

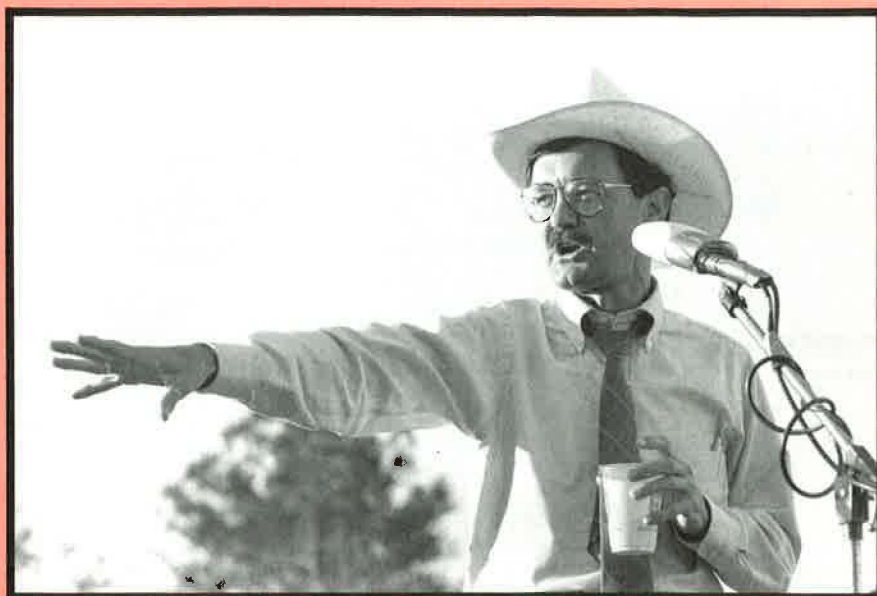
June 1989

A Socialist Magazine

# forward motion



**Building a  
Democratic-  
Populist  
Alliance  
with  
Jim Hightower**



**Battling the  
Rise in  
Police  
Brutality in  
Minneapolis**

## Forward Motion

June 1989  
Vol. 8, No. 2

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*FORWARD MOTION is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. We say socialist opinion because each FM presents analyses of important organizing work and reviews of political and cultural trends. We say socialist advocacy because FM is dedicated to a new left-wing presence in U.S. politics and to making Marxism an essential component of that presence. We share these purposes with other journals, but we seek for FM a practical vantage point from within the unions, the Black and other freedom struggles, the women's movement, the student, anti-war, and gay liberation movements, and other struggles. We also emphasize building working people's unity as a political force for social change, particularly through challenging the historical pattern of white supremacy and national oppression in the capitalist domination of this country.*

## In this issue...

This month's *Forward Motion* features an editorial on the reorganization of the National Rainbow Coalition plus an interview with progressive political leader Jim Hightower. Rainbow electoral politics is entering a new phase, shaped by both Jackson's 1988 success and the ease with which Reagan passed the baton to George Bush. Though differing in their estimate of electoral possibilities within the Democratic Party, the two statements here offer complementary emphases on the need for local grass roots initiatives. We also have two first hand reports on recent electoral organizing. Peggy Baker, liaison to the gay and lesbian community for Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, reviews the campaign for a Human Rights Ordinance in that city, and Gary Handschumacher reports on the fight against the English-Only amendment in Colorado.

Following up on last November's feature on student organizing, we have an interview with African-American student leaders in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The student-community coalition against police brutality emerging in Minneapolis signals the strengthening of student organizing in a stronger Black movement overall. "The Politics of Drugs," an interview with political prisoner and activist Mutulu Shakur looks backward and forward on organizing against drugs in oppressed nationality communities.

On the international front, long-time follower of the Cuban struggle Martin Eder offers a personal assessment of Cuba as it celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of its revolution. And, following up on our coverage of the Palestinian struggle, Michael Zweig reports on how Jewish communities in the United States have finally begun to respond and pressure for negotiations. Commentaries from Ireland and Mexico emphasize the vitality and sophistication of the political movements there. And, at a time when marriage-broking from Asia to the U.S. has been in the news, Mi Ok Bruining explores her own and others' experiences as part of the large "adoption industry" involving Korean children.

