

## A Tale of Two Cities — and States

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### Introduction

After World War II, the unionized autoworkers earned enough money and benefits so they could claim they were in the middle class. However, they had to fight against the bosses (labor wars) right from the start, circa the 1920s, namely, Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, and others. As the wheels of capitalism ground forward into the neoliberal phase, the bosses were back in charge. Detroit, MI – called the Motor City – is the best example of these occurrences. Milwaukee, WI is another city that was famous for making many things – not just beer! Many old-timers have told me that after WW II, a person could “quit a job in the morning and have a better one in the afternoon.” Many persons from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula went down to Milwaukee and other Wisconsin towns and cities to have union protected jobs.

I see this comparatively fair and progressive period within the volatile history of national and global capitalisms. The Western democracies’ governments had gone through a very difficult time, during the 1930s Depression, and WWII. The businesses’ “big-shots” in the U.S. were not able to be aggressive as they were before. Most of the American people wanted to have changes that would make their lives secure. The men and women had some power because of their war service. Moreover, the Western “democracies” faced the Soviet Union’s power in Eastern and, even Central Europe.

The U.S. working classes pushed for what they thought they deserved, namely, being in the “middle class.” The country was rich enough for many workers to achieve this step up. Returning to Michigan and Wisconsin, especially in the late 1940s and on to the late 1960s, many unionized workers had a chance to move to the city suburbs and its so-called advantages. They had homes of their own, green yards, good roads, new cars, vacations, and some of what the real bourgeoisie enjoyed. Because of the lakes, rivers, and forests in both states, former blue-collar workers could buy property “up north” and own a cottage. They went from the city, to suburbs, and then even “up north”!

Most of these people did not know what the “real” bourgeoisie meant and what they had. In other words, the bourgeoisie were people who could afford to be out of work and still have money and assets, those who could withstand bad times, those who had connections, etc. The good days did not last very long. During the 1960s, things began to blow up. The progressive things that were achieved before were slowly and powerfully being opposed by those who thought there were too many progressive changes. The backlash against civil rights is one example! The 1970s provided a bridge to the comeback of those who pushed back what they believed to be too much for those below them. Then, Reaganism led the comeback of capitalism über alles! Most Democrats were not willing, nor able, to prevent the country going to the right. The “Thirty Year’s War” was won by the powers that be, made comparatively easy because

enough “ordinary” people really did not know what was happening. Neoliberalism succeeded in crushing most of the progressive victories that had been achieved. In 2008, it became clear to most Americans that the good days were over. The Obama administration, and Congressional Democrats, could not, or would not, fight against the reactionary Republicans and, of course, their terrible Tea Party “know nothing” colleagues! Obama could not make it safe for the cottage “up north folks,” let alone those in barrios and ghettos! The “for-a-while-middle-class” has been crushed by the lords of the world. Global capitalism and empire have little or no use for the “little people”!

## I

Juliet B. Schor’s *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (1993) is helpful in understanding the comeback of capitalism and its imperatives after the somewhat better balance between workers and bosses. She argues that the left must move beyond traditional concerns about a democratic economy and workplace. The Marxist Frankfurt School scholars describe well the “fake” leisure we have in the so-called democratic societies. In the U.S., there are many jobless people. Many workers who are employed are not paid enough to enjoy real leisure. The leisure Schor wants is not what so many Americans think it is. It is not wearing 1970s “leisure suits” for sure! Obviously, some can argue they enjoy every bit of what Schor is against. However, we must also be concerned about leisure, in the context of the human and ecological limits of material growth. One might ask if Mediterranean capitalism could have been less severe on the leisure front, as opposed to the Anglo-American model. The latter is much more powerful – with the U.S. being the most powerful part of the capitalist empire!

Schor writes that the early development of capitalism in England was a tremendous expansion of human effort – the early version of Scrooge-ism. Greater productivity can and should have allowed workers to make higher wages, as well as to work fewer days and hours. Typically, aggressive and greedy capitalists have historically demanded that the profits should be more and more for them. The capitalist system gives us powerful bosses and weak proletarians. When depressions occur, it is not the corporations that help the working class to get on its feet again. In some industrial countries, the central governments are more helpful during depressions and recessions. That is because those governments have to deal with somewhat strong unions. However, recently neoliberal, or should I say, the “shock-and-awe” versions, use their power to overcome most of the progressive institutions – if not radical ones.

Within this model of capitalism, which resulted in high rates of unemployment, many people also were sucked into the spectacle. When there are not very good jobs, or worse yet, there is rampant unemployment, history tells us many people become only part of the audience. The world of television has changed how people “do” time off. Guy Debord explains:

The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated – and precisely for that reason – this sector is the locus of illusions and false consciousness; the unity it imposes is merely the official language of generalized separation. The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images. (Debord, 1995, p. 12)

According to Debord,

The spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something *added* to the real world... it is the very heart of society's real unreality.... In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system. It further ensures the *permanent presence* of that justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself. (*ibid.* p. 13)

As we must realize in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most powerful persons and institutions are not ones that really “make something” – that is, “material.” The rulers of this world never get their hands dirty, although there may be some blood washed off. However, the spectacle “makers” claim: “Everything that appears is good; whatever is good will appear” (p. 15). This is driven by “an ever-growing mass of image-objects” (p. 16). Debord argues that the spectacle is a way to prevent people from seeing outside of Plato's cave. The world is no longer “perceptible.” Sight is the most “abstract of the senses.” One has to really touch – something “material” – a word and thing that most people used to understand! The spectacle cannot be “grabbed” by the world population of today; therefore, dialogue leading to critique is very difficult to accomplish – so is progressive “science” (Marx, Dewey, Gramsci, *et al.*). We have trouble constructing theories, let alone action. Debord claims that Western philosophy never freed itself from theology!

