claiming that there were no class-based problems, only a lack of individual motivation and hard work. Global coverage was dismissive and focused on issues of cleanliness and safety hazards of those living on the campgrounds. Worldwide, occupiers held firm to the use of public spaces as a tool of free assembly and speech, as well as a weapon for challenging the status quo.

Aside from the constant encounter with hostile authorities, Occupy was also suffering from the lack of an identifiable leader. There was no name or face that the people turned to for motivation or direction. Historically, most movements have progressed based on the charisma, intellect and strategy of a single voice or small group of decision makers. A void of a leading organizer means the movement might be at risk of diverting from its original goals and lose followers along the way. Occupy London was impressive in that the occupied space was so organized, and people were willing to donate money, share their resources and compromise. However, it was clear that each person who was there had their own reasons and their own goals to pursue. Causes varied from religious freedom, to gypsy rights, to



Image © www.occupytogether.org

disassembling the Corporation of London. The democratic processes of the general assemblies gave everyone a chance to voice their opinion but without a central figure to guide the discussion and create cohesion, ideas were jumbled and chaotic. As soon as the occupiers were thrown out of the St. Paul Cathedral's courtyard, the movement fizzled and died without one firm stance on any issue.

Regardless of these troubles, Occupy was impactful because it shed light on many of the unjust conditions that had been left in the shadows. Many believed that we reached a Marxian stage of capitalism, where the gap between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats, the haves and have-nots, is so high that people are bound

to react. As such, not acting would result in the complete failure of our already semi-functioning society. The movement may have failed to end capitalism or bring the downfall of selfish multinational corporations/banks but the ideas it popularized changed the political discourse that had up until then rendered the common people invisible. It even brought consciousness to the people themselves, who might have not been aware of their own oppression. This step forward, along with the lessons learned from the shortcomings of Occupy, will hopefully facilitate a more vibrant and revolutionary movement in the future. ■



Image © Civilnet.am

PUTIN OUT?

By Shant Mirzaian

President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Armenia has sparked civil protests in Yerevan against membership in the Eurasian Customs Union. The Customs Union was first proposed in 2010 by then Prime Minister Putin and has since integrated the economies and increased trade between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. Despite four years of negotiations with the European Union to sign an Association Agreement (a treaty between EU and non-EU countries), in September of 2013 President Serzh Sargsyan surprisingly announced that Armenia would join the Russian-led Customs Union. This decision has

meant that Armenia can no longer pursue formal cooperation with the EU via an Association Agreement.¹

The protests in Armenia mirrored much larger protests that occurred earlier in Ukraine, regarding the same issue of abandoning pacts with EU to join the Customs Union. Hundreds of thousands have been gathering in the streets of Kiev, not only over the government's decision to revert from a European trade pact, but calling for the resignation of President Yanukovich. Demonstrations in Ukraine have been the largest in the country since the Orange Revolution in 2004.² In Yerevan, the number of protestors reached nearly 1,000, with over 100 detained by police. The sentiment in Armenia also seemed to be one of anti-Serzh as much as it was anti-Putin. Armenia and Ukraine are among the former Soviet states that are straddling between European and Russian integration. They are caught in-between deciding to align with East or West, and both have their benefits and pitfalls. Whichever direction Yanukovich and Sargsyan choose, a sizable group of Ukrainians and Armenians do not seem to trust their governments to make such strategic decisions in the best interest of the people.

Protestors claim that joining the Customs Union will severely threaten Armenia's economic sovereignty by further binding its economy to Russia. Russia is currently Armenia's largest foreign investor and primary trading partner, with bilateral trades increasing to \$1.2 billion last year, mostly in imports to Armenia.³ Coinciding with Putin's visit, Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller reported that the Gazprom had purchased the last 20% of ArmRosGazprom shares, making it the sole owner of the joint natural gas pipeline project.⁴ As a result, Armenia will see a drop in gas prices to those of Russia's own domestic prices. Russia has also expressed interest in improving Armenia's nuclear power plant, Metsamor, by covering 35% of the costs for a new power unit.⁵ Russia has been known to use its authority over the energy market to coerce nations toward desired policies. On multiple occasions in the

past decade, Russia cut off Ukraine's gas supply in order to force an agreement.⁶ With cheap energy and fuel, Armenia's economy is likely to improve; however, these conditions give Russia additional leverage and allow the regional power to further strong-arm a vulnerable Armenia.

The decision to join the Customs Union is not simply an economic one. Armenia's security concerns continue to rise as Azerbaijan boosts its high military spending and threatens to invade the liberated territories of Artsakh. In the past decade, Azerbaijan has increased its military spending to \$3.7 billion and earlier this year, announced its arms trade with Russia to be worth \$4 billion.⁷ This massive Russian sale of arms to Azerbaijan seems to have been an indication of pressuring Armenia into joining the Customs Union.

Russia's vested interest in maintaining strong relations with Armenia all comes down to strategic geopolitical alliances. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, namely since the Baltic States joined the EU, Russia has been scrambling to maintain influence over the former Soviet Republics. Armenia is Russia's closest ally in the South Caucasus. Turkey has been aligned with the West since before World War II and was of strategic importance for the United States' containment policy during the Cold War. Georgia has been vocally anti-Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia's invasion in 2008 over South Ossetia and Abkhazia hasn't helped relations. Azerbaijan has close ethnic and cultural ties with Turkey and has been leaning pro-West as a result. Their rich oilfield in the Caspian Sea has also allowed them to be independent of Russian influence since they need not rely on imported energy. Thus, Armenia is one of Russia's last allies in the region.

