

AGAINST THE **CURRENT**

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL



Chicago's Torture Machine and Reparations

♦ AISLINN PULLEY ♦ MARK CLEMENTS ♦ JOEY MOGUL ♦ LINDA LOEW

Palestine — Then and Now

♦ MALIK MIAH ♦ MOSHE MACHOVER ♦ DAVID FINKEL
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A Letter from the Editors:

Infrastructure: Who Needs It?

“INFRASTRUCTURE” IS ALL the rage, and not only just now. Trump talked about it, president Obama promised it, and so have administrations going back to the 1980s. Amidst the talk, the United States’ roads and bridges are crumbling, water and sanitation systems faltering, public health services left in a condition that’s only been fully exposed in the coronavirus pandemic, and rapid transit and high-speed internet access in much of the country inferior to what’s available in the rural interior of China.

A combination of circumstances have changed the discussion. The objective realities include the pandemic; its devastating economic impacts most heavily on Black, brown and women’s employment; the necessity of rapid conversion to renewable energy, now clear even to much of capital — and yes, the pressures of deepening competition and rivalry with China. The obvious immediate political factors are the defeat of Trump and the ascendance of the Democrats to narrow Congressional and Senate majorities.

It became clear, however, that there would be no Republican support for anything resembling Biden’s infrastructure program — even after he’d stripped several hundred billion dollars and scrapped raising the corporate tax rate to pay for it.

Instead, the Senate has hastily come together around “research and development” legislation explicitly aimed at facing China’s rising capacity. It signals that anything happening in the name of government economic development policy will be coming with a stop-China tinge — as was also clear in Biden’s statements at the G7 summit.

Gridlock

President Biden’s and the Democrats’ “nearly two trillion dollar infrastructure package,” as it was called, could only be enacted in the Senate with all 48 Democratic and two independent votes (Bernie Sanders and Angus King), plus Vice President Kamala Harris’ tie-breaker. That’s in order to pass the bill through the “budget reconciliation” provision that bypasses the Senate’s 60 votes required to choke off the buffoonery that passes for “debate” in that spectacularly unrepresentative chamber.

As the Republican Party at the congressional level consolidates itself as the party of the Big Lie and the still-to-be-indicted Big Liar lurking in his Mar-A-Lago bunker, the long tradition of “bipartisan” negotiation (with all the cynicism and pork-barrel tradeoffs it entails) has become middle-of-the-road kill. Loyally ensconced for decades in the old habits, Biden routinely reaches across the aisle to Mitch McConnell, who responds by stomping on the president’s face. After several repetitions, most Democrats not named Joe Manchin get the point.

In essence, the Democrats were left negotiating with their own Senator Manchin and one or two Republicans he might bring along — maybe Lisa Murkowski, whose main purpose in political life is to keep her state of Alaska open for ecocidal oil and gas drilling. Under more bipartisan circumstances, the Democratic leadership would likely be willing to sacrifice their bill’s more innovative measures — “social infrastructure” like expanded child credit and health care access, as well as some first steps toward mitigating climate disaster — to get Republican support, even though enraging their progressive-minded base.

Now, however, the Democrats need that base and its Congressional voices to once again, as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez put it to journalist Marina Hinojosa about the 2020 election, “save the party’s ass.” (<https://www.nbcnews.com>, May 21, 2021) If the Democrats don’t “go big” and deliver

serious results, they might well be electorally dead in 2022 and beyond. That pressure, along with the party’s left wing, put some backbone into the administration’s posture although the “progressive” forces certainly don’t control the agenda.

Size and Scope

Without trying to predict what if any infrastructure spending might finally survive the filibuster-blockaded mess known as the United States Senate, it’s worth looking at what the Biden administration and congressional Democrats hoped to accomplish. These proposals are by no means “socialist,” as Republicans absurdly pronounce. We’ll come back to the issue of what a *socialist* infrastructure program would look like.

Importantly, however, the Biden proposals were *big* — even ground-shifting by the standards of decades of neoliberal gutting of social spending by both capitalist parties. It’s worth exploring why. Dollar figures do matter, although they fluctuate with each day’s news reports. (To paraphrase the late Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen, “a trillion dollars here, a trillion there, and pretty soon you’re talking real money.” In the long-ago 1960s, Dirksen actually said “billion.” How outdated is that?)

The biggest attempted innovations, however, are over the Democrats’ “wide range of concerns, including elder care, parents and families” and social support, scorned by Republicans like John Barrasso of Wyoming “as ‘socialism camouflaged as infrastructure.’”

“Maintaining their belief that any package should hew to what they describe as traditional infrastructure,” the Senate Republicans’ new plan “proposes more than \$500 billion for roads, \$98 billion for public transit, \$46 billion for passenger rail and more than \$70 billion for water infrastructure” and other items. (“Senate Republicans make new infrastructure offer as House Democrats urge Biden to dig in,” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2021)

Through budget legerdemain, however, Republicans propose paying for some of this through money already legislated, but not yet spent, under the previous COVID relief bill. Under no circumstances, McConnell pledges, will any part of the sacred Trump tax cuts for corporate capital and the rich be touched. In any case the Republican proposition adds up to something less than half of the Biden administration’s proposal.

Proposing infrastructure spending to meet social needs is a departure from established practice. That fact shows

continued on the inside back cover

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AGAINST THE CURRENT

July / August 2021 — Volume XXXVI, Number 3



2 Burma: The War vs. the People

interview with Carlos Sandiña Galache

4 Afghanistan's Tragedy

Valentine M. Moghadam

6 The Detroit Left & Social Unionism in the 1930s

Steve Babson

9 Detroit: Austerity and Activism

Peter Blackmer

Chicago's Torture Machine

12 Reparations for Police Torture

interview with Aislinn Pulley

17 A Torture Survivor Speaks

interview with Mark Clements

18 Torture, Reparations & Healing

interview with Joey Mogul

23 The Windy City Torture Underground

Linda Loew

Front Cover and above: Chicago demonstration exposing the horrific extent of the police torture machine.

Sarah Jane Rhee

Back Cover: Nakba Rally, Dearborn, Michigan, May 15, 2021

Barbara Barefield

Palestine — Then and Now

26 Palestinian Americans Take Lead

Malik Miah

27 Zionist Colonization & Its Victim

Moshé Machover

29 Conceiving Decolonization

David Finkel

31 Not a Cause for Palestinians Only

Merry Maisel

32 When Liberals Fail on Palestine

Donald B. Greenspon

Reviews

36 Immigration: What's at Stake?

Guy Miller

38 Exploring PTSD Politics

Norm Diamond

40 A Life of Struggle: Grace Carlson

Dianne Feeley

42 Living in the Movement

Martin Oppenheimer

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Burma: The War vs. the People

interview with Carlos Sardiña Galache

SUZI WEISSMAN conducted this interview with Carlos Sardiña Galache, the author of *The Burmese Labyrinth: A History of the Rohingya Tragedy* (Verso). He has recent articles in Jacobin and the Sidecar blog at NewLeftReview.org. His website is <http://carlos-sardina.pressfolios.com/>. This interview, recorded on April 24, is on Suzi Weissman's Jacobin Radio podcast (<https://blubrry.com/jacobin/76666276/jacobin-radio-w-suzi-weissman-us-china-green-rivalry-and-a-myanmar-report/>), and has been edited for Against the Current.

Suzi Weissman: Since the military coup that overthrew the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi on February First, a massive civil disobedience movement has emerged. The economy has been paralyzed through strikes in key sectors. The military has been in power most of the time since the country's independence from British colonial rule. What are the sources of this repressive form of rule?

Carlos Sardiña Galache: Burma never finished its nation building. Ever since independence in 1948, most of the ethnic minorities who live in the periphery of the country don't feel a sense of belonging to the country and have been trying to separate — or at least have autonomy — within the federal system. The Bamar, comprising the majority, tried to impose a centralized model of the state.

By 1962 the *Tatmadaw*, as the Burmese military is called, took power because they saw themselves as the only ones who could manage to keep Burma united. That inaugurated 50 years of military dictatorship, first under the guise of the so-called "Burmese way of socialism" government, which was not socialist, but that's another question. After a massive uprising in 1982, they adopted a capitalistic model on neoliberal lines.

In 2011, they initiated what they call a "disciplined, flourishing democracy," which meant a multiparty electoral democracy with parliament. The *Tatmadaw* kept control of over 25% of the parliament and three key ministries. This process culminated in 2015 with the victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy.

Although Aung San Suu Kyi spent 15 years under house arrest, we might call this process a convergence of elites: the pro-democracy elite led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and

the military elite.