The spectacle makes its own rules: a hierarchy that sits on top of a “refined division of labor,” those who produce so much for a global market. However, those on the bottom have not figured out how to take on this complex chapter of historical bossism. This separation of capitalist bosses from those who are below becomes more vertical than ever before. The powerful countries that are allied to the U.S. have had ups and downs since the end of World War II; however, the former colonies, most of the Global South, have not experienced such ups. I am arguing that the unfairness of the capital global system in the twenty-first century encourages the power elites in the U.S.-bloc to reach down the stratification vertical that is capitalism. Consequentially, the so-called middle class that we thought (believed) would not be pushed down the ladder is now experiencing just that! In some countries, the unions may still give their members some support; however, organized labor has been very weak during the last thirty years. Those who were promised the end of hard work – leisure to do what one desires – are wishing now that they had “that” job – or any job! The spectacle has succeeded in many ways: One is having stripped away one's identity. Millions of people have been overcome by the corporate-driven control of much of what we see and hear. The corporate media is a powerful tool within the spectacle. Hence, the middle classes around the world, especially most Americans, have little or no models of what and how to do during these crises.

Returning to Schor, she argues that the capitalist system “created strong incentives for employers to keep hours long.... Of course, there have been countervailing pressures, the most important of which was the trade union movement, which waged a successful hundred-year struggle for shorter hours. But once this quest ended after the Second World War, reductions in hours virtually ceased. Not longer after the unions gave up the fight, the American worker's hours began to rise” (Schor, 1992, p. 48). Not only that, all too many blue-collar workers saw their wages go down, as well as their pensions and health care protection.

She goes back to the medieval times in Europe – mostly Western Europe – when the economy protected peasants, whether serfs or free persons, who

had secure, time-honored access to land. And land was what nearly everyone depended on for survival.... They were not dependent on the market for their “subsistence.” The growth of the world market led to the uprooting of the peasantry from the land... [They] lost control over once had been a ‘common treasury’ from which they had derived a measure of independence. Now their survival depended on participation in the market in labor. They had become proletarians, reduced to selling time and toil. An analogous fate befell artisans, with the elimination of the more or less assured upward mobility of journeymen into masters promised by the guild system. Increasingly, masters turned themselves into small capitalists and hired apprentices and journeymen. The labor practices enforced by guild traditions were jettisoned in favor of reliance on “what the market would bear.” (pp. 52-3)

Obviously, the state was the power that could make this possible. It began to have the monopoly of the gendarmerie. The birth and development of capitalism could never have happened if ordinary people (the demos) had the ballot in hand. Perhaps better yet – weapons! I believe that this would be the same today, as the use of force around the world to maintain the capitalist empire(s) becomes more obvious to the many of us. I recommend Ellen Meiksins Wood’s work on this important claim. I offer these as examples: *Empire of Capital* (2005) and *The Origin of Capitalism* (1999).

Schor’s book includes “Time Squeeze: The Extra Month of Work” – chapter 2, with a section on “Involuntary Leisure: Underemployment and Unemployment.” This book also includes “Overwork in the Household” – chapter 4. The catastrophe called “The Great Crash” that made the news in late 2007 when Bush Jr. was still the president should have been no surprise if more Americans had had access to the “power knowledge” that their “betters” seemingly owned. This crash was followed by “The Great Recession,” which is still quite great as I write this article in 2012. The absence of civic education for all too many, in school and afterward, made it quite easy to fool “ordinary” people. Of course, economics are a part of civil society! The “shop-until-you-drop” society included many working-class people. The business barrage of advertizing helped capitalism convince many people that the malls were the sites of democracy. Freedom to buy almost anything confused many people. They began to actually think, or believe, that free choices were just as good – or even better – than they found in our politics during that time.

Schor tells us that “one of the great ironies of our present situation [1992] is that overwork for the majority has been accompanied by the growth of enforced idleness for the minority.... Just as surely as our economic system is ‘underproducing’ leisure for some, it is ‘overproducing’ it for others” (39). Those few who study history, economics, society, politics, philosophy, and other tools used to figure out what was happening – and what is not – were, and are, not surprised by where we are and how we got here. I am not saying that this is an elite, certainly not the rich elite; history teaches us that most of the people who “got it” were from many parts of a vertical society. “Capitalist systems such as our own do not operate in order to provide employment. Their guiding principle is the pursuit of profitability. If profitability results in high employment, that is a happy coincidence for those who want jobs. If it does not, bottom-line-oriented companies will not take it upon themselves to hire those whom their plans have left behind.... Full employment typically occurs only when government commits itself to the task” (p. 40).