Finally, Kathy Chamberlain hasn't forgotten FM's large mystery readership. She's back with pocket reviews just in time to help plan your summer reading list.

This *Forward Motion* is longer but late. Over the last two years, we have been working to expand coverage, enlarge each issue, and improve production quality. Because we have had to do this with the same staff and financial base, we have only managed five issues each year, though we have extended subscription dates so subscribers won't lose out. We hope you will bear with us during this transition, keep those sustainers subscriptions coming, keep writing, and keep spreading the word.



## Students and Community Ally in Minneapolis

### Battling the Rise in Police Brutality

*With Keith Ellison and Chris Nisan*

*This interview with student activists Keith Ellison and Chris Nisan took place in the heat of the biggest community struggle in Minneapolis, Minnesota in over a decade. Ellison is president of the Black Law Student Association at the University of Minnesota, and Nisan is a student at the University of Minnesota and a member of the African Student Cultural Center. Both are part of the leadership of the current community movement.*

**GH: What set this struggle off?**

**CN:** This is the continuation of a history of abuses against the African-American community, other communities of color and the broader working class community. This particular movement was sparked by two incidents. One was the police bombing of a house in predominantly African-American Near Northside, Minneapolis in the midst of a so-called drug raid. They used an incendiary device similar to the device that was used on the MOVE people in Philadelphia, and they ended up setting a fire which got out of control. An elderly couple who lived in the back of the house died as a result of the bombing. No drugs were found. A few people were held for questioning, but to my knowledge nobody has been charged.

**KE:** If I could just throw in a few more facts. The police department through its surveillance activities was aware that the elderly couple was in the house. More than that, according to the neighbors, the younger people, occupants of the home, who had been handcuffed and forced to lie face down in the house even while it was burning, screamed at the top of their lungs that there were elderly people in the back of the home whom the police should try to rescue. The police ignored them and ran out of the home. It is important to know the police had this knowledge and that a foreseeable result actually occurred.

**CN:** The second incident involved about twenty students and young

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*Geoff Hahn, a student activist and member of the Progressive Student Network conducted the interview. He spoke with Ellison and Nisan Friday, February 24, just hours after hundreds of angry community members marched on a Minneapolis City Council meeting.*

people, all African Americans, in the Embassy Suites Hotel here in Minneapolis. They were having a birthday party get-together with friends. There was a loud party happening a few doors down, and the management mistook their party for the other party. Words were exchanged, and the management asked them to leave. In the meantime, the management called the police.

When the police came in, they began to brutalize the students. They shouted racial obscenities, made very crass racial jokes, beat people and told them they were beating them because they were sure they had voted for Jesse Jackson, sure they watched the Arsenio Hall show. The police also made all kinds of lewd sexual comments to the young women. Then they began spraying mace, and a lot of people were sprayed. One person's wrist was broken, another person's arm was bruised badly. Eleven people required medical assistance after the incident.

**KE:** It's routinized atrocity. Daily something heinous disrupts people's lives. We can talk about the Anthony West killing, in which a young man who had an asthma condition came to the police for aid and they arrested him and shock him down because they suspected him of something and then left him out in the street to die. We can talk about a Native American man who was taking his own stereo out of his own home. Police drew guns on him, held him in custody for twelve hours, because they suspected he had stolen the stereo. His father came out of the home at the same time, informed the police that this was his son, that this was his home, and this was his son's stereo, and they arrested his father too. So this was just basically the straw that broke the camel's back.

**GH: What demands are being raised in this struggle?**

**KE:** The first demand is that the police officers who killed Lillian Weisse and Lloyd Smalley [the elderly couple killed in the fire] be arrested and denied bail because they are such a serious danger to the community. We ask that they be charged for murder and arson. We can show they had the requisite intent because there was clear animosity and malicious intent to harm people of color by the police department.