Over the past year, Armenia has experienced several episodes of public outcry against the Sargsyan regime, including the Barevolution, the November 5th riots led by Shant Harutyunyan, and the most recent anti-Customs Union demonstrations.

These are just some central examples of protest that fall in line with many others, like those against the mandatory private pension plan, hikes in public transportation fees, and illegal construction. Despite the continued efforts of these activists, none of the calls to action have gained enough traction to develop into a successful social movement. Social movements require methodical collective actions, a set of clear public grievances and goals, resource mobilization, leadership, and a plan of action.

In many instances, it seems the reason protests so quickly fizzle out is a lack of leadership and direction. Simply being anti-government, anti-corruption or anti-Russia, is not enough to produce concrete changes in policy. In fact, it has been precisely when the target goal of a movement is focused, that protestors have seen most success (e.g. Mashdots Park, 150 dram). Interestingly enough, these cases have also clearly defied any hierarchical leadership structures. Nevertheless, if there was clear direction provided by influential leaders, like from a long standing political party that has a history of activism and rallying people behind various struggles both in the homeland and the diaspora, then perhaps these haphazard protests could better produce institutionalized and long-term progress for Armenia. Until then, it will be interesting to see how the current government handles a combination of foreign pressures with the rising tide of domestic public participation in cases such as joining the Customs Union. ■

1. <http://asbarez.com/113868/eu-will-not-sign-agreement-with-armenia-commissioner-says/>
2. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/12/2/ukraine-protestsechoaroundformersovietunion.html>
3. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/02/us-armenia-russia-idUSBRE9B10RD20131202>
4. <http://www.amradio.am/en/2013/12/02/gazprom-becomes-the-sole-owner-of-armrosgazprom/>
5. <http://asbarez.com/115886/russia-offers-to-subsidize-nuclear-plant/>
6. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1106382/Europe-plunged-energy-crisis-Russia-cuts-gas-supply-Ukraine.html>
7. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-13/azeri-russian-arms-trade-4-billion-amid-tension-with-armenia.html>

By BBoy Aleks // Գարիկ Ալեքսանյան
 *BBoy կամ Bgirl են անվանում նրանց ովքեր
 զբաղվում են Breaking-ով.

The Literal Movement

Breaking-ով սկսել են զբաղվել բավականին մեծ հասակում և մինչ այդ մտքովս էլ չէր անցնում, որ այն կփոխի իմ ողջ կյանքը: Մինչև 16 տարեկան զբաղվել են տարբեր սպորտաձևերով՝ Ուշու, բռնցքամարտ եւ բավականին լուրջ արդյունքներ են ունեցել: Մի անգամ զարմուհուս ծննդյան տարեդարձին ականատես եղա նրա պարային խմբի պարին. այնքան տպավորված էի, որ որոշեցի զբաղվել պարով: Երկու տարի հաճախեցի այդ նույն խումբը, պարում էինք հիպ-հոպ եւ սթրիթ դանս: Պարային որակները բարձրացնելու նպատակով զուգահեռ հաճախում էի նաև ակրոբատիկայի, մնջախաղի և դասական պարի դասընթացների: Դա 1999 թվականն էր, երբ ես հեռուստացույցով տեսա գերմանական “FLYING STEPS” և ռուսական “DA BOOGIE CREW” BBoy-երի տեսահոլովակները և հասկացա, որ “այդ սա իմն է”, բայց այդ ժամանակ Հայաստանում Breaking-ը տարածված չէր:

Չկային ոչ BBoy-եր ոչ պարային խմբեր, որտեղ կարելի էր Breaking սովորել և ինտերնետն էլ դեռ տարածված չէր, որտեղից կարող էի երգ երաժշտություն, կամ վիդեո ներբեռնել: Ինձ մնում էր բավարարվել կիսամաշ տեսաերիզների աղբատ ընտրանիով: Սկսեցի ինքնուս պարապել: Հանդիպում էի շատ դժվարությունների, ստանում վնասվածքներ, սակայն ամեն նոր շարժում սովորելուց ավելի էի ոգևորվում, նվիրվում և սկսում ավելի շատ պարապել: Չկային հատուկ վայրեր, որտեղ կարելի լիներ ցուցադրել Breaking՝ բացառությամբ դիսկո ակումբների, չկային մրցույթներ, որտեղ կարող էիր “battle” անել մեկ այլ BBoy-ի հետ, այդ պատճառով ես հիմնականում պարապում էի տանը: Պարապում էի, որովհետև պարզապես սիրում էի այդ պարը: Շատ հաճախ լինում էր, երբ գիշերը ուշ, մտքիս մեջ ինչ-որ

շարժում էի հնարում, վեր էի կենում անկողնուց և սկսում պարապել, մի օր էլ հասկացա, որ շատ լուրջ հիվանդացել են ես այս պարով և այն, որ BBoy լինելը իմ կոչումն է: Եվ որոշեցի, որ Հայաստանում պետք է զարգանա այս պարը:

Որոշ ժամանակ անց՝ ես հանդիպեցի այլ հայ BBoy-երի, որոնք նույնպես ինքնուս հասել էին ահագին բարձր պարային մակարդակի, նրանք էին “Flash”, “Snake”, “Smoke” և այլք: Հաճախ հանդիպում էինք, միասին պարում, փորձ փոխանակում: Պարապմունքներն անցնում էին շատ ուրախ և հետաքրքիր: Սակայն եկավ իմ զինծառայության ժամանկը: Շատ դժվար էր բանակում առանց Breaking-ի, բայց հնարավորության դեպքում այնտեղ էլ էի պարապում: Եվ մեծ նպատակ ունեի վերադառնալուն պես շարունակել Breaking-ը, խումբ հիմնել և այդպես էլ եղավ: Իմ առաջին աշակերտը եղավ իմ կրտսեր եղբայրը: Խումբն անվանվեց Ալեքսանյան ազգանունից ծագող անվանումով՝ Aleks Brothers այնուհետև վերանվանվեց՝ AlekStyle: Խումբն իր գործունեությունը սկսեց 2005 թվականին: Սկզբում մեզ ձեռք մեկնեց ԵՐԵՎԱՆԻ ՄԱՆԿԱԿԱՆ ՖԻԼՀԱՐՄՈՆԻԱՅԻ տնօրինությունը՝ տրամադրելով 40 քառակուսի մետրը չգերազանցող մի շատ փոքրիկ պարասրահ: Խմբի առաջին անդամները մեր զարմիկներն ու զարմուհիներն էին, ովքեր հավանություն էին տալիս մեր ինքնուս պարելուն և մեծ ցանկությամբ փորձում էին կրկնօրինակել մեզ:

Ժամանակ անցավ, և խմբի մեծանալուն զուգահեռ մեծացավ նաև բռնյկ դանսի նկատմամբ հետաքրքրությունը երիտասարդների շրջանում: Շատերը սկսեցին լուրջ զբաղվել breaking-ով, սակայն breaking-ը, լինելով էքստրեմալ և սպորտային պար, ոչ բոլորին է թույլ տալիս հաղթահարել հոգնատանջ



Կարծես, մի նոր շունչ է գալիս,
 մի նոր խոսք ու նոր ասելիք:

մարզումները, երբեմն էլ՝ անխուսափելի վնասվածքները: Միայն համառները շարունակեցին՝ ստանալով նոր որակներ և ձեռքբերումներ: Կայացավ պատանի տղաների և աղջիկների խումբը: Խումբը սկսեց ելույթներ ունենալ, մասնակցել պարային մենամարտերի, համերգների, տեսահոլովակների նկարահանումների և այլ պարային միջոցառումների: Շուտով սկսեցին փոխվել պարասրահները, երաժշտական տեխնիկան, ավելացան BBoy -ներին անհրաժեշտ պարային գույքն ու երեխաների անվտանգ մարզումների համար անհրաժեշտ պաշտպանիչ պարագանները:

2010 թվականից հիմնադրվեց, ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒԵՅԿ ԴԱՆՍԻ ԱՍՈՑԻԱՑԻԱ-ն: Այն իր լուրջ ներդրումն ունեցավ Հայաստանում breaking-ի ձևավորման և զարգացման գործում: Ասոցիացիան կարճ ժամանակահատվածում մշակեց և իրականացրեց breaking-ի զարգացմանը նպաստող միջոցառումներ, սեմինարներ, ուսուցողական դասընթացներ, որը խթանում էր տարբեր ուղղությունների զարգացմանը, նոր խմբերի և մարզադպրոցների ստեղծմանը, ինչպես նաև համագործակցությունը breaking-ի միջազգային ասոցիացիաների, ֆեդերացիաների, խմբերի և այլ կազմակերպությունների հետ: Իր գործունեության ընթացքում, ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒԵՅԿ ԴԱՆՍԻ ԱՍՈՑԻԱՑԻԱ-ն հասցրել է կազմակերպել գարնանային և աշնանային պարային բաց

առաջնություններ, ինչպես նաև տարեվերջյան ամփոփիչ “Լավագույնների Լիգա” մրցաշարը: Ասոցիացիայի անդամները մասնակցել են տարբեր սեմինարների, որոնց ընթացքում Lilou, Cico, Ardit, Roxrite, Mounir, Ronnie, Iron Monkey, Focus, Midus և այլ աշխարհահռչակ BBoy-ներ իրենց փորձն են փոխանցել մասնակիցներին: Բազմիցս մասնակցել ենք միջազգային խոշոր մրցույթների Բելուռուսիայում, Ուկրաինայում, Ռուսաստանում, Վրաստանում: Այդ նույն թվականին նաև որոշում կայացրեցի մասնակցել “Պարիր թե կարող ես” հեռուստանախագծին, որի միջոցով փորձում էի հանրությանը ներկայացնել և պրոպագանդել breaking-ը, որպեսզի այն ավելի մեծ տարածում ստանա: Արդյունքում հայտնվեցի եզրափակիչում, որը տվեց իր դրական արդյունքը:

Շատ մեծ թվով երիտասարդներ համալրեցին մեր ասոցիացիայի շարքերը: Հիմա երեխաները բաժանված են ըստ տարիքային խմբերի, որոնք վերածվել են առանձին պարային դասարանների, և ամեն նոր սերնդի հետ, կարծես, մի նոր շունչ է գալիս, մի նոր խոսք ու նոր ասելիք: Այն, ինչ նախկին սերունդների պարողները ձեռք էին բերում տարիների ընթացքում, նոր սերնդի պարողները յուրացնում են ամիսների, նույնիսկ օրերի ընթացքում: Սա նշանակում է, որ breaking-ի վերելքը գնալով արագանում է, և շուտով այն կկոտրի բոլոր կարծրատիպերը՝ գնահատվելով ըստ արժանվույն: ■





Image courtesy of Impacto.mx

For Dignity & Beyond

A glance into Argentina's history of collective action

The history of social mobilization in Argentina is long and inspiring. While discussing all the significant periods is beyond the scope of this article, the most recent and poignant of them can be generalized here. From the turn of the mid 20th century and up until the first years of the 21st century, waves of social mobilization can broadly be categorized into three periods.