## II

Most of the people who live in so-called “Western Democracies” are no longer listening to John M. Keynes; nor are United Statesians studying what the best of what FDR’s New Deal accomplished – with regard to government commitment. Even the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations kept up some of the progressive economic ideas and actions that had come before. Johnson was the best with regard to making it easier for African Americans to have the rights that they struggled for in the past. Some would even include Nixon, however this would be in contrast with the Republican Party now. You readers can decide for yourselves on this one! Fast forward to Pierre Bourdieu: “Everywhere we hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neo-liberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, there is no alternative” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 29). Then, we had to deal with Francis Fukuyama and his *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992). He told his readers that humanity finally found the best form of politics and economy – “liberal capitalism.” Said differently: There is no alternative! Propaganda laid the groundwork for believing that there was no alternative. Of course, the ruling class has great propaganda advantages over “ordinary people.” Economics, beyond a course in one’s first year in college, does not prepare or arm people to grasp what is really happening in the Western-led banking systems – their governments, and the whole civil society.

Propaganda and outright lies by the neo-liberals kept the demos mostly in the dark. They believed in what their masters wanted to be done. There occurred some serious crashes before 2007-8, but not enough to alert the right people. Bourdieu writes: “In the United States, the state is splitting into two.... social guarantees, but only for the privileged... and a repressive, policing state, for the populace” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 32). He tells us that since 1994 the prison budget has been greater than the universities’ budgets. “The blacks in the Chicago ghetto only know the state through the police officer, the judge, the prison warden and the parole officer” (p. 32).

Bourdieu uses the word globalization as a myth; however, it is a powerful discourse that has social and economic force. He believes that globalization means many things; however, its essence and danger relies on force. It is the main weapon in the war on the welfare state(s). Bourdieu continues:

European workers, we are told, must compete with the least favored workers of... the world. The workers of Europe [and the United States, Canada, *et al.*] are thus offered as a model, countries which have no minimum wage, where factory workers work twelve hours a day for a wage which is between a quarter and a fifth of European wages, where there are no trade unions, where there is child labor, and so on. And it is in the name of this model that flexible working, another magic word of neo-liberalism, is imposed, meaning night work, weekend work, irregular working hours, things which have always been part of the employers, dreams. In a general way, neo-liberalism is a very smart and very modern [post-modern?] repackaging of the oldest ideas of the oldest capitalists. (p. 34)

Bourdieu tells it as it is--via a very tough defensive critique of what he is against. He attacks neo-liberalism within the history of what it replicates – or at least tries to – but in

different garb than the European fascists at their height of power from the 1920s through their seeming defeat in World War II. The bosses wear new clothes; however, underneath the fig leaves worn by people who rule the world, one can see what Bourdieu calls what “macho” neo-fascists do presently.

Magazines in the US draw up a league table of macho bosses, ranked, along with their salary, according to the number of people they have had the courage to sack. It is characteristic of *conservative revolutions*, that in Germany in the 1930s, those of Thatcher, Reagan and the others, that they present restorations as revolutions. The present conservative revolution [1998] takes an unprecedented form: in contrast to earlier ones, it does not invoke the idealized past, through exaltation of soil and blood, the archaic themes of the old agrarian mythologies. This new kind of conservative revolution appeals to progress, reason, and science (economics in this case) to justify the restoration and so tries to write off progressive thought and action as archaic. (pp. 34-35)

They call this the law of the market!

It ratifies and glorifies the reign of what are called the financial markets, in other words the return to a radical capitalism, with no other law than that of maximum profit, an unfettered capitalism without any disguise, but rationalized, pushed to the limit of its economic efficacy by the introduction of modern forms of domination, such as ‘business administration’, and techniques of manipulation, such as market research and advertising. (p. 35)

Bourdieu knows his history:

If this conservative revolution can deceive people, this is because it seems to retain nothing of the old Black Forest pastoral of the conservative revolutionaries of the 1930s; it is dressed up in all the signs of modernity [bosses’ new clothes]. After all, it comes from Chicago [economists]. Galileo said that the natural world is written in the language of mathematics. The neo-liberal ideologues want us to believe that the economic and social world is structured by equations. It is by arming itself with mathematics (and power over the media) that neo-liberalism has become the supreme form of the conservative sociodicy which started to appear some thirty years ago [book copyright: 1998] as “the end of ideology” or more recently, as “the end of history.” (p. 35)

An aside, theodicy means a vindication of god’s justice in tolerating the existence of evil. “Max Weber said that dominant groups always need a ‘theodicy of their own privilege,’ or, more precisely, a sociodicy, in other words a theoretical justification of the fact that they are privileged. Competence is nowadays at the heart of that sociodicy, which is accepted by, naturally, by the dominant... but also by the others” (p. 43).