For reasons that are not altogether clear, the military decided to put an end to that experiment with democracy on February 1 this year. The reasons they give is that there was voter fraud during the election last November, but nobody believes that. Something happened that made the military say, OK, we take the power back.

Now, they claim that the coup — which they don't call a coup, of course — is constitutional. But even according to their own constitution, it's not constitutional. However, the coup triggered a huge popular response against the military. And right now, you can describe the situation as a war between the military and virtually the whole of the Burmese population, ethnic minorities included.

Minorities in a "Failed Nation"

SW: The Financial Times headline asked, "Is Myanmar on the road to becoming a failed state?" You argue that it's never been a functioning state. What do you mean and why did that lead to the coup?

CSG: It's not so much a failed state as a failed nation. When I say that it's a failed state already, it's not in the sense of complete chaos. What I mean is that the military, the government, ever since independence hasn't managed to control the whole of the territory because several guerrillas from ethnic minorities have established their own power along the borders with China and Thailand.

Apart from the Bamar who live in the heartlands, nobody feels they are Burmese. If you go to the border areas and ask people, what are you? if they are Kachin, they will say, I am Kachin, not Burmese — whereas if you go to the Philippines, they won't tell you I'm Locano, they will tell you I'm Filipino, and secondly I'm Locano.

In Myanmar, that's not the case because the project of nation building was a Bamar project from the beginning.

That means the pro-democracy camp led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the military are more or less on the same page. There are no essential differences: both want a centralized state in which the ethnic minorities are going to have little autonomy.

The reasons for the coup must be found somewhere else. In my opinion, they are not

ideological. The difference is who should have the power, not what to do with it.

SW: Is there a difference between calling the country Myanmar and calling it Burma?

CSG: I much prefer Burma. The name was changed to Myanmar in 1989 by the former military junta. In Burmese it was called Myanmar, so basically it is like Germany telling people, you must call me Deutschland in English.

The junta argued that Myanmar was more inclusive of ethnic minorities, but both Burma and Myanmar refer historically to the Bamar kingdoms in the central areas of the country, not the minority area.

They said that Burma is a colonial name. But when the British arrived, they didn't change the name. It's not like the Philippines, which is a colonial name, the name of the Spanish King at the time. That's what I would say is a colonial name.

SW: How did the National League for Democracy develop during the years of military rule?

CSG: Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Aung San, the father of modern Burma. He's the one who fought against the British and then fought against the Japanese in World War Two. He negotiated the terms of independence with the British in 1948 but he was assassinated a few months before independence when Aung San Suu Kyi was two years and a half years old.

Aung San was from the majority and tried to get the ethnic minorities on board, but it was a very sketchy process. He signed an agreement with only four groups but it was not spelled out before he was killed.

In 1988, during the uprising against Ne Win [ed: Army Chief since 1949 who led two coups], Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been living in the United Kingdom and was married to Michael Aris, the famous scholar, was taking care of her mother in Rangoon. She was convinced to join the National League for Democracy and lead the pro-democracy movement.

The chairman of the National League for Democracy, U Tin Oo, who is now 95, was a commander in chief of the military during the Ne Win dictatorship. The leaders are Bamar and view ethnic minorities with certain distrust. All share this idea of a national project, which is dictated on Bamar terms

and excludes groups deemed as foreigners, including the Rohingya.

SW: *Could you explain the citizenship rule? I think that people in the West who were championing Aung San Suu Kyi and her road to democracy were shocked to see that she didn't lift a finger to help the Rohingya when they were being subjected to genocidal killing and forced to flee.*

CSG: According to the citizenship law passed by Ne Win in 1992, only the so-called national races are to have citizenship. This means that whoever had citizenship, according to their previous citizenship law, should keep the citizenship.

Many Rohingya were citizens. Then the regime went to all the Rohingya people and took away their documents, supposedly to give them new ones, then suddenly then said "No, you are not a citizen because you are not members of a national race." These are defined as those ethnic or racial groups who were in Burma before 1824, the date of the first Anglo-Burmese war and the beginning of colonialism.

The debate is over whether the Rohingya were already there or not. Of course they were already there, but others arrived from what is now Bengal during colonial times. They mixed with the ones who were already in Burma. Now it would be completely impossible to separate the descendants. The military said most, if not all, arrived during colonial times and therefore are not a national race.

SW: *Does this citizenship law mirror the Indian one? [This law introduced by the Hindu-nationalist Narendra Modi government will strip over two million Muslims of Indian citizenship — ed.]*

CSG: This nativist, racist conception of citizenship in Burma might be a model for India, which seems to be going in the same direction.

SW: *You have emphasized the ideological similarity between the generals and the Aung San Suu Kyi forces. Is there a class aspect that is being disguised? Help us understand the strikes in the context of political economy that is operating.*

CSG: During the first military dictatorship and during the Ne Win era there was a kind of pseudo-socialist system or a state capitalism. From 1988 to 2011, the State Law and Order Restoration Council and its puppet, Burma Socialist Program Party, instituted a purely capitalist system.

The *Tatmadaw* wanted to open the markets and create a neoliberal model but it never took off because of the sanctions imposed by Western countries. Instead, what happened was a kind of crony capitalism in which the military controls a big part of the economy through two conglomerates. There is a group of rich cronies who made their

fortunes through their contacts with the military and who have a big slice of the pie.

After 2011 and the transition to democracy this neoliberal model took off. At the same time a vibrant group of trade unions took advantage of the new political liberalization. Aung San Suu Kyi was not sympathetic to them because she wanted to assuage the military. Mass movements are unpredictable and not easy to control.

She was interested in deepening intra-elite rapprochement between the pro-democracy forces and the military. She admonished the cronies and encouraged them to be moral: "You have gotten your riches through your dealings with a dictatorship. But I believe that everybody has a second chance, and now you should use your riches to be good."

But she did not demand increasing taxes or control over their fortunes or redistributive policies whatsoever.

That's what leads me to say that the difference between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military is not ideological. Both are neoliberal conservatives. Perhaps the closest Western model to Aung San Suu Kyi is Margaret Thatcher.

She is moralistic but committed to the free market. Yet the military didn't want to share power with her. The ultimate question was: Is the military over the civilian government or is the civilian government over the military? That was the conflict. At some point the military decided: We are the power.

Massive Resistance

SW: *Were you surprised at the level of resistance? Do you think the military miscalculated when they took power, thinking they could just easily shove Aung San Suu Kyi out of the way and go back to what they used to have?*

CSG: There is a lot of debate about this but I think they really miscalculated and did not prepare the coup or create a crisis to make a military takeover acceptable to some significant sectors of the population.

But people really hate the military government. I have lived through the 2014 coup in Thailand when the military took over. Thai society was quite polarized. Large sectors of the population — conservatives, Royalist sectors — supported the coup.

Nothing of the sort is happening in Burma. Nobody supports the coup outside the military, because the military doesn't have ideological legitimacy in the eyes of the Burmese population.

Over the years I have talked with many Burmese people. Nobody really likes the military. Unfortunately, the only time they liked them was when the Rohingya people were attacked in 2017.

During the liberalization process, there was a modicum of political liberty that many people didn't know before. There was inter-

net access that people didn't have until 2012.

Importantly, there was the growth of trade unions. These unions are at the forefront of most of the protests. They have used their skills and networks to organize against the coup and the military.

It is no wonder that the repression in big cities like Yangon or Rangoon is especially bloody in the working-class areas. These are the people who are on the barricades; they are people who have nothing to lose.

Most of the middle class were happy having Aung San Suu Kyi in power and trusting her to deal with the military. Whatever Aung San Suu Kyi did wrong, they could blame on the military since she didn't have much room to maneuver. But once they took Aung San Suu Kyi from them, they fought back. They, and especially the younger generation, have had in the last ten years certain liberties and don't want to renounce them and go back to military dictatorship.

Then you have minorities who are the people who have suffered for decades, on a daily basis, the violence of the military.

One of the most encouraging things I am seeing is that in social media and talking with friends, a lot of people in the heartlands of the country, who until two or three months ago didn't want to think about the wars going on in the ethnic areas between the armed groups and the military, are now showing a newfound solidarity with ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya people.

So right now, it seems that the ethnic minorities and the Bamar are united — I would say even for the first time in history — against a common enemy, which happens to be the military.

SW: *What do you see ahead?*

CSG: I'm very reluctant to make predictions because I was one of many people who would have said no, there's not going to be a coup — and then there was. Virtually nobody saw it coming until two or three days before.

I think we are going to witness a very long, protracted and bloody conflict. The military is not going back. It is ruthless and relentless and the more they commit crimes, the more inflexible they are going to be.