Our next demand is that the charges be dropped against the students in the Embassy Suites Hotel incident. The police brutalized them, then charged the students with loud and disorderly conduct.

Our third demand is the establishment of a blue-ribbon panel to investigate the two brutalizations.

The fourth demand is an end to the police harass-

ment that the organizers of this struggle have had to face. Today we have a young man who has been quite active in the struggle who now feels as though he can't participate because the police have harassed him.

Our next demand is the establishment of a permanent external review board of the police because the police can't police themselves.

And our last demand is that the police be provided with racial sensitivity training and that the police who were responsible for the brutalization of the students and the police responsible for the killing of the elderly people be subjected to psychological testing. Even though we are sure they're crazy, we want some objective evidence that they've lost it.

So those are the demands, and we figure that they are very reasonable because we're not asking for anything more than justice. Our demands are set up in the priority that the community feels that they have to be dealt with. Before we deal with some of the later demands we insist that the first demands be met.

Different ideas have been proposed by different people of different political persuasions about how to deal with this whole question of police brutality. One proposal has been to increase the number of African American police officers. Our position has been that this emphasis is a tactical error. Increasing the number of African American police will not produce any kind of police sensitivity to African American and other communities of color. If you think that just getting some African American people on the police force is going to change it, you deny the fact that this is a systemic problem and not random, individualized "cowboyism" on the behalf of the police. The police force is designed to suppress the communities of color and working class European communities.

**GH: There hasn't been a struggle like this in this city in over 15 years. I'm wondering why now? Is it the times—the eight years of Reagan—the Jackson candidacy, or a combination of factors?**

**KE:** Not being a Minneapolis resident, I'll just say that people have finally gotten sick of this thing, and that is the root of it all. The people have been subjected to too much police brutality, and they just got sick of it. Having said that, nationally, during the Reagan era, the unemployment rate for Blacks has increased, and the unemployment rate for whites has decreased. The life expectancy rate for white males has increased, while the life expectancy rate for Black males has decreased.





Clara Wu

KEITH ELLISON ADDRESSES DEMONSTRATORS RESPONDING TO POLICE BRUTALITY IN MINNEAPOLIS.

These changes aggravated the contradictions such that people are coming face-to-face with their own oppression.

Eight years of mean-spiritedness of the Reagan era have encouraged fascist and racist forces to come out again. A Ku Kluxer was just elected in Louisiana. We see a rise in police brutality all over the country. In Long Beach, California, the police pushed a man's head through a window—while he was monitoring them to show their racism. But the more the Right attacks, the more we have to respond, and that is essentially what has happened. So in the same way that the racists were cut loose, we're noticing a reaffirmation of what it means to be an African person, and a working class person.

**CN:** The contradictions have definitely intensified in the U.S., and as those contradictions increase, racism and white supremacy will also increase. Also, having gone through the movement of the sixties, the African American community is beginning to come to some more fundamental assumptions about their oppressor, and about the movement, and what kind of things have to happen. The struggle here is a manifestation of that recognition. The Minneapolis police force has had a real Nazi element in it for the past fifteen years. This is something that people have known about for a long time, but people are just now beginning to respond.

People are responding in the way that is needed. A lot of this is just a reawakening. After the movement of the sixties, people were placated, the movement was

subverted, and people were killed off. The movement of the sixties took place in the context of an expanding capitalist pie. A real radical movement was forestalled by throwing down some crumbs.

Now U.S. capitalism is not willing to buy off people anymore. It's not willing to make the kinds of concessions it made in the past. We see this all around. We see this in the cut-backs in the unions. We see this definitely in the cut-backs that African Americans took during the Reagan era. And as Keith said, people are finally beginning to realize that it's not apple pie anymore. This is moving people to action.

**GH:** Police Chief Laux said that Smalley and Weisse were victims of the war on drugs. We know drugs are a big problem in the Afro-American community, and in oppressed nationality communities in general. What should be the response of activists to the war on drugs?