Bourdieu takes us farther. The sanctimonious Anglo-American ideology – and action – divided the “undeserved poor” from the “deserving of charity ones.” However, the current elites are without religious and other “ethical” justifications, those who rule the planet have used another tool to beat up on the poor! They deserve it because they are stupid not just immoral, alcoholic, drugsters, degenerates, and other sub-humans. These are the Reagan-Thatcher so-called achievements, but they

have resulted in enormous insecurity, a sense of distress, not only among manual workers but also in the middle classes. The same can be seen in the United States, where there is a great rise in the number of insecure, underpaid jobs.... The American middle classes, exposed to the threat of suddenly losing their jobs, are feeling a terrible insecurity.... In all countries, the proportion of workers with temporary status is growing relative to those with permanent jobs. Increased insecurity and “flexibility” lead to the loss of modest advantages (often described as “perks” of the “privileged”) which might compensate for low wages, such as long-lasting employment, health insurance and pension rights. Privatization equally leads to the loss of collective gains. (Bourdieu, pp. 36-37)

The powers that be are now (2012 in America) attacking those who are “privileged” and have “perks”!

I am not surprised that ordinary middle-class Americans could or would not see what was happening. It took the 2007 crash and 2008 recession (which is not yet overcome in 2012) to start understanding, horizontally or vertically, what the catastrophe really is about. Perhaps this may be because the so-called American leftists have not read their Marx! Added to this, some of us know how important it is to understand that capitalism cannot live with “real” democracies, but I do not have the podium to teach this.

Globalization, in Bourdieu’s view, is really the united financial markets! The U.S. is the boss with its European and some East Asian helpers. This hegemony reduces the autonomy of so many other countries. Semi-left wing governments are usually the ones that feel the pain from those above. We should not be surprised given historical capitalism’s huge/high verticality (99%). The U.S. and its allies claim to be democratic; however, the claimed horizontalness of this bar is still very vertical. Higher than a U.S. fighter jet! Bourdieu asks: What can be done? We must learn what kind of system we are up against. Our foes must be met on battlefields in order to combat the lies that everyone benefits from capitalist “individualism” and real privatization of everything possible. We must fight to keep the commons that have not yet been conquered by our capitalist foes. And then try to organize around the world. I remember reading about Karl Marx giving a speech to communists in Switzerland. He allegedly finished with: our party must be international. Presently, some scholars and activists believe, or hope, that the almost complete victory of global capitalism can then be used against our foes – as the carnage becomes profoundly recognized. Perhaps, a worldwide international can help construct an “economy of happiness.”

Bourdieu argues that some national states at this time should fight against the capitalist world system that is not democratic--imperialism never is. An international organization must be one that is committed to overcome the injustices we suffer from today. We must remember that the best reds believed that communism and democracy were very much the same. Not the fake “democracies” whose leaders help keep the opposite of the demos in place! However, the countries that have gone up against the empire have been brutally shot down so far!

I want to conclude touching Bourdieu’s take on the postmodern philosophers. I have written elsewhere about these people and agree with how Bourdieu pictures them. He asks why these intellectuals are so ambiguous about the issues of our time. A brief answer is they are “occupied... in their scholastic games, wrap themselves up in a verbal defense of reason and

rational dialogue, or, worse, offer a supposedly postmodern but in fact ‘radical chic’ version of the end of ideology, with their condemnation of the great explanatory narratives or the nihilist denunciation of science” (p. 42). I agree with Bourdieu’s last smash against the “pomo” philosophers. “Why have we moved from the committed intellectual to the ‘uncommitted’ intellectual? Partly because [some] intellectuals are holders of cultural capital and, even if they are dominated among the dominant, they still belong among the dominant” (p. 44). He compared them to some of the German intellectuals who did not think they were getting the accolades they deserved; therefore, they joined the Nazis in 1933!

### III

Chile under Pinochet from the fascist 1973 coup, and long after, was not like Germany during the Third Reich (1933-1945)! Perhaps the Mussolini and Franco fascist regimes were closer to Pinochet-ism? Milton Friedman never got his hands dirty; however, all of them believed in shock and awe as a way to get what they wanted. Naomi Klein’s book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* teaches us that: “Shock and Awe are actions that create fears, dangers, and destruction that are incomprehensible to the people at large” (Klein, 2007, p. 3). In Klein’s introduction, called “Blank is Beautiful: Three Decades of Erasing and Remaking the World,” she begins with what happened in New Orleans after the flood. Friedman saw an opportunity in this tragedy to remake the city along the ideas he had for a long time. He had help from right-wing powerhouses, and even President G. W. Bush. Friedman did not have gendarmes to ruin the city, “Mother Nature” did it for him. Those who saw the world from the perspective of almost everything should be private – of course the markets and businesses, schools, etc., but really everything – were ready to act! They believed the U.S. should be ruled by the most powerful and rich Americans; consequently they saw disaster as a chance to build from the blueprints they had developed over the years. For example, “the auctioning off of New Orleans’ school system took place with military speed and precision. Within nineteen months, with most of the city’s poor residents still in exile, the public school system had been almost completely replaced by privately run charter schools” (p. 5).

The former strong teachers’ union was smashed. According to Klein, forty-seven hundred former union teachers were fired. The 2010 election of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has allowed more and more pressure on Wisconsin public schools and their teachers, without the New Orleans’ real disaster. In 2011 Michigan and many other states also face some of what the Walker administration is trying to do to what was good under public supervision.