Starting in the mid 1940's, Perónist Argentina was significant through its populist policies and empowerment of the working-class. Industrialization and a thriving social infrastructure created space for the Left to be an active force within the country. As a reaction to this progress, there was severe conservative backlash manifested through the 1976 military coup.

In an environment of instability & declining democracy, a new generation was mobilizing to take back the country.

The period of military dictatorship caused immense physical suffering yet, it also introduced a new wave of social mobilization around the discourse of human rights. Finally, beginning in 2001 as a result of the growing economic crisis, a new form of organizing was adopted that utilized horizontal structures and encouraged direct participation of citizens in decision-making processes.

Perónism's popularity among the masses was in part due to how it cut across a wide range of ideological spectrums that incorporated liberal and radical points of view, as well as integrated different class interests. Between 1946 and 1951, unions grew from a little more than half a million to more than two million members. However, Perón built up his political career through a system of patronage, and left no space for political opposition.¹ There was a constant dependency of the working class on the state, presupposing the unions' alliance with the state. These complications and troubles notwithstanding, the movement had a lasting impact on many fronts. It expanded the educational system, gave women the

violence was adopted by political actors on all sides, most notably the radicalized left. In an environment of instability and declining democracy, a new generation was mobilizing to take back the country. The 1959 Cuban revolution had also wielded its influence and offered a new path for the newly radicalized youth. In response to the looming threat of a socialist takeover, the right-wing military dictatorship seized power in 1976, in the name of national reorganization.²

During the period of military dictatorship there was an estimated 30,000 cases of disappearances, creating a unique phenomenon of human rights abuse. In response to the oppressive rule of the regime, the mothers of disappeared children founded The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in 1977. Although a culture of fear and the danger of state repression were still very present, these women could not sit idly by as their children were arbitrarily detained and murdered. The Madres were generally understood as an apolitical group driven by their moral convictions. Their tactics were non-violent and they wore white headscarves repre-

figures and movement leaders. The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo was revolutionary in that it achieved collaboration between the private realms with the rest of society in the public. The organization released a telling statement saying, "We realize that to demand the fulfillment of human rights is a revolutionary act, that to question the government about bringing our children back alive was a revolutionary act. We are fighting for liberation, to live in freedom, and that is a revolutionary act...To transform a system is always revolutionary."³

In 2001, with the looming financial crisis, food riots broke out and the President announced a state of siege. Millions of Argentines disobeyed the curfew order and on the 19th and 20th of December 2001, hundreds of thousands poured into the streets, banging pots and pans and chanting "Que se vayan todos" (They all must go). This pressure forced five presidents to resign in a matter of three weeks. In the wake of the rupture, people began to turn to one another for answers, giving birth to a new form of social mobilization that can be described as Horizontalism or Horizontalidad. They gathered in street corners and workplaces and launched an experiment of self-organizing.⁴ The culture of fear that had so strongly dominated the previous generation had subsided and a new grassroots horizontal movement had been created. This era of organizing utilized techniques of direct decision-making that rejects hierarchy, promotes self-management, uses and occupies spaces of production, and creates new social relationships based on trust.

The working class who mobilized under Perón were not directly involved in politics beyond their requirement of being Perónist; the human rights organizations such as the Madres, were widely thought of as apolitical,

right to vote, developed the economy and solidified a class consciousness and class solidarity that would leave a lasting legacy in Argentinean history.

There was much political and economic tension in Argentina during the years following the 1955 coup that brought down Perón. Competing political and ideological interests created a volatile environment and the use of

resenting peace and a refusal to mourn the loss of their children until receiving answers of their whereabouts. The maternal impulse that galvanized this organization into the streets was used as a springboard to create a new political space. Their strategies included a conscious effort to reconcile their lives in the private space of home, with their new role as public

This perpetual theme of de-politicization must evoke doubts about the traditional understanding of political work.



Image © Nicolas Pousthomis/Argentina Indymedia

and direct political organizing at the time of the dictatorship was unimaginable considering the dangers it posed; The most recent examples of horizontal movements have directly rejected affiliation with any political parties, even those aligned to the Left. However, this perpetual theme of de-politicization must evoke doubts about the traditional understanding of political work. It seems that all these movements have created a different sense of what it means to do politics by taking an approach transcending beyond traditional political activity. The labor unions of the 1940's were state controlled and did not have much opportunity to voice political dissent, yet the pressure they placed as a collective helped solidify the long-term working class identity in

Argentina. The Madres courage to organize in the face of direct violence was foundational in introducing the personal as political. Women who were traditional housewives uninvolved in public life boldly marched in front of government buildings in the city center and played a pivotal role in bringing down the dictatorship. Finally, the autonomous movements at the turn of the 21st century have completely redefined the relationship between the state and its citizens. By experimenting with local level direct democracy, Horizontilidad has narrowed the opportunities used by elites for political and economic exploitation. Throughout all these waves of social mobilization, regardless of what specific circumstances were motivating the masses to act,

the pursuit of human dignity through alternative politics seems to be a resounding commonality.

Today, with a widening wealth gap, high inflation rates and a time of great tension, it will be interesting to see what methods of organizing the future holds for Argentina's progressives. ■

1. WolfendenN, Katherine J. "Perón and the People: Democracy and Authoritarianism in Juan Perón's Argentina." Student Pulse 5.2 (2013): 1-2. Web. <<http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/728/peron-and-the-people-democracy-and-authoritarianism-in-juan-perons-argentina>>.
2. Elena, Eduardo. "Conclusion: The Dignified Life and Beyond." Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 2011. 257. Print.
3. Bouvard, Marguerite Guzman. Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1994. Print.
4. Sitrin, Marina A. Everyday Revolutions: Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina. London: Zed, 2012. Print.