The population, from what I am seeing, sees this as a struggle for life or death. So right now I think the only hope is for all the armed groups, and there are conversations, to unite in a common front and create a Federal Army that attacks the military at the same time.

If the military attacks the civil disobedience movement in the streets of Burma's heartlands and all or most of the armed groups in the peripheries are attacking them at the same time, the *Tatmadaw* is going to have trouble managing to defeat all these enemies. But I think this is going to be very long and very violent. ■

After U.S. and NATO Troops Leave: Then What for Afghanistan? By Valentine M. Moghadam

AFGHANISTAN HAS BEEN in a state of chaos since at least the Taliban resurgence in 2006 and the entry of the Islamic State group (Daesh) more recently. Assaults have been made not just on Afghan police units and U.S. military targets but also on prisons, schools, funerals and maternity wards across the country. In early 2017, the UN estimated that some 18,000 civilians had been killed since 2015 alone.

Taliban gunmen attacked the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul in January 2018. Daesh attacked offices and staff members of international NGOs. Women and men who have worked with those offices have been targeted with threatening “night letters” and some with assassination.

In early 2020, the UN estimated that some 100,000 civilians had been killed over the past decade, mostly by militants but also by Afghan and U.S. military strikes.¹ More assaults occurred after the Trump administration’s announcement of the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the Biden administration confirmed the withdrawal’s completion by September 11, 2021.

In May 2020, horrific attacks took place on a maternity ward in Kabul. On the morning of December 10, 2020, Malala Maiwand, the first woman TV presenter for Enikass News in Nangarhar province, was killed along with her driver, when gunmen opened fire on their car near Jalalabad. Two women judges working for the Afghan Supreme Court were shot dead in January 2021.

In early March, gunmen fatally shot three women who worked at Enikass News. Seven Shia Hazara workers were murdered at a plastics factor in Jalalabad.

In April, a suicide bombing took place in Afghanistan’s Logar province, killing over 20 civilians. A girls’ school was attacked in May in a majority Shia Hazara district of Kabul, killing at least 30.

Costs of Intervention

This litany of tragedies and crimes in Afghanistan is a reminder — especially to those of us who have followed events since

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Malala Maiwand, one of 10 journalists killed in 2020.

1978 — of the consequences of foreign military interventions. Afghanistan remains among the countries with the lowest human development rankings and the highest insecurity rankings.

Is it any wonder that thousands of young Afghan men, along with many young Afghan families, try to find refuge in Europe? Or that over the years, the present writer has prepared affidavits for *pro bono* lawyers representing Afghan professional women seeking asylum in the United States?

This is Afghanistan, 20 years after the Bush regime launched a military attack in the aftermath of 9/11 to punish the Taliban for harboring Osama bin Laden, and years after the Obama administration ordered troop enhancements and drone attacks.

But the roots of Afghanistan’s insecurity and instability go back further, to the fateful decision by the Carter Administration in 1978-80 and the Reagan administration in the 1980s to undermine a modernizing left-wing government supported by the Soviet Union and to promote a tribal-Islamist rebellion. In the waning days of the Cold War, U.S. politicians, pundits, and even human rights advocates considered communism a greater threat than political Islam — despite what they saw occurring in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The attack on the Intercontinental Hotel hit home to me because that is where I stayed in Kabul in January-February 1989, as the last Soviet troops were leaving Afghanistan. I had come to explore the government’s social policies, particularly its commitment to literacy, schooling for girls

and women’s equality.

Born in Iran, I was able to converse with Afghans — from hotel employees and shopkeepers to members of the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and employees of the various agencies and organizations I visited. I found most of them proud of the accomplishments to date despite the almost decade-long internationalized civil conflict. But they also were uncertain of the future, given that their main ally was withdrawing.

As it happens, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) and its military stayed in place for another three years, finally succumbing in April 1992 to the Mujahideen rebellion reinforced by Islamist fighters from other countries, arms delivered by the United States via Pakistan, and funds from Saudi Arabia.

Almost immediately, Mujahideen commanders began to fight each other, plunging the country into more chaos until the Taliban came rampaging in, finally removing the Mujahideen in 1996 and creating their own, nightmarish version of stability. Will the same happen after the last of the U.S. and NATO forces leave in September?

Remembering Revolutionary Afghanistan

In 1978-79 I was a student, first in Canada and then in the United States, determined to return to Iran after what we leftists hoped would be a democratic socialist Iran. I was aware of the revolution in neighboring Afghanistan but was fully focused on Iran’s revolution.

Iran’s outcome went from bad to worse — with summary executions of Pahlavi-era officials, executions of the first group of leftists in August 1979, the U.S. embassy hostage incident, the imposition of compulsory *hejab*, the war with Iraq in the 1980s, the arrests and killings of numerous dissidents, and the self-exile of other dissidents. I turned my attention to events and developments in Afghanistan.

Here was the leftwing alternative that we had sought in Iran, even though by the mid-1980s it was clear that the Afghan experi-

ment was under siege. I began to read what I could, including Afghan government and Soviet publications, academic studies and press accounts. U.S. press accounts and academic and “human rights” reports alike evinced the kind of knee-jerk anti-communism that led logically to sympathy for Islamist rebels. The dispatch of young Afghans to school and university in the Soviet Union was denigrated as “Sovietization.”²

As I was about to embark on a post-doctoral fellowship for which I would be comparing gender policies in Iran and Afghanistan, I decided to pay a visit to the Afghan mission to the UN in New York to request contacts in Kabul. I also spoke with Inge Kaul, then of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), who had spent two years in Kabul. She offered a positive assessment of what the Afghan government under president Babrak Karmal had been trying to accomplish.

What the Afghan government tried to institute in the years after it came to power in April 1978 is worth recalling: land reform and redistribution, free and compulsory schooling, rights for women, and equality for all ethnic groups (including the oppressed Shia Hazara).³ It should be noted that the DRA’s program included elements that had already been achieved in Iran, and much earlier, albeit under a state system that had been strong and centralized for much longer.

In 1978, the DRA had the advantage of a loyal military and a ruling party committed to the country’s modernization. The disadvantage lay in intra-party rivalries and opposition from Maoist groups and rural landlords, which weakened the government’s efforts.⁴ The hostility of the United States and Pakistan deepened the internal crisis and elements within the ruling party several times appealed to the Soviet Union for assistance, which finally came in December 1979.*

Denouncing the “Soviet invasion,” the Carter administration made its covert destabilization program more overt. The Reagan administration intensified it further, prolonging the Soviet army’s presence and the suffering of the Afghan people.⁵

Nonetheless, when I visited Kabul in early 1989, I met with and interviewed committed party members and government workers, saw placards across the city that showcased the literacy program or called for peace and reconciliation, toured a factory, shopped at the bazaar, observed a meeting at the women’s organization, attended a press conference by president Najibullah (the DRA’s third and last president), and visited a women’s literacy and training center.

Upon my return to the United States, I tried to publish an article about my visit to Afghanistan but was preempted by the Salman Rushdie affair; Ayatollah Khomeini’s appalling *fatwa* [condemning Rushdie to death for purported “apostasy” — ed.] finished off my efforts to present a different picture of Afghanistan in the mainstream media. My academic writings, however, continued.⁶

It is worth imagining what Afghanistan could have been today, had the Carter/Brzezinski administration refrained from efforts to destabilize the Afghan government — which had come to power in a military coup in April 1978 — and the Reagan administration had not created a “Vietnam quagmire” for the Soviet Union, which had sent troops to bolster the Afghan military after appeals from the government.⁷

The DRA government very likely could have defeated the tribal-Islamist uprising and continued to carry out its social reform program, especially after the DRA’s more moderate “second stage” (*marhaleh dovom*) under Babrak Karmal, the DRA’s second president. It would have strengthened state institutions, increased literacy, schooling and healthcare, built roads and a railway system, and promoted business, agriculture and industrial development.

Of course, the global shift to a neoliberal economic model would have weakened such initiatives, as it did in many developing countries but at least some semblance of good governance and infrastructural development would have prevailed, and the country would not have been plagued by Taliban attacks.

What Comes Next?

That the U.S. “investment” in Afghanistan has been an utter failure cannot be denied. The recent Congressional Afghanistan Study Group Report describes the financial and human costs, although it calls for an extension of the withdrawal date. The UN assistance mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, published a study, “Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2021 First Quarter Report,” documenting 1,783 civilian casualties (573 killed and 1,210 injured).

UNAMA adds: “Of particular concern is the 37% increase in the number of women killed and injured, and a 23% increase in child casualties compared with the first quarter of 2020.” The UN mission tweeted on April 28: “UN steadfast in support of inclusive peace process, with meaningful participation of women & youth for a lasting peace.” Given the continued violence, how can this come about?