Both U.S. wars against Iraq were in the league of shock and awe “therapy.” The second war after 9/11 was the worst – more complete. After Iraq was conquered, although many Iraqis continued the fight against the U.S. forces, they could not stop what the American government wanted. Klein explains, while the country was still in flames, the chief envoy L. Paul Bremer pushed for: “mass privatization, complete free trade, a 15 percent flat tax, [and] a dramatically down-sized government... When Iraqis resisted, they were rounded up and taken to jails where bodies and minds were met with more shocks, these ones distinctly less metaphorical” (p. 8).

Klein explains what ordinary people want to do after a disaster: “they want to salvage whatever they can and begin repairing what was not destroyed, they want to reaffirm their relatedness to the places that formed them” (p. 8). The American forces in Iraq and elsewhere tried to erase as much as possible of what the places were like. In Klein’s words: “the process

deceptively called ‘reconstruction’ began with finishing the job of the original disaster by erasing what was left of the public sphere and rooted communities, then quickly moving to replace them with a kind of corporate New Jerusalem – all before the victims of war or natural disaster were able to regroup and stake their claims to what was theirs” (p. 8). I cannot resist adding one more point with regard to shock and awe, as it stuns people so that they cannot defend themselves very well. “Torture, or in CIA language ‘coercive interrogation,’ is a set of techniques designed to put prisoners into a state of deep disorientation and shock in order to force them to make concessions against their will.... The shock doctrine mimics this process precisely, attempting to achieve on a mass scale what torture does one on one in the interrogation cell” (p. 16). Perhaps some of my readers would say it is not that bad because we must make the world safe for our democracy and number one capitalist system. The G. W. Bush administration exploited 9/11 in ways that some people thought could never be that bad and anti-democratic! “With [almost] everyone preoccupied by the deadly new cultural wars, the Bush administration was able to pull off what it could only dream of doing before 9/11: wage privatized wars abroad and build a corporate security complex at home” (p. 16).

Again, one might ask why so many Americans did not know what their government was doing abroad after World War II, or if they did, most had other things to do. Some – those who went against the grain – recognized the shock and awe by U.S. forces in so many foreign places after 1945, but they paid a price as they turned their opposition into action. My understanding of this tragic lack of realization and opposition by so many Americans has been already touched on above in this essay. The spectacle constructed by ever-growing capitalism allowed or forced all too many people to buy the government’s lies – believing that our military was defending, in every case, anti-democratic persons, their leaders, and armed guerillas. We were at war in so many places around the world after 1945 that it seemed just regular and necessary. Ours was not the same as the earlier colonization by the British, French, and other powers where flags flew over their conquests. The post-1945 “de-colonization” by the European powers was replaced by the growing power of America (and its allies) that relied on controlling the United Nations and almost all of global entities. Of course, there were times when the master nations would have to interfere when their subalterns began to resist their “betters.”

During this time in the U.S., ordinary middle-class people with union jobs, two cars, and a cottage up north, small business folks, some white-collar workers who were a step above the aforementioned groups, et al., were not interested in what the empire was doing. The Vietnam War was criticized by pens, voices, and demonstrations, but when it was over it seemed that all too many people did not try to force politicians to stop another Vietnam military-type action. Few, if any, were like the classic bourgeoisie who could survive without jobs for a long time because of the real wealth they had and enjoyed. The powers that be listened and knew they had to control most of the world with other strategies. For example, the post-Vietnam War did not rely on a drafted military! Finally, most Americans experienced almost the complete victory of capitalism over real workers, with the help of both political parties in the U. S. Right now it is almost impossible for those below the super rich, 1%, as we call them presently, to defeat the 1%ers. Why? Because the U.S. is no longer a democracy – not even a republic. It is a country run by Wall Street, global capitalism, the armed forces, and police who are now very militarized, weak federal government, the rightist courts, advertisers, most of the media, and very harsh imprisonment. Then, of course, the possibility in this country, to be killed in jail.

All these anti-democratic forces are also steadily smashing public schools and education that could help people understand what is going on. Now that the gendarme regime has come out without the fig leaf, perhaps some persons will get to know what their government and its most powerful military have done to people all over the world. More average United Statesians may finally get the treatment that those who oppose the empire abroad have endured, and still do. Many Americans have already suffered right here at home, almost as bad as our enemies all over the world did, and continue to experience. Public school teachers who want to learn and teach as the progressives (for example, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene) are really forced to use the authoritarian/essentialist No Student Left Behind way, test until you drop, “fill-in-the-blanks,” etc. Perhaps some teachers would “have the guts” to give the students an assignment called: How to do a safer “water board” torture job?

#### IV

The working, middle-class persons of Michigan and Wisconsin have not been shocked as brutally as what has been explained above, although some would argue that people of color have been treated brutally in these states, and especially in Detroit and Milwaukee! I will make a case in this section that the working, middle-class persons have taken their fair share of abuse in the recent past. Because of word limits here, I will explain mostly what the former governor of Michigan has written. Jennifer M. Granholm’s (and her husband’s) book is called: *A Governor’s Story: The Fight For Jobs and America’s Economic Future*.