**CN:** There's an analogy: if you look on the fire extinguisher, it says spray at the base of the fire. Now the flames of the fire might be what's killing you, but in order to put the fire out you need to spray at the base. Malcolm X used to say that African American people don't own boats and planes that bring drugs into this country. We don't subsidize poppy growers in Southeast Asia or coca growers in Columbia and Peru. Drugs are a side of business, an underground business, for U.S. capitalism. Drugs are a big business, and we don't run it.



We're the very low end of the drug business in our communities. By the time you see the little hustler on the corner slinging crack, most of the money has been made that's going to be made off of dope. So I think a responsible activist's response to the drug problem is to deal with the root of the problem. People sell dope because their communities are economically devastated and there are no other opportunities, and that's a historical pattern.

Whenever you see oppressed people, you see people turning to other sources of living, and to crime for a living. You saw it with the Irish when they came here and they were in ghettos. When the Italians and Jews came here and they were in ghettos they also turned to crime. The African American is a late-comer to this phenomenon, as one of the latest ethnic groups in this country to become urbanized. The problem will continue until there is some fundamental change in the economic conditions people face. So a responsible activist needs to go to the source and keep in mind our president is selling drugs.

**KE:** The responsible activist has to show young folks out there that white supremacy and capitalism are what's putting them in the position they're in. And to give them the kind of hope and faith and pride in their African heritage that is essential. What we find among many people engaged in drug activity is that they have no national consciousness about what being an African means and the greatness that Africa once knew and can know again. They have no grasp of that. And it's only because white supremacy has deprived them of that in the most brutal fashion that they feel as though they can perpetrate that kind of thing on their own community.

So in addition to focusing on the source of the problem, which we have to do very vigorously, we also have to draw attention to the fact that these folks are doing this to their own people. And that being an African person is something to be proud of, and something that you can belong to in a strong, positive way.

**GH:** Could you characterize the role of Afro-American students in this struggle?

**KE:** African American students have played a central role in organizing and initiating a lot of the action that's been taken, and that's not surprising. On campuses around the country, African American students have been pressed so tight to the wall that they've had to come out swinging. We look at the University of Michigan crisis; they've had a series of incidents. I just learned today that

at Michigan State the student president of the NAACP on campus received hate mail from the KKK. In addition, the Michigan State Student Association has seriously cut the funding of African American student organizations, while it hasn't done the same thing to student organizations predominantly filled by European students, white students. We see at Citadel that even at a military academy, African American students had to fight back. And at Dartmouth College, African American students have had to band together.

Here at the University of Minnesota, there is really no doubt that we're just doing what everybody has to do. The students at African Cultural Center, the students at the Black Law Student Association, and other African American students have come out and had to assist in the leadership and organizing of this whole struggle. But what we've also tried to do is be sensitive to the community and bridge that gap between the community and the student movement. And I think we've successfully done that.

**CN:** Yes, students have been instrumental in bringing the town and the gown together. Whenever that has happened in the past, we know that there's been very good results. It also points to young people's prominent role in this battle, and not just students. It is an expression of continuity in the struggle. Students have linked with those who have struggled in the past. They have learned and benefited from the earlier wisdom and knowledge and are beginning to use that to build programs and strategies for the future. It's been a real good mix of young and new leadership; people in the community who have not had an opportunity to exercise leadership plus people who have traditionally been out there in the vanguard of the struggle in our community.

Students who are active now are the students and youngsters that grew up during these eight years we discussed earlier. We were teenagers during Reagan's time. Now we get on campus to get an education, so to speak, and we begin to realize what we've really been going through these last eight years. That's another reason why African American students are responding.