The Congressional Study Group’s recommendation of a “regional diplomatic strategy

implemented over the longer term” is sound, as is UNAMA’s emphasis on the participation of women and youth. For that to occur, the United States would need to become an honest broker; and refrain from undermining a regional strategy that would of necessity include Iran, Russia, China, India and Pakistan (and possibly the Central Asian states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan).

A broad-based caretaker government may need to be in place to complement a regional peacekeeping force. The United States would have to ensure that its ally Pakistan would no longer provide support for anti-government extremists. Further, the following steps are needed:

1) The presence of Afghan women’s rights groups in peace talks and involvement of the international feminist peace movement. This will ensure the inclusion of programs and policies for the physical security and education of women and girls in all deliberations and outcome documents.

2) A dedicated fund for Afghanistan’s reconstruction and social development, to be administered by the appropriate UN agency.

3) A broader mandate for UNAMA to extend beyond September 2021 so that it can continue its peacebuilding, humanitarian and governance activities.⁸

States that have been most involved in Afghanistan’s destabilization and decades of military conflicts have the responsibility to help foster and fund peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and development — with the rights and participation of women and girls at the center of all programs, projects and policies. ■

Notes

1. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/un-100000-civilians-casualties-in-afghanistan-in-10-years>, accessed 9 May 2021.
2. A prime example of such knee-jerk anti-communism is Jeri Laber, “Afghanistan’s Other War,” *The New York Review*, Dec. 18, 1986. For an excellent review of one-sided and misleading press reporting, see Erwin Knoll, “Journalistic Jihad: Holes in the coverage of a holy war,” *The Progressive* (May 1990): 17–22.
3. See Fred Halliday, “Revolution in Afghanistan,” *New Left Review* 112 (Nov.–Dec. 1978).
4. See Fred Halliday, “War in Afghanistan,” *New Left Review* 119 (Jan.–Feb. 1980).
5. A re-enactment of this scenario occurred in Syria after the 2011 protests.
6. I discuss the social reform program in *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993, first ed., ch. 7), and “Revolution, Religion, and Gender Politics: Iran and Afghanistan Compared,” *Journal of Women’s History* (vol. 10, no. 4, Winter 1999): 172–195. For my critique of anti-communism and cultural relativism as applied to Afghanistan in the 1980s, see “Globalizing the Local: Transnational Feminism and Afghan Women’s Rights,” *Peuples & Monde* (2003): <https://peuplesmonde.net/2003/09/25/globalizing-the-local-transnational-feminism-and-afghan-womens-rights/>.
7. On U.S. and Soviet calculations, see David Gibbs, “Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan: A Declassified History,” *Critical Asian Studies*, 38:2 (2006): 239–263, <https://dgbibbs.faculty.arizona.edu/sites/dgbibbs.faculty.arizona.edu/files/Afghan-coldwar.pdf>.
8. See also Code Pink and Massachusetts Peace Action statements: https://www.codepink.org/the_us_and_afghanistan_toward_troop_withdrawal_peace_and_womens_interests; <http://masspeaceaction.org/withdrawing-troops-from-afghanistan/>.

*A brief timeline: The Soviet military intervention beginning December 24, 1979 followed a period of intensifying U.S. destabilization efforts, and factional struggle between and within the Khalq and Parcham factions of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan. The September 1979 assassination of PDPA general secretary Nur Mohammad Taraki was instigated by Hafizullah Amin, who in turn was killed and replaced by Babrak Karmal of the Parcham faction when Soviet troops entered. In the ensuing decade the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia financed Islamist fundamentalist fighters against the regime, notably including Osama bin Laden, with all the tragic consequences for Afghanistan, the United States and the world — ed.

The Detroit Left And Social Unionism in the 1930s

By Steve Babson

FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS pondering an uncertain future in the 2020s, there's good reason to look back to the 1930s, a decade that began with the catastrophic collapse of organized labor and ended with the dramatic rise of a new movement. What can we learn from that stunning turnaround, heralded by the wave of sitdown strikes that swept across the nation in 1936-1937?

Nowhere was that social transformation more dramatic and far reaching than in Detroit, a city known in the 1920s as an exemplar of the anti-union, "Open-Shop" town.

That changed in a single sweep of militant action beginning in November, 1936 and lasting through the spring of the following year, a rolling general strike that made Detroit the nation's leading union town. An estimated 100,000 workers walked off the job in those few months and 35,000 more barricaded themselves inside 130 workplaces, including auto factories, parts plants, department stores, restaurants, hotels, laundries, meat-packing plants, and cigar factories.

[For a brief list of readings on the left and labor upsurge, see page 37. — ed.]

Three Myths

History doesn't repeat itself, but it sometimes rhymes, as the saying goes. Any potential for a resurgence of workers' power will certainly look different today, after decades of globalization, deindustrialization, and automation. But if there were underlying dynamics in the 1930s that rhyme with today, they are best understood if we first rule out the myths that often accompany a retelling of "labor's giant step."

The first myth is that widespread suffering during the Great Depression made the uprising of 1936-1937 inevitable, a view reinforced by the casual certainty of hindsight. In the first years of the depression decade, this was not how most people saw things.

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When the court ordered 1937 sitdowners at Chrysler's Dodge Main plant in Hamtramck to evacuate, they responded with determination to remain.

A. Hughes, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Even for many pro-labor observers, the "inevitable" prospect was the continued disintegration of the American Federation of Labor. The AFL, hobbled by its near-exclusive focus on organizing skilled, native-born, white men, had no will or capacity for organizing mass-production industries where less-skilled workers predominated and where African Americans and women had become more numerous.

Material conditions and widespread suffering certainly defined the range of possible outcomes in the 1930s, but it was the human agency of leftwing activists that made some of these possibilities more likely than others.

Another myth focuses on the role of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal administration.

Conservatives and liberals alike point to FDR's outsize role, the former to condemn him for meddling in matters best left to CEOs, the latter to celebrate him as a champion of the working class.

Both misrepresent the president's actual role. He was, in fact, a reluctant meddler and

an unreliable champion, favoring a toothless mediation of industrial disputes in 1934 and at first opposing passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935.

To his credit, he finally signed on to the NLRA's partial protection of union organizing when it appeared to be the only alternative to the widening bloodshed of 1932-1935 — a time when employers refused to bargain and police and National Guardsmen gunned down striking workers.

Even after FDR signed the legislation, employers simply refused to obey the law and waited for the courts to overturn it.

Yet another myth is that workers spontaneously rose in opposition to these continued abuses, and did so "all in one mass," as the *United Auto Worker* claimed in 1937. Popular histories abound with such imagery of unified and spontaneous militancy, much of it originating with participants and reported subsequently by journalists and some historians.

But that's not how it happened with the rising of 1936, which began with a militant

minority taking the first well-planned steps. With their success, an anxious and hesitant majority was then inspired to join the movement.

Two Questions

To plumb this history, we can begin with two questions. First, why were workers in so many different workplaces inspired to join the rolling general strike of 1936-1937, in contrast to the usual one-workplace-at-a-time organizing we commonly see today? Second, why did the sitdowns begin in the fall of 1936 and not, say, 1933 when conditions were actually worse?

To answer the why-all-at-once question, it's important to remember that the economic and social crisis of the Great Depression was far more severe in Detroit than in most cities and towns. While the national unemployment rate peaked at an estimated 25% in 1932-1933, in Detroit the reserve army of the unemployed swelled to more than 50% of the working population.

The city was suffering the acute downside of its dependence on auto production: people in crisis save money for food and clothing, not a new car. As auto production plunged to just 25% of capacity, those lucky enough to find a job were taking pay cuts of up to 50%.

They also knew their days were numbered: auto work was still largely seasonal in these years, peaking in the spring and summer and tumbling dramatically in the fall and early winter, with no assurance you'd be called back to work unless you bribed the foreman.

The specter of joblessness was especially terrifying at a time when there was no social safety net. Unemployment benefits and Social Security weren't established until 1935, and benefits were minimal even then.

On a daily basis, this industrial crisis was experienced primarily as a community crisis. Families struggling to survive on donated food baskets went hungry when charitable and mutual aid societies collapsed.

As thousands fell behind on rent and house payments, they faced eviction, homelessness and exposure. In the winter of 1932-1933, there was no disputing that some people in Detroit were dying of starvation and malnutrition. The only debate was how many.

In this industrial and community setting, it was members of leftwing parties who provided the only credible defense for working-class families. The AFL's "business unionism" had focused primarily — and unsuccessfully — on delivering negotiated benefits to skilled workers. Progressives, in contrast, simultaneously took action in the workplace and the streets to define a class-based "social unionism" that mobilized workers both on and off the job.