Granholm’s book starts with “Seven Months of Freefall: A Michigan Timeline: December 2008-June 2009.” Although autoworkers in this state were in trouble since the 1970s, they picked up in small advances through union leadership, government help, and the quality of some of what they built. Globalism came home to Detroit early on, for example, because of the Japanese competitors. What follows is some of what Granholm tells in the timeline with regard to the shredding of jobs and people leaving Michigan: December 2008, 248 Michigan companies announced lay-offs; January 7, 2009 1 million unemployed people called for help via telephones; January 30, 229 companies announced mass layoffs; February 1-28, 79 more companies announced mass layoff. The timeline goes on and on, up to the end of June 2009!

I argue that many working-class, blue-collar employees – may we call them the proletariat – felt shocked, as they were falling out of what they thought was a middle-class position in capitalism’s verticality. The globalization that the mainstream media (mostly business/capitalist) promised almost everyone was a sham from the start. As Granholm wrote: Michigan might do better in competition with Indiana, or some other state, but it cannot take on “Mexico, China, and Korea when their governments of those nations enter the fray” (Granholm & Mulhern, 2011, p. xii).

Granholm believes that her administration has done many things to get Michigan out of the great recession. However, the 2010 elections brought in mostly Republicans – including a governor. She, herself, seems to be an Obama Democrat! Like the president did nationally, she did some things to help the people in her state. Probably she could become more Left in terms of what is to be done; however, Michigan is still in very poor shape with regard to the working class and its retirees. As we know, this is the case of most industrial states. This is what she wrote: “I ramped up my campaign [2002] of hope and change, promising higher levels of citizen engagement, a deep commitment to urban revitalization, and the creation of a more diverse

knowledge economy ... Above all, I promised to focus on creating an educational system that offered excellence to all children” (p. 14). Obviously, she promised to take care of the budget crisis so that the plans to improve schooling could go forward. She thought that fixing the K-12 schools so that all, or most, of the graduates could go on to colleges or vocational schools was possible. She, as well as many other politicians, tried to use better education in order to keep good jobs in the state, and even attracting persons from outside of Michigan. Perhaps the governor thought these policies would at least be a start for overcoming the crisis?

However, as we know now [2012], the states could not do what liberal progressives wanted to achieve. Global capitalism, via the countries whose leaders back this system, is too powerful for this to be done. I argue that moderate liberal progressives cannot go back to what FDR and Keynes achieved. The capitalist forces started to wreck these achievements soon after World War II. The former Republican Governor Engler left Michigan in bad shape. He, like, G.W. Bush, got out just in time!

Returning to what I wrote above concerning similarities between Michigan and Wisconsin during the good years for ordinary people, Granholm wrote:

When the country flourished, people bought more cars.... Parts suppliers charged great premiums, workers took home checks fattened with overtime pay, and stockholding employees and families watched their nest eggs grow. The rest of the economy benefited. People renovated their homes, took vacations... and went out to dinner. Thousands were able to rent or purchase cottages and maybe even a boat ‘up north’ on Lakes Superior, Huron, Erie, Michigan or our 11,000 inland lakes. (p. 20)

Wisconsin governor Scott Walker is not even trying to do what Granholm sought to achieve in Michigan. She writes: “Conservative laissez-faire dogma tends to treat government spending as *the* enemy of economic growth, with the corollary that tax cuts can serve as a magic elixir any time the economy falters. Michigan proves it is not true” (p. 277). Sadly, Michigan’s current governor, Rick Snyder, does not seem to be continuing what Granholm told she achieved. His administration has taken away the power of some Michigan towns – one is Benton Harbor, a predominantly African-American small city. “Under a new law, the governor can authorize dissolution of local governments and the elimination of not just elected school boards but historically independent school districts through forced mergers” (Nichols, 2011, p. 17). *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* published an article called “Left in the Dark.” Highland Park, MI is so poor that the city government had to shut off and even take out many city lights because of their lack of money. The author tells us that “In its heyday, Highland Park was one of Michigan’s urban jewels” (Williams, 2011, p. 6A).

## V

Let us go back to Milwaukee and, of course, Wisconsin as a whole. As in Michigan, shock and awe was neither of the Chilean version, nor Iraqi and other countries. Perhaps not as much as New Orleans suffered? As I wrote above about Detroit, and other places in Michigan, the powers that be and their gendarmes could not get away with the killings allowed abroad. Although, in the summer of 1967, President Johnson sent the Michigan National Guard to Detroit because of its “racial uprising”! African-Americans have had a hard time in both

Michigan and Wisconsin. Some labor unions played an important role with regard to people of color, making it possible for them to do well when the factories were booming. However, in these times, Milwaukee and Detroit have so many unemployed people; many are whites but nowhere near the number of people of color including people in Milwaukee's Latino community. Speaking now just about Wisconsin, many indigenous and Hmong people are in bad shape. The school crisis the Republican governor Scott Walker talks about is mostly non-whites. Obviously, this problem has to do with social class. The Wisconsin Republican Party had the majority in the senate and legislature up to the recall in 2012. The Democrats now have a slim lead; however, the fall elections may give the lower house back to the Republicans who want to privatize the schools and almost every other institution in the state. They are backed by most of the richest and most powerful forces in the country, for example, the Koch brothers! Before going into more detail about Milwaukee and Wisconsin, I offer the following, even though it is not exactly the same as where I live. Na'im H. Madyun writes: "According to social disorganization theory... when a community is high in social [I would add economic] disorganization, it is more likely that too many deviant norms can be embraced by individuals.... Lastly, when a community is disorganized, access to resources may be unevenly distributed.... The literature suggests that neighborhoods high in disadvantage have a higher potential for being socially disorganized" (Madyun, 2011, p. 31). Shock and awe?