**KE:** A lot of students who have been active in this thing grew up or were born in the sixties, and did get a taste of the radicalism of the later sixties and early seventies. And the difference between this era and that era is that in the forties and fifties there was no comparable movement that people could relate to on a personal basis. These days African American students can talk to people who actually were in that movement, and they can take from





Lori Wasechuk

THE MINNEAPOLIS STRUGGLE AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER NEW AND OLD LEADERSHIP, TOWN AND GOWN. HERE CHRIS NISAN, CENTER LEFT, AND KEITH ELLISON, CENTER RIGHT, ADDRESS THE CROWD.

that movement. So its not at all surprising. People can remember when students were shot at Kent State and Jackson State, although only vaguely, and can use that and relate it to the future.

**GH:** Many people have united in the fight against police brutality in this town. Some of these forces, for example the anti-intervention movement, are predominantly white. What contradictions, if any, has this given rise to?

**KE:** At this stage I can honestly say that the white progressives who have sought to join forces with the African community, the Asian community, and the Native American community, have been very respectful of African leadership, and have been very careful to make sure actions they want to take have been discussed with people in the communities of color. I hope that those communities will continue to do that.

The theories that the people have been working with are sound ones. For instance, some groups work under the premise that Malcolm X set forth for the white progressive—that is, if you want to defeat white supremacy, you need to work with your own people. You can convince them that white supremacy is an evil system far better than an African person can. Because the African person is its victim. While white progressives have taken that charge, they also have wanted to join in coalition when that was appropriate too.

**CN:** I agree. The coalition has been very good. I'm glad to see the realization of those in the anti-interventionist movement and the progressive white community that in

order to deal with the contradictions that they themselves face, they must beat back racism and white supremacy. The same oppressor oppresses all of us. But there's no doubt that people of color definitely suffer a dual oppression, and a triple oppression in terms of women of color.

This attitude is refreshing though I would add that I think it has a material base. The white working class is beginning to see more clearly that their enemy is not the person of color, but the people who rule this country. In the past, U.S. capitalism has always been able to buy off the white worker. The white working class in the United States has historically been one of the most backward working classes in the world. The capitalists in this country were always able, when the white working class moved, to cut them in on a large enough slice of the pie and keep them passive. One of the problems I think in the sixties was that the white working class left the Black movement out there by itself. So it is a good sign to see progressive whites now moving in sync with people of color.

**KE:** I'd like to add one more thing which is a caveat. Many of the white progressives we've joined with—not all, but many—come from the progressive student movement. What we've yet to do, I think I'm safe to say, is bridge the gap with organized labor. That may cause serious difficulties in terms of the movement. I hope it doesn't. And it's my expectation that no white supremacist problem will arise. But that will be the true test.

**GH: What do you see on the road ahead?**

**CN: VICTORY, VICTORY.** The three things that I think are most important for us to gain out of this are, number one, a thorough political education for the community. What I think we're seeing here is a flexing of muscles that have not been used in a while. In order to expedite that process, we need to give people the weights with which to develop that muscle, which are experience and education.

Another thing is getting some concrete results. Getting a victory, having these police charged with a crime, having them suspended, having the charges dropped. We also want to use the momentum here to establish some kind of organization to do ongoing organizing and political work, particularly with younger folks.

The third thing is to be able to make and strengthen connections amongst various groups in the community. In the coalition, as we stated earlier, it's been working very well. We want to broaden that base and begin to knock down some of these barriers which prevent us from working together, and develop a more solid working relationship. Issues like police brutality represent a

common agenda item around which people can come together. For all kinds of very good reasons, the level of trust is very low—particularly on the side of people of color toward whites, even white progressives. Working together around common concerns is a way in which people can break down some of these notions. It gives white progressives an opportunity to really prove to the communities of color that, in fact, they're really serious about battling racism and white supremacy and serious about battling the contradictions in this society side-by-side with people of color.

**KE:** I'd also like to engage in some serious mutual uplift with the Native American community, the natural ally of the African American community. That coalition has never really been solidified the way we know that it can be. That's an important thing we hope will come out of this struggle. As Chris said, we want to see some structural change in the administration of government here. We want to let people know that the police cannot just do things and get away with it. The police are going to be called to task just like anybody else. ■