On the job, it was the Auto Workers Union (AWU) that spearheaded this mobilization. A forerunner of the UAW, the AWU had been organizing since 1918 as an independent union led by socialists and communists. It now took the lead in 1933 when Hudson Motors, Murray Body, and Briggs Manufacturing slashed wages yet again, provoking a strike of 15,000 skilled and less-skilled workers.

As the police repeatedly attacked the picket lines at Briggs, the company managed to house hundreds of strikebreakers inside the plant and recommence production — a fact many activists later recalled when their chance came in 1936. The AWU failed to win bargaining rights, but this broad-based uprising did persuade the companies to rescind their recent wage cuts.

The Role of Activists

In the community, socialists led the resistance to eviction and hunger. Mayor Frank Murphy, a liberal supporter of FDR, did open several closed factories as shelters and food pantries for the unemployed, but these provided only limited relief for those in the immediate neighborhood.

For many Detroiters, the only reliable place to turn for support were the Unemployed Councils organized across the city by AWU activists and the Communist Party.

As the number of reported evictions peaked in Detroit at 150 a day in the summer of 1931, the Councils' network of block captains and runners could often mobilize a crowd as soon as the sheriff entered the neighborhood.

Even when they could not stop the eviction, they would afterwards return the family and their furniture to the home. In many cases, they would reportedly bypass the disconnected gas and electric services.

Hungry families could also find free food at the soup kitchens and pantries organized by the 15 Unemployed Councils in the city, distributing food solicited from local merchants and farmers at Eastern Market.

The first public demands for unemployment insurance were raised by the Unemployed Councils in cities across the country, their rallies marked by signs highlighting the class disparities evident in the crisis: "Kill One, Go to Jail. Starve Thousands, Go to Florida," as one Detroit sign read.

The Detroit-area Unemployed Councils also led the famous march on Henry Ford's Rouge factory in 1932, after the Ford patriarch had disparaged thousands of laid off Ford workers as lazy no-accounts.

This "Hunger March" became an iconic moment in Detroit's labor history when Ford guards and Dearborn police opened fire on the 4,000 unarmed marchers, killing five and wounding 50. Five days later, a funeral procession with upwards of 50,000

marchers paraded down Woodward Avenue.

Besides serving as a rallying point for Detroit's hard-pressed workers, the Unemployed Councils were also incubating the broad-based union movement that would follow. Common to many biographies of future union activists in 1936-1937 was their baptism of fire in the Unemployed Councils, where they learned the basics of community mobilization and direct action.

When many of these activists found work in the reviving economy of 1934-1936, they also brought with them the experience of working in a multi-racial movement.

This alone would have been hard to imagine in the previous decade when the avowed candidate of the Ku Klux Klan, Chester Bowles, won majority support in the 1924 mayoral election — although denied office when thousands of his write-in votes were disallowed for misspellings.

At a time when most employers still refused to hire African Americans into anything but the worst jobs and when most AFL craft unions were whites-only, the Unemployed Councils represented something unprecedented. This was especially true on the city's East Side, where Italian, Jewish and East European families still had Black neighbors.

African Americans became Council leaders in several cases, and one, Frank Sykes (a Communist Party member) became citywide Chairman.

The community-based mobilization of the early 1930s also brought women into a new prominence, their augmented role highlighted by the emergence of the Women's Action Committee Against the High Cost of Living. Led by Mary Zuk, a former autoworker in Hamtramck, the Action Committee launched a boycott in 1935 to protest the rising cost of meat in an economy where wages had fallen so dramatically.

Marked by parades and mass picketing of markets, the boycott spread across metro Detroit and from there to Chicago and other midwestern cities. This was not a narrowly focused consumer movement: the Action Committee was initially headquartered at the International Workers Order, a left-wing mutual-aid society, and the demand for a 20% reduction in meat prices was supported by union activists.

Phil Raymond, the AWU leader of the 1933 strikes, was a featured speaker at a rally of 5,000 boycotters in 1935. When the Action Committee sent a delegation to Washington, Irene Thomson, an African American, was among the five women who met with federal officials. Less than two years later, Zuk and other leaders of the Action Committee were key supporters of the sitdown strikes by 2,000 women cigar workers in Detroit's major cigar plants.

In all these ways, the community mobilization of Detroit's neighborhoods prefigured

the emergence in 1935 of a broad-based and inclusive movement, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Having found common cause in the community, many workers were better equipped to find it in the workplace, despite the prevailing gender, racial and occupational divisions of labor.

"Solidarity" was not an abstraction for veterans of the Unemployed Councils and the meat boycott. For them it was a lived experience. When the UAW-CIO announced its presence in Detroit as a broad coalition of leftwing and centrist workers, it did so in the community as well with neighborhood clinics to screen for tuberculosis and a Renters and Consumers League to mobilize tenants and shoppers.

This community base was the link that tied together many otherwise separate workplaces and infused them with a common purpose based on social class.

UAW organizers would address the specific needs of their varied constituencies through the Polish Trade Union Committee, the Italian Organizing Committee, and the Negro Organizing Committee. But this diverse constituency was linked in the social unionism of the CIO, primed and ready for an unprecedented counterattack on Detroit's Open-Shop employers.

Why 1936-1937?

The first Detroit sitdown occurred at Midland Steel, a supplier of auto frames for Chrysler and Ford. It's no coincidence that this strike began in November of 1936, just weeks after Franklin Roosevelt had won reelection in an unprecedented landslide.

The election was, in effect, a referendum on the New Deal and the National Labor Relations Act, with FDR simultaneously declaring his support for union organization while also denouncing the men of wealth who opposed him. Frank Murphy, running for Governor, also aligned himself with labor, pledging he would never send the National Guard to break a strike.

Few on the left had any illusions that these promises could substitute for direct action. But they also recognized that something exceptional was happening: the leading candidates for office had not only pledged their support for a new movement of workers, but had promised they would not send troops to break their strikes. Both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party still ran their own candidates for high office in 1936, but neither party put any significant effort into these nominal campaigns.

The primary goal was to defeat the conservative opponents of the New Deal and validate the labor rights protected by the NLRA. At the same time, few on the left or in the CIO wanted to subordinate their campaign to the formal control of the Democratic Party. Labor and the left formed a Labor's Non-Partisan League to conduct

an independent campaign in support of FDR and Murphy.

The link that many labor activists saw between political action and direct action was made concrete within days of the election. "We defeated the bosses at the polls," said one UAW flyer. "Now we can win our rights in the workplace."

This time it would be the strikers who barricaded themselves inside the factories, unlike 1933, when strikebreakers had occupied the safer ground inside the plants.

The first sitdown at Midland Steel was led by Wyndham Mortimer and "Big John" Anderson, both aligned with the Communist Party. They saw this carefully planned seizure of the factory as part of a deliberate effort to escalate the struggle for labor rights and win recognition for the UAW.

Among those elected to the strike committee was Oscar Oden, a Black production worker. The nearby Slovak Hall meanwhile served as a strike kitchen. Weeks later a second Detroit sitdown began at Kelsey Hayes Wheel, led by Walter and Victor Reuther, both aligned with the Socialist Party.

Here, the sitdown included women production workers as well as men, with the nearby Polish Falcons hall serving as headquarters and strike kitchen. Both sitdowns relied on this community base and both won union recognition for the UAW.

UAW organizers in Michigan waited until December 30, two days before Governor Murphy's inauguration, to launch their sitdowns at the Fisher Body plants in Flint and the Cadillac plant in Detroit. Here again, most of the organizers and lead activists were socialists and communists. Governor Murphy, honoring his pledge, only sent the National Guard to Flint after city police had attacked the sitdowners.

In Flint, as in the preceding sitdowns in Detroit, the occupiers were acting on behalf of a clear majority who favored unionization, but the number of actual sitdowners was a small fraction of the workforce. This was the militant minority, prepared to risk their jobs and their lives to win union recognition.

When GM finally agreed to recognize the UAW on February 11, 1937, the floodgates opened in Detroit and elsewhere as thousands more saw the power of the movement's new tactics and the dramatic change in the government's response.

That change was manifested not only at the state and federal level, but also at the local level, especially in the city of Hamtramck, home to the giant Dodge Main plant. Here, independent action by labor and the left took the form of the People's League, led by Mary Zuk, the veteran organizer of the meat boycott.

Zuk won election in 1936 to the Hamtramck city council, where she championed ordinances to support union organizing and

prohibit racial discrimination in the distribution of welfare benefits. When 6,000 workers launched a well-planned occupation of Dodge Main in March of 1937, Hamtramck's police were on call to help UAW organizers patrol the surrounding streets.