The People Power of the Black Panther Party

By Razmig Sarkissian

Popular imagery of the 1960s is often saturated by pictures of white middle-class hippies in San Francisco with flowers in their hair preaching "peace and love". This depiction fails to recognize the racially charged and violent United States many marginalized and, specifically, Black communities lived through in the 1960s.

The Civil Rights Movement was in full force in that decade, and while it might largely be remembered as a nonviolent movement, Black Americans and their allies endured unimaginable terrorism and violence — most often by the state — to create the change they wanted to see in the world.

Alabama Governor George Wallace famously proclaimed in 1963, "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." The Ku Klux Klan, which then had widespread support by local and state governments resistant to ending segregation, regularly terrorized those calling for change. This terrorism included the bombing of

the 16th Street Baptist Church in Alabama, which killed four young girls. Even common civilians were driven to unconscionable acts. A hotel owner in Florida, for example, poured muriatic acid into the water to get black demonstrators out of his "Whites Only" pool. And police officers mostly preferred to protect and serve racism over the people — regularly beating demonstrators with clubs, letting loose canine units on unarmed civilians, and hosing people with high-pressure water cannons.

To say that Black America and its allies were under attack on all fronts during the 1960's — from all levels of the state — is an understatement.

The Breaking Point

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale — two young community organizers from Oakland, California who first met at an African-American Student Association meeting — felt fed up with non-violent activism against a political system that, in their eyes, had no conscience. They decided the time called for a new kind of Black movement with new tactics.

In October of 1966, they founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The Black Panther was chosen as the symbol of the party because the panther is an animal that does not attack unprovoked, but will defend itself vehemently. Little did they know they were about to launch a movement that would quickly capture the attention of the world.

Newton and Seale surveyed residents of Oakland and based on the community's responses, created the BPP's initial 10-Point declaration, "Platform and Program: What We Want, What We Believe." It included demands such as:

- The immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people;
- The self-determination of blacks over their destiny;
- Justice and reparations for slavery;
- Exemption of all black men from military service;
- Full employment;
- Decent housing, and others.¹

Serve the People and Patrol the Pigs

The Party existed first and foremost to serve the needs of the community. The organization wholeheartedly dedicated itself to living among the masses and empowering them to create solutions to their day-to-day problems.

Social programs aimed at blacks and the poor comprised the bulk of Black Panther community activities. Their breakfast program provided free breakfast for hungry school children, eventually feeding 10,000 children every day before going to school.² The program grew so popular that it spread to every major city in the country with a Black Panther Party. They also organized free health clinics, clothing drives, rent strikes and led campaigns for the community control of schools.³

The Party's most popular social program was the armed patrolling of "Pigs" — the term Panthers used to describe police officers. The Panthers strongly believed in the Second Amendment of the U.S constitution and



Image © Michael Ochs Archives/Stringer



Image © Rolls Press/Popperfoto

took advantage of the right to openly carry firearms in California in order to hold state-power accountable. They purchased their first cache of arms by selling Mao Tse-Tung's Little Red Book to young students on the University of California, Berkeley campus, and began their patrols shortly after⁴ (until Governor Ronald Reagan passed gun control in California).

Whenever an officer stopped a community member, a Panther on patrol would intervene to ensure the individual's constitutional rights were not violated. Newton, who had studied law for a year, brought along legal books during patrols, which infuriated police who knew they were legally powerless to stop him.

But even if the BPP could help the people with their social programs, they understood that the programs were merely a band-aid on the larger issue of inequality and oppression, which are inherent to the economic system of capitalism. Soon, they dropped "Self Defense" from their organization's name and expanded to larger goals for the party.⁵

My Oppressor is Your Oppressor

While the Black Panthers existed as a nationalist organization concerned first and foremost with liberating black people from oppression, the organization eventually recognized itself in solidarity with all oppressed peoples of

the world, "for it was the same racist imperialism that people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were fighting against that was victimizing blacks in the United States," explained Kathleen Cleaver, an early Panther leader.⁶

Their solution required a new system based on socialist principles geared toward the people — in other words, the Black Panther Party called for socialist revolution to rid society of capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.

To that end, the BPP studied the ideas of leaders and movements from all around them. Newton said in his autobiography that, "The literature of oppressed people and their struggle for liberation in other countries is very large, and we pored over these books to see how their experiences might help us understand our plight."

The Panthers mixed and matched a diverse range of concepts and ideologies such as: guerilla warfare tactics from Fidel Castro and Che Guevara; the colonial analogy and the revolutionary potential of the lumpen proletariat from Frantz Fanon; class struggle and proletarian internationalism from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; organizing principles and Serving the People programs from Mao Tse-Tung, among many, many others.⁷ They kept their ideology constantly evolving and expanding, rather than limiting themselves to one train of thought.

But while the Panthers developed a solid ideological foundation, the implementation of it never fully materialized. You can't call for armed socialist revolution within the largest capitalist superpower in the world, without the government taking notice.