Wisconsin has a record of progressivism from the time of the socialist governments in Milwaukee in the twentieth century: *The Progressive*, published in Madison, left-center state governments, and other traditions around the state, for example, unions – both in the private and public sectors. However, the Wisconsinites have had their share of characters such as Senator Joe McCarthy. Moreover, the liberal progressives have always been countered by the corporations, business, religionists, warmongers, many suburbanites, racists, and, of course, the richest. One might add the *lumpen* proletariat, those who do not know what is going on and may even support those who are keeping them *lumpen*!

One of the worst problems in the Dairy State is how African-Americans have been treated! Their percentage is low, and they live mostly in Milwaukee and some of the other industrial cities in the southeast and south-central parts of the state – Racine, Kenosha, Janesville and Beloit. The state has a growing Latino/Latina population, an indigenous one, as well as Hmong. Although many of the people listed above have hard lives, I choose to focus on the African-American population in Milwaukee. Patrick D. Jones has written a book called: *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

The Selma of the north means that in Milwaukee there have occurred terrible beatings of African-Americans and their supporters, as the civil rights people tried to march over a bridge to where the white people lived. This occurred in the summer of 1967 – the Selma, Alabama bridge carnage had occurred two years before. The Milwaukee white mob held up Confederate flags. Many white savages held up George Wallace posters! Detroit also had terrible white attacks on African-Americans in the summer of 1967; however, not just on a bridge. Jones, the author, wrote:

The Movement in the North shared consciousness with those who struggled in the South, but it took place within and responded to a distinctive context. The industrial base of the economy, with its strong labor movement; the presence of white ethnic groups; the dominance of the Catholic Church; the strong link between race, ethnicity, and urban geography; the relatively secure African

American right to vote; and the diffuse nature of discrimination – all of which set the region apart from the South – critically affected the development of race relations and civil rights activism in Milwaukee and other northern industrial locales. (Jones, 2009, p. 5)

The white working class (presently called middle class) of Milwaukee was early on fighting among themselves because of coming from different places in Europe. I like to say the “white tribes” are no longer enemies; however, as I write this (January 2012), race is still at the center of what the greater Milwaukee has yet to overcome. It continues to be one of the most segregated cities in the country!

I want to go back to shock and awe that the powers that be in Milwaukee have visited on people of color. The center of this will be the schools – public and private – within the context of this segregated city. Although African-Americans have had the right to vote since 1848 in Wisconsin, in Milwaukee de facto segregation was the rule with regard to non-whites. From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s, Milwaukee became a great industrial city. It was called the city of nations; however, the African-Americans were not thought of as a nation. They always lagged behind the white nations. Milwaukee’s socialist governments during this expansion of industrial jobs did not do much for “outsiders.” “Because class was their primary mode of analysis, the Socialists did not have a significant or sustained program to address the discrimination and inequality faced by Milwaukee’s small black population” (p. 17). They were “cultural conservatives”! The interested reader about Milwaukee can go to a historian by the name of John Gurda.

After the end of World War II, the city’s black community “skyrocketed.” However, they were forced to live in what some people would rightly call ghettos. They lived in places that were abandoned by whites who did not want to live with black people. Because the latter did not have good jobs, they could not keep up the housing in which they were living. Meanwhile, most whites, even working-class ones, were able to flee the “inner core.” The city’s public schools and their teachers were very good before, but now had to teach very different kinds of students. “It was this inability to move to other areas of the city if they chose or could afford to do so that set black Milwaukeeans apart from white immigrants, giving lie to the idea that African-Americans were simply another immigrant group in a city filled with migrants” (p. 20). A community columnist wrote in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: “The collection and entrapment of African-Americans into Milwaukee’s ghetto was as deliberately designed and as efficiently orchestrated as it was in Warsaw with skin color substituting for yellow stars and those in the city’s and state’s power structure, and the white population in general were either active participants in the collusion or very silent observers” (Ridley, 2011, p. 4J).

When “neo-liberal” economics allowed American companies to flee out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the whole United States, the white workers began to suffer from this chapter of capitalism, and they were not prepared to figure out what they were in for. They could always say they were over some other poor people; however, as global capitalism became even more “radical” and everywhere, the white working-class people were beginning to worry about their “places up north.” The “Bush II” recession is taking from ordinary Americans more than this. It is eating up their income right at home: their houses, pensions, health care, their jobs, and even extra fun money. The so-called middle class has been betrayed by the most powerful people in

the world – and their minions in the state! Obviously, the filthy rich hire and help the minions win elections.