For conservatives, this all had the appearance of social revolution, particularly given the prominent leadership role of communists and socialists. The sitdowns did mark a watershed in popular thinking about labor rights and mass mobilization, but the leftwing leaders of this movement tailored their demands to the progressive, but less radical, aspirations of the movement's base.

The seizure of factories, hotels and department stores was more akin to a citizens' arrest than a revolutionary challenge to private property. The companies had refused to abide by the NLRA, had continued to promote company unions, and had illegally fired union supporters. In response, the sitdowners sent a simple message: obey the law and recognize our union, then you'll get your property back.

This hardly ended the struggle. Internal union battles, Red scares, racial conflict, and tectonic shifts in government policy would slow and finally compromise the consolidation of a militant and inclusive movement.

But the social unionism that had broadened the base of Detroit's labor movement in the 1930s continued to sustain that link between the workplace and the community into the next decade.

By allying with progressive Black ministers like Reverend Charles Hill, the UAW was able to defeat Chrysler's attempt to recruit Black strikebreakers in 1939. In the war years that followed, the UAW, in turn, supported the desegregation of production jobs and fought the "hate strikes" of white workers who opposed this breach of the color line.

Thereafter, the struggle for Black civil rights was germinating inside Detroit's factories, led by the integrated union committees that occupied segregated restaurants around the plants, forcing them to serve Blacks and whites alike.

Social unionism in these years also took the form of prolonged campaigns for universal healthcare and affordable housing. It even took the form of a demand during the 1945 GM strike that wage increases be paid for out of profits rather than price increases forced upon the public.

Today, union organizing faces many new challenges in an economy driven by subcontracting, service jobs, and gig work. Yet many of the same social issues are still with us — the struggle for human rights, universal healthcare, affordable housing, and an end to profiteering.

All these issues still rhyme. ■

State of the City, Part 2: Detroit: Comeback & Austerity

By Peter Blackmer

WELCOME TO BELOVED Detroit.” The words rang out across Woodward Avenue, echoing off the brick buildings behind the hundreds of marchers who filled the street where the Algiers Motel once stood.

Monica Lewis-Patrick, co-founder of We the People of Detroit, challenged the crowd to see the connections between the murder of George Floyd, the 1967 executions at the Algiers, and the violence of austerity imposed under emergency management that has shaped Detroit’s political landscape over the last decade.

Lewis-Patrick connected the dots: the defunding of public schools, theft of pensions, illegal foreclosures, and mass water shutoffs are interwoven in the systemic racism the young activists were confronting.

It was June 8, 2020, the eleventh day of Detroit’s mass marches following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. In Detroit they had been marked by police riots against protests and age-old claims of “outside agitators” by city officials.

Meanwhile marchers successfully challenged the curfew imposed to suppress the protests. That evening Nakia Wallace and Tristan Taylor, co-founders of the newly-formed Detroit Will Breathe, led protestors on a four-mile march from police headquarters downtown to the North End.

The march led to a small park where, 53 years before, three Black teenagers were executed by police inside the Algiers Motel during the Detroit Rebellion. There, dozens of Movement elders met with a new generation of freedom fighters to pass the torch and ground the emergent movement in the city’s tradition of radical struggle.

This article draws from oral histories with community organizers to offer some observations on how Detroiters have carried forth the city’s Black Radical Tradition to organize against austerity politics and reclaim the city during the era of emergency management and corporate capture.

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<https://jimwestphoto.com/>

Shock Doctrine & Fabricated Crisis

The period of emergency management in Detroit was an extension of a new form of colonialism, carried out around the world by the U.S. government and multinational corporations for the past 50 years.

Dubbed “the shock doctrine” by journalist Naomi Klein, the strategy uses authoritarian regimes and neoliberal economic advisors to seize assets, markets, and governments during periods of social crisis.

Whether a *coup d’état*, hurricane, act of war or economic collapse, Klein explains, a moment of crisis puts society into a “state of collective shock” that is then exploited for conquest.¹ While people struggle to survive, democracy is suspended and austerity measures imposed as a form of “shock therapy” to shrink the government, dislocate the population, attack organized labor and suppress resistance.

In Detroit, Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr used age-old racist narratives to justify the 2013 takeover and privatization of public assets. By blaming “dumb, lazy, happy, and rich” Detroiters for the economic crisis, the self-described “benevolent dictator” depicted a majority-Black city that was incapable of self-governance, in massive debt through its own faults, and in need of saving.

In reality, declining revenue sources were

a greater factor than municipal debt. Alongside the devastating impacts of the Great Recession, a major cause of this revenue drought was a massive reduction in state revenue sharing.²

In a 2014 report, the Michigan Municipal League found that in the decade leading up to emergency management, state lawmakers withheld \$732 million in funds from Detroit.

These declines were compounded by an Executive Order signed by Governor Rick Snyder (R) that cut revenue sharing by 33% percent in 2011 — the same year a new law went into effect that greatly expanded the powers of emergency managers.³

As veteran organizer Russ Bellant explained, “If you withhold the money, you help foster the conditions that are a pretext for the takeover.”

Resisting the Shock in Highland Park

The period of emergency management in Highland Park was a harbinger for what followed in Detroit a decade later. In 2001 Governor Jennifer Granholm (D) installed an emergency manager over the small city surrounded by Detroit.

After stripping elected officials of their powers, the emergency manager quickly raised water rates, enforced shutoffs and tied water bills to property taxes, resulting in foreclosures. She privatized the recreation center, sold off public lands, closed the city’s only public library, turned their schools over to charter operators and laid-off most city employees.⁴

These moves to privatize and dismantle public infrastructure, Highland Park organizers General Baker and Marian Kramer explained, turned the city into a “corporate wasteland.” Their determination to stop this theft was influenced by the decades of organizing experience that Baker, Kramer and Maureen Taylor brought to the situation.

Kramer first became active with CORE in the South. After moving to Detroit in the 1960s, she organized tenants and welfare recipients with the West Central Organization and Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO).

General Baker’s theory and praxis was forged during the Black Power and New Communist movements, blending anticolonialism, Marxism, and Black self-determina-

tion into a cohesive analysis and organizing strategy. Taylor cut her teeth with Baker and Kramer in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers before emerging as a dynamic welfare rights organizer.

All three understood the necessity of organizing poor and working-class people around their material needs. With a focus on the water crisis and its connection to housing dispossession, they formed the Highland Park Human Rights Coalition (HPHRC).

This period of struggle is detailed in Liz Miller's documentary "The Water Front," a vital resource on organizing against emergency management and austerity politics (waterfrontmovie.com).

"The lesson of Highland Park said we have to alert the frog that if the water is getting warmer, you might need to get out of the pot and do something," Taylor explained. "The lessons of Highland Park are critical to the survival of working-class people."

Despite HPHRC's successes in ousting the first emergency manager and blocking the privatization of the water department, the struggle continued. By 2004, the creation of a water affordability program became a unifying demand in the struggle against shut-offs, displacement, and economic injustice in Highland Park and Detroit.

Three years after a water affordability plan was first introduced and approved (but not implemented) by the Detroit City Council in 2005, the People's Water Board Coalition (PWVB) was formed to expand the fight for safe, affordable water held in the public trust. HPHRC and MWRO organizer Sylvia Orduño has played a vital role in this ongoing struggle.

The Takeover of Detroit

With little relief coming from state and federal governments, however, cities with large populations of Black residents were disproportionately placed under emergency management.

Between 2008-2013, 51% of Michigan's Black population and 16.6% of its Latino population were under emergency management at some point, compared to only 2.4% of the state's white population.⁵ Many of these cities already had their public schools taken over by the state as well.

Since 1999 various governors and state legislatures, whether Democrat or Republican, have acted to circumvent Detroit's elected officials, or — when they could — win them to accepting the state takeover of the public schools and the city itself.

Explained as helping city residents, these maneuvers have usurped their funding and resources.

The state took over the Detroit Public Schools on two separate occasions in 1999 and 2009. This resulted in the closure of 195 of the district's 288 schools (including all but



Black Lives Matter at Fight for \$15 demonstration.

three of the city's African-centered schools) and enrollment dropping from 168,000 to 47,000. (Many now attend charters or nearby suburban public schools.) The DPS operating budget went from a \$93 million surplus to a deficit of \$3.5 billion.⁶

The commonly accepted explanation among activists for the first takeover is that the state wanted control of the \$1.5 billion bond Detroit voters had passed five years earlier.

The first takeover was met with swift resistance from Keep the Vote/No Takeover, a coalition including parents, educators, lawyers, and civil rights leaders formed to fight for an elected school board and local control of DPS.