The Empire Strikes Back: COINTELPRO and Demise

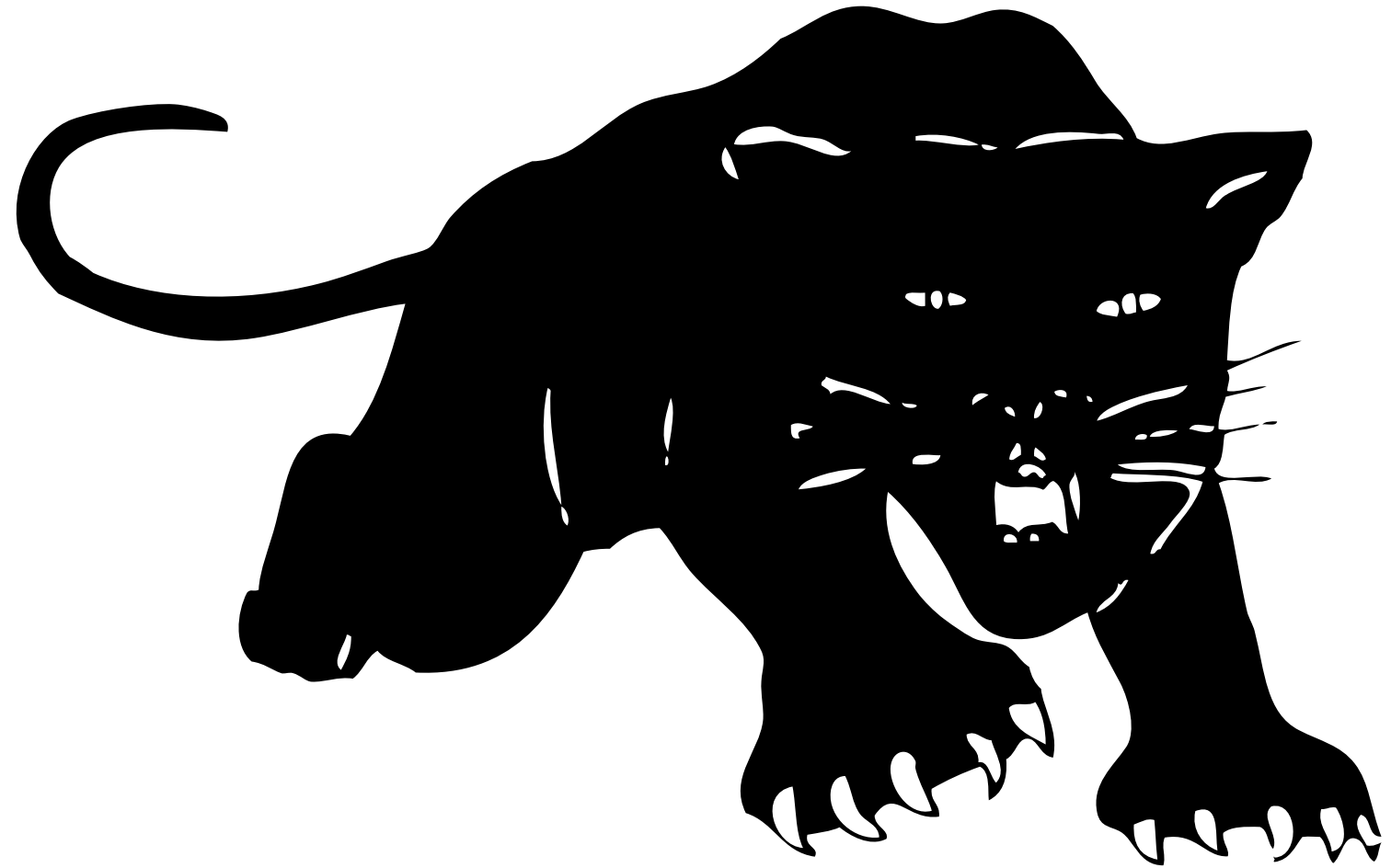
J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI at the time, called the Black Panther Party "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country."

Hoover's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) — which was set up to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, destroy, or otherwise neutralize the leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters" of organizations they found suspect — targeted the BPP with a relentless and ruthless array of tactics.⁸

The use of violence was an obvious tactic. COINTELPRO worked with local and state police to arrest and assassinate Panther members on any pretense they could find. To this day Panther members are in jail, or in exile in places such as Cuba and Tanzania.⁹

But it wasn't until leaks by civilian rights groups and investigations by the U.S. Senate's Church Committee in the 1970's that the program's more nefarious tactics became known, specifically the use of psychological warfare and "divide and conquer" techniques.

FBI agents regularly sowed dissent and violence between rival Black Nationalist organizations, such as the US Organization. They would create cartoons of Panthers killing US Organization leaders and vice versa, and anonymously send them off to one another to create rivalries. This led to eruptions of violence between the organizations, including the assassination of Bunchy Carter and John Huggins at UCLA.¹⁰



The FBI would also write anonymous letters to leaders of the BPP to create paranoia and mistrust between them — and it worked. Countless members were expelled from the organization in "purges", and the West and East coasts of the party eventually turned against one another.

The Party formally demised in 1982, but it had lost its influence and legitimacy long before that in the 1970's.¹¹

Black Panther Legacy and Lessons

The Black Panthers were the defenders, the actualizers, and the catalysts of change that inspired people to organize against empire and capitalism, much like a long line of freedom fighters that came before them. While they may not have accomplished all of their goals, their legacy is still seen today.