Will we see the savage fights on bridges in Milwaukee now, or more likely on the other borders separating the city from the suburbs? Jones writes this in the book's conclusion: "Even at the height of the mid-1990s boom, unemployment rates hovered as high as 30 or 40 percent in the most depressed core neighborhoods.... Milwaukee's public schools began to resegregate, graduation rates in the inner core high schools plummeted, and truancy rose" (Jones, 2009, p. 258). As I write this, I read an article on "The Soviet Union's Afterlife." The author, Stephen F. Cohen, makes a very credible argument that the liberal and progressive Gorbachev perestroika was shot down by fascistic shock and awe crimes. Obviously, with the help of the capitalist West (Cohen, 2012)!

## VI

Still in Wisconsin, I want to show how the Republican Party used a form of shock and awe tactic to fool the people. I have learned some important facts from the *Shepherd Express*, a weekly newspaper that is free. It is progressive – some may say radical – however, I call it democratic in the real sense. Their writers use the word middle class most of the time, but I think they mean working class; I would say, the proletariat. Here is an example of this paper's usefulness. Lisa Kaiser is the assistant editor and shows how Governor Walker's extremists stole the state. She tells how the power in Madison hijacked the government in 6 steps (Kaiser, 2011).

*Step 1: "Declare an Emergency.* Walker told the people that Wisconsin was broke; therefore, needing to do some tough stuff right away. However it was not the case. The Republicans, who had the majority in both houses, were able to strip public employees of most of their collective bargaining and cut their pay. Kaiser writes that the governor lied so he could strengthen his radical agenda with regard to dividing the state's so-called middle class. Kaiser mentions Naomi Klein's "shock doctrine" to explain what the Republicans did in 2011.

*Step 2: "Concentrate Power In a Few Hands.* "The old administrative rule system worked very well, was a national model and was effective in providing checks and balances between the Legislature and governor-appointed agency heads and independent elected state officials. But thanks to Walker's changes, he and the Republican-dominated joint committee for review of administrative rules have amassed enough power to thwart the work of professionals in the various state agencies and open the door to totally politicizing the rule-making process. It also provided an opportunity for corruption, since lobbyists can help to rewrite rules" (p. 6).

*Step 3: Use Mischief-Makers to Smear Opponents.* One example is: "he and his staff had 'thought about' planting troublemakers among the peaceful protesters at the Capitol this winter. That this sort of Nixonian dirty trick, which easily could have resulted in some level of violence, was even considered by the governor, an Eagle Scout who was raised by a minister, shocks the conscience" (p. 8). Kaiser brings up what the governor said on the telephone when he thought he was talking to the super-capitalist billionaire, David Koch! While Walker only considered violence-provoking mischief-makers, the rest of his party used different kinds of mischief-makers. One example is that the GOP ran fellow Republicans as Democrats in the summer 2011 recall election.

*Step 4: Co-opt an Independent Branch of Government.* “We all knew that the state Supreme Court was divided ideologically. But who knew that the divide was so severe that one justice [a man] would attempt to choke another justice [a woman]?... Four conservatives [on the court] were trying every which way to destroy common decency and impose their will on the three members in the minority” (p. 8).

*Step 5: Change Rules Midstream to Favor Yourself.* “Back in August 2011, Republicans passed a legislative redistricting plan that would favor the party until the next U.S. Census, in 2020.... Recall elections conducted before the November 2012 use the old map” (p. 8). However, because of the chance that Walker and the lieutenant governor will lose in the recall election in the summer of 2012 [which he did not], the GOP is trying to argue that the new map should go into effect immediately and be used for any recall elections held before November 2012. The Republicans want to gerrymander in their favor.

*Step 6: Stifle Dissent.* Because of the historical opposition against Walker and his allies at the Capitol in Madison, WI, the Occupy Wall Street people may have seen Wisconsin as an example? The successful repeal of a Walker-style collective bargaining in Columbus, OH, may be a “cousin” of what was done in Madison and elsewhere? “So it is no wonder that Walker has decided to crack down on peaceful protests by signing off on an unconstitutional policy that restricts peaceful protests and charges protesters the cost of providing security at their protests” (p. 8).

## **Conclusion**

There is so much more to report on with regard to the “Tales of Two Cities and States;” however, there is such a thing as being fair to the editors. I plan to work on this project – going deeper and broader – in the near future. I’ve always agreed with Marx and the Marxists that the economy, especially the capitalist (now global) economy(ies), is the first place to look with regard to the fight for making countries democracies.

In this work I have attempted to explain how working-class Americans were, and still are, fooled with regard to where they were on the verticality of state, country, and world capitalism. There are many reasons why all too many United Statesians did not know what was really going on. Some of these reasons are touched on in this piece. Perhaps it is too late in this country to build organizations that could fight against the capitalist system and its governments. Historians would have to find all the places and things that are the enemies of real democracy. The teachers must include these kinds of histories. The journals must move to the left. So should all of the people who work on television, and other “new” ways of offering the news. This is going to be difficult. I see the United States, and its history, as a series of conquests by those who have tried to make themselves rich. The institutions with real power have always been on the side of the 1%. Liberals of the past, and still, try to cover the “beast” with rouge and fig leaves. As real socialism had to go beyond liberals, the socialists (if there really are some) must move to the radical left. Some readers will say: What does this mean, I don’t understand; however, there is a rich history that can educate people to learn “what is to be done”!

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