With leadership from parent activists and organizers like Helen Moore, City Councilmember JoAnn Watson and Russ Bellant, Keep the Vote drew from Detroit's rich history of struggle for community control of schools that was a hallmark of the Black Power Movement.

The second takeover in 2009 spurred the formation of We the People of Detroit by Phyllis "Chris" Griffith, Aurora Harris, Monica Lewis-Patrick, Cecily McClellan and Debra Taylor, which would become a leading force in the fight against emergency management and for the right to water.

The state takeovers also brought student-activists into the fold through walkouts and demonstrations against school closures and funding cuts. Future Detroit Will Breathe co-founders Tristan Taylor and Nakia Wallace emerged as young organizers during this period through their involvement with By Any Means Necessary (BAMN).

At the same time, the wave of foreclosures, unemployment, and loss of revenues caused by the Great Recession sent Detroit reeling. Between 2005-2014, 36% of all properties in the city went into foreclosure, with Black working-class communities hit the hardest.

The Moratorium Now! Coalition formed

to fight subprime mortgage foreclosures through the courts and direct action. Inspired by the anti-eviction work of Black communists during the Great Depression, they proposed a moratorium on evictions as a transitional demand toward a system that values people over profit. Their work also spurred the emergence of Occupy Detroit's Eviction Defense Committee (now Detroit Eviction Defense) and played a vital role in the legal challenge to emergency management, bankruptcy, and corresponding attacks on public employee pensioners in the following years.

By 2011 the Republican-controlled State Legislature passed Public Act 4, a new law that expanded the powers of state-appointed emergency managers.

The new law gave them autocratic power over collective bargaining agreements, public assets, municipal budgets, and the ability to initiate bankruptcy proceedings.

Emergency management "was very race-based and used to target African American communities," Flint labor organizer Claire McClinton explained. "It was assets, poverty, and minority. And those were the three dimensions of the drive toward emergency manager takeover."

The law met with resistance across the state. While the Sugar Law Center in Detroit led a legal challenge, a big tent of organizers — including many from the AFSCME and the UAW — got to work on a state-wide referendum campaign to repeal the law. Coordinated by Michigan Forward and Stand Up for Democracy, the campaign connected working-class communities across the state.

Despite a spurious lawsuit filed by a conservative group to reject the petition signed by over 225,000 on a technicality, the referendum went to the polls and voters successfully repealed PA 4 in 2012.

Though an enormous feat, the victory was short-lived. In a lame-duck session, the State Legislature passed PA 436, a comparable law, but veto-proof.

While the referendum campaign was underway, Detroit was also coerced into a consent agreement, a concession to state oversight of the city's finances. The City Council approved the agreement in April 2012 over the protests of Free Detroit-No Consent, a coalition that had emerged to resist PA 4.

Within months, Governor Snyder declared a financial emergency and appointed corporate lawyer Kevyn Orr as emergency manager. "I already saw the writing on the wall," JoAnn Watson recalled. "I knew a consent agreement was a prelude to a bankruptcy." With Orr at the helm, Detroit was ushered into bankruptcy and the shock doctrine kicked into full gear.

With democracy suspended, Orr acceler-

ated water shutoffs as a bill-collecting measure to cut debt, increase revenues, and prepare the water department for privatization. He also attempted to cut retiree pensions and benefits by as much as 90% (the average pension for a city worker was only \$19k), attacked collective bargaining agreements, and sold off city lands and services.

To manage the symptoms of austerity, suppress protest, and prime the city for redevelopment, Orr appointed James Craig as DPD Chief to implement broken windows policing.⁷

Tapping into organizational networks built over the past decade or more, a coalition of 35 organizations called Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management (D-REM) was formed to fight the hostile takeover. It counted an array of veteran organizers including Linda Campbell, Sarah Coffey, Gloria House (Aneb Kgositsile), Shea Howell, Tom Stephens and Bill Wylie-Kellermann among its ranks. Many were veterans of the Civil Rights, anti-war, labor, and environmental justice movements. More recently, the Occupy movement and decades-long struggle to shut down the city's trash incinerator proved important training grounds for many D-REM organizers.

Like HPHRC in Highland Park, D-REM organized direct action protests in city streets and at City Council meetings, held teach-ins and forums, legal challenges, public tribunals, public art projects, and media campaigns to mobilize resistance at every step.

"What we were always trying to do was organize a local communications, education, political mobilization node," Stephens explained, "part of a larger movement to try to take that on as best we could."

Amidst the chaos of emergency management, mass water shutoffs proved an effective issue for organizers to coalesce around. The struggle was energized by Charity Hicks, who urged Detroiters to "Wage Love" after her arrest for protesting shutoffs that spring.

In July 2014, organizers forced recently-elected Mayor Mike Duggan to declare a moratorium on water shutoffs. Though short-lived, it demonstrated the collective impact of mass marches, nonviolent civil disobedience, lawsuits, appeals to the United Nations, and media campaigns that brought international condemnation upon the city.

Likewise, retired city workers managed to eke out some concessions for their pensions and benefits during the bankruptcy proceedings. Facing political and media pressure to accept steep cuts with only meager support from unions, retirees like David Sole, Cecily McClellan, and William Davis fought through the courts and direct action protests to protect their fixed incomes. Though retirees were hit with pension and insurance cuts, end of cost-of-living adjustments, and annuity clawbacks, Orr was forced to back

off his plan to cut pensions by 90%.⁸

Alternative Visions

In addition to the well-documented struggle against water shutoffs, the development of alternative plans for resolving the financial crisis and restoring democracy were important modes of resistance.

As Orr was preparing to declare bankruptcy, Linda Campbell was organizing the first Detroit People's Platform Convention that June. Reminiscent of the political conventions of the Black Power era, 200 residents and activists gathered in workshops and caucuses.

"We identified a five-point platform of issues that we would organize and fight for in terms of holding onto our own grassroots community-based democracy and fighting for equality alike for Detroiters," Campbell recalled. The platform issues, included food justice, land justice, transportation justice, good government and good jobs.

Amidst the bankruptcy proceedings, D-REM also put forth an alternative to Orr's Plan of Adjustment, called "The People's Plan for Restructuring Toward a Sustainable Detroit."⁹ "What emerged in the city are actual policies that would make life better for everyone," Howell later explained. "That's the struggle that's ahead of us, but a lot of those ideas came out of the bankruptcy process that we had to be able to show here's a different way to develop."

Resisting the Aftershocks

In November 2014, Judge Steven Rhodes approved Kevyn Orr's Plan of Adjustment, marking the end of bankruptcy and emergency management. Comparing the plan to neoliberal structural adjustments imposed upon nations in the Global South, Wayne Law Professor Peter Hammer warned that the plans "sucked the life out of countries forced to receive them," predicting that "the same will happen to Detroit."¹⁰

The plan also subjected the city to continued state oversight through the Detroit Financial Review Commission, a local version of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Orr heralded his term as a "turning point" for the city and took pride that under his iron fist, Detroit did not "take the bait" and "did not have another '67 riots" (which would have jeopardized the corporate capture of the city).¹¹

While Orr claimed that Detroiters supported his plans, the reality is that despite the mass resistance, the shock doctrine worked. Organizers were spread too thin, resources were limited, and hundreds of thousands of residents were too busy struggling to survive.

With the reins turned over to Mayor Duggan, austerity measures have continued as Detroit has been turned into a corporate

playground. However, the shock has begun to wear off.

D-REM remained active until 2017, working mostly on communications and media while much of the coalition channeled their efforts into the ongoing water struggle. One of the major outgrowths of D-REM has been the Detroit Independent Freedom Schools Movement (DIFS), modeled on the SNCC freedom schools Dr. House helped organize during the Civil Rights Movement.

A continued focus on grassroots organizing has fostered the political development and leadership of people directly impacted by the financial crisis, which has been vital to movement-building in Detroit. "It's just a matter of going in and knowing that the experts are there already," organizer and poet Tawana Petty explained. "They just might not know how to connect whatever resource to change it or how they got there."

Sonja Bonnett, who had her home stolen through an illegal tax foreclosure, has become a leading organizer for policy change and reparations with the Coalition for Property Tax Justice. Likewise, through saving their homes with the help of Detroit Eviction Defense, Jerry Cullors and Urealdene Henderson have become steady forces in the fight for housing justice.

Through an organizing strategy that combines mutual aid, political education, direct action and policy advocacy, MWRO, WTPD and the broader People's Water Board have fostered the development of organizers like Nicole Hill and Valerie Jean, both of whom had their water shut off during emergency management.