Serving the people and fighting for them unsurprisingly gained the BPP popularity across the world, and spread their influence far beyond the ranks of their own membership. In addition to inspiring other ethnic minorities in the United States (including Armenians) to use new tactics of organizing and activism, Black Panther Parties and movements sprung up in countries such as Bermuda, England, Israel, Australia, and India.¹²

Furthermore, the over 60 social programs initiated by the Black Panther Party led to broader campaigns to end police brutality and injustices against minority prison inmates, more emphasis on preventative healthcare, and

increased voter registration and electoral involvement by blacks nationwide (inspired by Bobby Seale's 1973 bid for Oakland Mayor and other runs for office by Panthers).¹³

The Black Panthers' grew from a 50-person organization in Oakland to a worldwide movement in a matter of a few years. Their success was due in large part to their dedication to serving the community, their willingness to look outside black nationalism for ideas and inspiration, the recognition that their struggle was tied to the larger struggle between the oppressed and the capitalist elite, and — above all — an unwavering determination to bring power to all People. ■

1. Abbron, JoNina M. "The Legacy of the Black Panther Party." *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 17, No. 6, BLACK POLITICS TODAY (November/December 1986), pp. 33-37.
2. "Rise of the Black Panther Party". Black Panther Party.org. Retrieved December 14, 2012. Rise of the Black Panther Party". Black Panther Party.org. Retrieved December 14, 2012.
3. Harris, Jessica C., "Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (Summer, 2000).
4. Clemons, Michael L., and Jones, Charles E. "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena." Taylor and Francis Group. *New Political Science*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (1999), 191
5. Harris, 167.
6. Clemons and Jones, 186-187.
7. Clemons and Jones, 188.
8. Harris, 168-169.
9. Clemons and Jones, 201.
10. Harris, 168.
11. Clemons and Jones, 195.
12. Clemons and Jones, 182.
13. Abbron, 34-35.

SOLIDARITY: THE REVOLVER IN THIS REVOLUTION

By Tiffany Esmailian

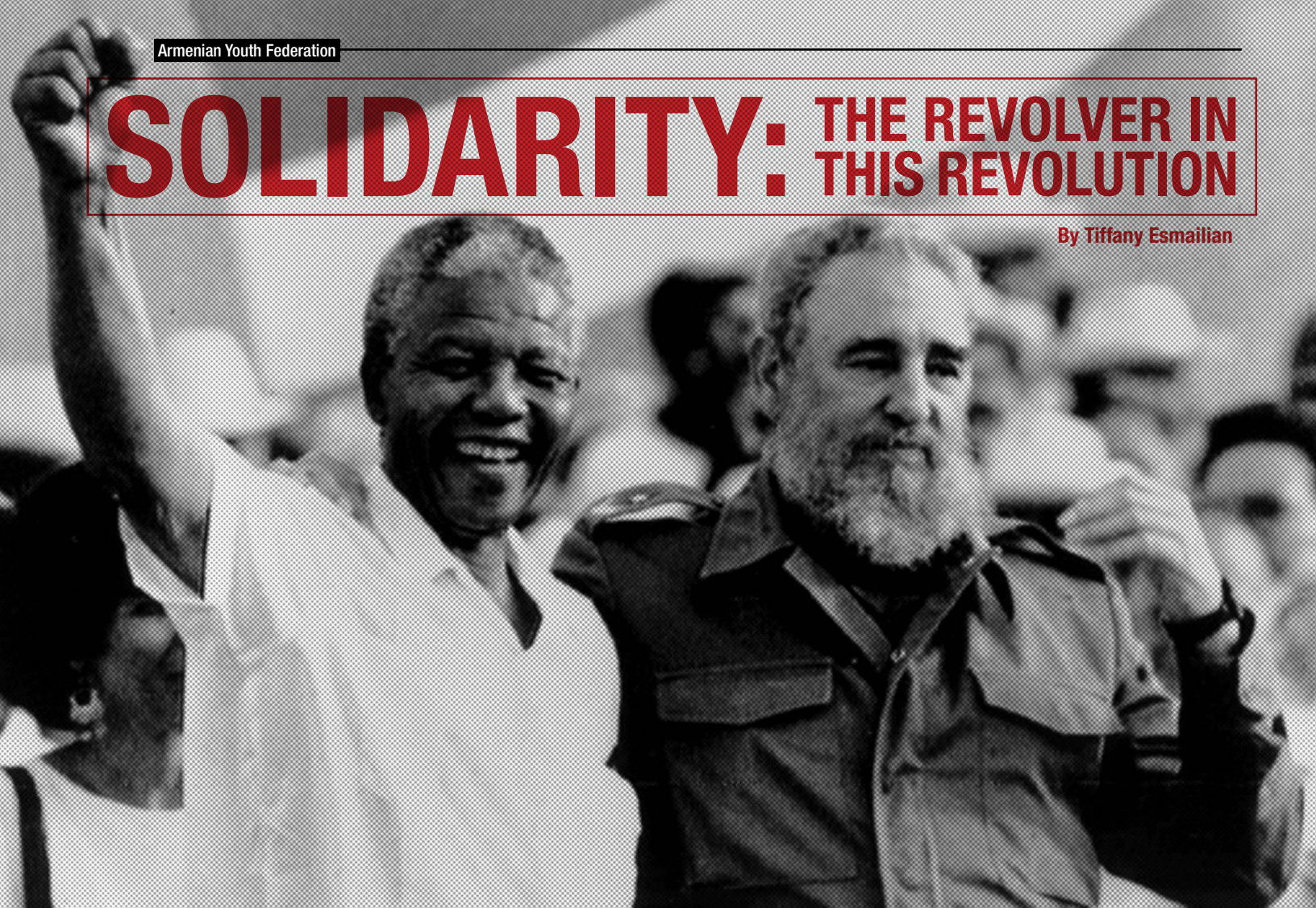


Image © Associated Press

“But the most important lesson that you have for us is that no matter what the odds, no matter under what difficulties you have had to struggle. There can be no surrender! It is a case of freedom or death!”

Nelson Mandela proclaimed these words in a speech he made to the Cuban people where he displayed his upmost respect and admiration to his comrade, Fidel Castro. Mandela and Castro are two of the most well known revolutionary figures in modern history. They built and maintained a relationship based on their common ideologies and mutual admiration of

each other. As leaders, they both held the strong belief that solidarity and determination would create a better world. The book *How Far We Slaves Have Come! South Africa and Cuba in Today's World* compares the recent history in these two countries and contains the speeches made by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, at the Matanzas rally on July 26, 1991.

Nelson Mandela, a profound anti-apartheid revolutionary and politician, joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944. Shortly after forming the ANC Youth League and being elected as its General Secretary, Mandela was arrested for taking part in protests against the apartheid regime organized by the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws. In the same year, Mandela was elected to be the ANC deputy national president, but was arrested soon after (along with 155 others) for high treason. Despite his arrests and the

ANC's banning in 1960, Mandela proceeded with his antiapartheid activities. He took part in establishing the Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the armed wing of the African National Congress, which organized martial training and armed activities against the apartheid regime. To no surprise, in 1962, Mandela was arrested once more, this time being charged with inciting workers to strike and leaving the country without a passport. While incarcerated, he was additionally tried for sabotage.

In 1990, after 27 years of isolation behind bars, Mandela was released from prison and elected as president of the ANC. The gradual progress made in the country was evident, as Mandela became the first Black president to hold office in South Africa from 1994 to 1999. Although, post-apartheid tensions remained, there was a clear increase in the number of whites who identified with the black

struggle. Mandela demonstrated his determination to institutionally disassemble the legacy of apartheid through his work against racism, poverty and inequality, as well as by promoting racial reconciliation.

Despite heavy criticism, both domestically and abroad, Fidel Castro, Cuban communist revolutionary and politician, may not have always been the so-called dictator that the world – particularly, the Western world – has identified him as. Castro's strong interests in politics were fueled at a young age when he was a law student at the University of Havana. In 1952, after Fulgencio Batista carried out a military coup d'état and became a corrupt and repressive dictator, Castro launched many failed attempts to overthrow Batista, and was imprisoned with his co-conspirators. A few participants of the botched effort to bring down Batista were even murdered after capture. However, due to an amnesty campaign, Castro was released after serving only two years. He subsequently traveled to Mexico in order to organize an underground group of rebels. For the next year he planned a guerrilla expedition known as the 26th of July Movement to return to Cuba and start a revolution. On December 2, 1956, along with other freedom fighters, including Che Guevara, Castro entered Cuba and fought the regime using guerilla warfare tactics. The rebels gradually gained popular support and by January 1959, Batista was forced to flee Cuba.

By July 1969, and for the ensuing four decades, Castro was the leader of Cuba. While he made many radical changes within his own country, collapsing world capitalism was also an important part of the agenda. In order to support foreign revolutionary movements, Cuban troops were at times sent to directly aid in the combat of other countries. Supporters of Castro have understood him as a champion and hero of leftist ideologies including anti-imperialism, humanitarianism, socialism, and environmentalism. On the other hand, critics are quick to point out his

“Whoever is incapable of fighting for others will never be capable of fighting for himself.”

human rights abuses and struggling economy. Regardless of his successes and shortcomings, it is indisputable that Castro has considerably influenced politics worldwide.

Castro and Mandela are both highly controversial revolutionary leaders identified with Cuban and South African national movements. While Mandela's battle was to establish a democratic country representative of its population and not ruled by apartheid, Castro as a Marxist socialist was headstrong on ending capitalist privatization. However, their commonalities are what fueled their strength. Both believed that victory depended on the support of a global community. Mandela included that the participation of Cuba in the anti-apartheid movement was a significant contributing factor to helping push the cause forward. On the other hand, Castro believed that brutal inequality and economic exploitation stemmed from the apartheid system. The two leaders came to the conclusion that the anti-apartheid and anti-imperialist revolutionary movements went hand-in-hand, as both fought for the oppressed masses.

Mandela's reputation is one that shines with more integrity across the world in opposition to Castro's, who is more notably known as a communist dictator. However -- dictator or moral authority -- these contentious leaders made a solid conclusion. The bottom line was that any fight for national liberation or realization of socialist ideology requires international support as a vital component of the revolution. This notion of solidarity and coordination of like-minded progressives is depicted through Castro's words, “Whoever is incapable of fighting for others will never be capable of fighting for himself.” Both Mandela and Castro, in their speeches at the Matanzas rally of 1991, are able to

portray the struggles being waged by the working people of South Africa and Cuba. Through the vivid imagery piercing through their words, the two leaders convey the significance of individuals who wish to rid the world of racism and exploitation as they pave the road forward for all of humanity. If the ends justify the means, then the two revolutionaries are off the hook. True, there have been losses, there have been tragedies, and there have also been actions one may argue as dictatorial and tyrannical. But for them and many others, the ends are what justify a rough journey. Human rights, social justice, freedom and equality– these are only some of the ends. Through their speeches, it is clear that the difficult process of attaining these ends could not be a deterring factor for these revolutionary leaders. Mandela's quote is the most telling of this truth, “But the most important lesson that you have for us is that no matter what the odds, no matter under what difficulties you have had to struggle. There can be no surrender! It is a case of freedom or death!” ■



MOVEMENT
DRADD

99%
TOO BIG TO FAIL!

99%
WE ARE
TOO BIG
TO FAIL!

WWW.GetMoneyOut.Com
#GetMoneyOut

HEALTH CARE
FOR THE 99%

MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAIO

Ինքնիշխան
Հայաստան
ԱՌԱՅՈՒՆ
ՍԵՐ