Hill, who has been involved with MWRO, PWB and other organizations, credits Maureen Taylor with teaching her how to fight. "That's how we roll at welfare rights," Taylor said. "There's no crying here. There's only fighting and organizing."

Organizers with roots in the Black Power era have resisted land grabs and are leveraging vacant land to cultivate liberated territories through food sovereignty, cooperative economics, and political education. These projects include Freedom Freedom Growers on the East Side, formed by Myrtle Thompson-Curtis and former Black Panther Wayne Curtis, and D-Town Farm on the West Side, founded by educator and organizer Malik Yakini.

The Charter Commission Fight

This is the political landscape our current generation has inherited. In response to the contradictions of austerity and escalation of police violence, surveillance and repression, younger Detroiters like PG Watkins (BYPI00), Paul Jackson (Frontline Detroit) and Lloyd Simpson, Nakia Wallace and Tristan Taylor (Detroit Will Breathe), have emerged as dynamic leaders.

continued on page 44



Aislinn Pulley discussing with students the police cover up of Rekia Boyd's murder by an off-duty cop (2012).

Sarah Jane Rhee

Reparations for Police Torture interview with Aislinn Pulley

DIANNE FEELEY AND Linda Loew interviewed Aislinn Pulley for *Against the Current* on April 30, 2021. Aislinn Pulley is co-executive director of the Chicago Torture Justice Center, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Chicago, former organizer of We Charge Genocide and founding member of Insight Arts.

Chicago has admitted that its police were involved in systematic torture of civilians, formalizing this with the passage of the Reparations Ordinance on May 6, 2015 and the establishment of the Chicago Torture Justice Center two years later. This victory occurred through the grassroots organizing campaign by those who had been tortured, their families and communities along with sympathetic lawyers and investigative journalists.

According to testimony, at least two police precincts, under the commanding officer Jon Burge, engaged in a program of torture from 1972 to 1991. Flint Taylor's *The Torture Machine*, reviewed by Linda Loew in this issue, chronicles the story, the torture techniques that police used and the decades-long struggle to expose them and win justice for victims.

Linda Loew: With the sixth anniversary of Chicago's historic and unprecedented Reparations Ordinance, what is your evaluation of how the reparations have been implemented? What is the struggle that remains in light of the continued police violence we see across the country?

Aislinn Pulley: May 6 will make six years to the date of when the Reparations Ordinance was passed unanimously by City Council. It also will mark the fourth-year birthday of the Chicago Torture Justice Center. I think both have similar but distinct things to celebrate and learn from. With the Reparations Ordinance, it's six years since the ordinance was passed and we still don't have the memorial.

The five main tenets of the Reparations Ordinance were:

- Creation of a center located on the south side to deal with the psychological effects of torture. This is the Chicago

Torture Justice Center.

- Free access to all city colleges for survivors and the family members, including their grandchildren.

- A monetary compensation for selected torture survivors. The city budgeted \$5.5 million, and that's been distributed to 57 survivors, so it amounts to roughly \$100,000 each. It's not a lot of money, and only for an exceedingly small number of survivors.

- Implementation in all Chicago public schools of a curriculum that teaches this history in the eighth and sophomore Social Studies classes. This is the third year that this has been taught. It is an extraordinarily important victory. Implementation has varied along the lines that you could expect. The whiter, more affluent neighborhoods where cops live have put up resistance and have protested. In one case, it resulted in a principal being removed. Other areas of the city where there's less resistance, and especially where the fight against policing is more vibrant, have welcomed it. The Center has developed deep relationships with certain schools and teachers, but implementation is disparate and reflects the politics of the city.

- The public memorial has not been built, and the city has delayed implementation. Former mayor Rahm Emanuel rejected meeting about the public memorial, refused all proposals. Mayor Lori Lightfoot has met or had people meet with the Memorial Committee. The delay, though, is a red flag. A site location hasn't been confirmed, nor has the funding, so all those things are still in motion.

The Center has been created, and we exist, which is great. We're the first and currently only center in the country dedicated to domestic torture. Federal regulations limit the 14 other torture centers in the country to accept only international torture survivors. We have been able to bypass that federal restriction because of the movement and because of

the Reparations Ordinance. That's significant and important.

The city, however, continues year after year to threaten us by saying that they have fulfilled their reparations duty and therefore we're not owed any continued funding. Of course, the ordinance doesn't say that the Center will be funded only for three or four years. It says you will create and fund.

Our position is that the Center needs to continue to be funded until either no more police killing exists and the generations afterward have healed from the trauma, or other such radical transformations have happened in society so that these services are no longer necessary.

Survivors in the Lead

Dianne Feeley: *How did the ordinance come about? You mentioned earlier that survivors were involved in shaping it. What were their concerns?*

AP: The survivors have been involved and leading the way through every single step. The ordinance initially developed out of an exhibition that called on artists to answer the question, "What could reparations look like for survivors of Chicago Police Department (CPD) torture?"

This took place after Jon Burge, who implemented the torture, was tried and convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice in 2010, although he'd been suspended in 1991 and fired in 1993. Because the statute of limitations had expired for the crime of torture, those were the charges. He was sentenced to four years in federal prison. Survivors and their community felt "This is just another example of there not being justice."

Joey Mogul, one of the attorneys along with Flint Taylor who litigated the torture cases, is not an artist. She submitted an ordinance as part of her contribution to the exhibit. Survivors said, "Let's make this real." That's how it came out of this imaginative space of "Let's envision beyond the current confines of the system."

Through survivor leadership, the ordinance was revised. Survivors said, "We need housing, we need medical care." The first drafts were really expansive. Through the negotiations with the city, the city knocked down some of the demands, saying "No to housing, no to medical care," but then agreed to the final document. Survivors were in those negotiation meetings with the attorneys. Survivors testified at City Hall about their experiences. They were a part of it every step of the way.

DF: *How many people were tortured over this period?*

AP: Jon Burge became employed by Chicago Police Department in 1970 after his army tours in Vietnam and Korea. During the Vietnam war he had been engaged in "advanced interrogation techniques" or torture.

As soon as he got on the force, he began applying those techniques to the people in Chicago. His torture ring lasted until he was suspended in 1991. There's a conservative count that the city has accepted of 120 survivors and has apologized for. That number is primarily Black men, but some were children when they were tortured.

That's just between those years and just for those who acquired attorneys, had their testimony recorded and where the evidence has been found credible by Torture Inquiry & Relief Commission (TIRC) set up in 2009 by the Illinois General Assembly as well as other entities. That's a very conservative estimate because it presupposes a whole bunch of things. We can assume that the true number is in the

thousands. I believe there are people who didn't survive, and we don't even know their names. And the cutoff date is 1991, when Burge was fired.

Torture didn't begin with Burge or end with him. Burge was a commander and trained thousands of other officers who carried on the torture after he was fired. Some of those who were tortured after 1991 are beginning to come out of prison. Survivors of Kenneth Boudreau, James O'Brien, Jack Halloran, Michael Kill and others who trained under Burge led torturing his way after him. The true number is in the thousands, really. If we look at the specific methods of torture that Burge used, then the number is huge.

DF: *Where does recently released Gerald Reed, whose life sentence was reduced to time served by Governor J.B. Pritzker, fit into that picture? Was he one of the 120 or is he in a different category?*

AP: He was tortured after Burge was fired by some of the officers, particularly Michael Kill, who trained under Burge.

DF: *Many of those murdered by police or sentenced to prison are young men and women. Was this true of those who were tortured?*

AP: Many of the torture survivors were in their teens. The youngest known one was 13. Mark Clements was 16. I believe Sean Tyler was 16 or 17. Most of them were children, they were teenagers and then sentenced to serve out massive lifelong and inhumane sentences.

Stanley Howard, who was sentenced to death row, was a part of creating and leading the Death Row 10. This group of survivors formed a study group and through their study realized that they were all tortured by Jon Burge and his henchmen.

Then they created the Death Row 10. They led the organizing work on the inside, which eventually led to a moratorium on the death penalty in Illinois. It was implemented in 2003 by former Governor George Ryan and led to commuting 167 death penalty sentences to life imprisonment and pardoning four. In 2011, the Illinois State Legislature officially abolished the death penalty, converting 15 sentences to life.

That abolition is a direct result of incarcerated folks organizing along with folks on the outside. However, Stanley, no longer facing the death penalty, is still incarcerated. He's been inside almost 40 years; we're fighting to get him out.

Technically parole doesn't exist in Illinois, although it operates in obscure ways. There's a movement led by incarcerated folks called Parole Illinois to re-establish parole so that folks who have life without parole sentences can petition the parole board to be released. They believe that this would be their only opportunity for release.

I've heard many stories of folks who are torture survivors and folks who are not torture survivors. This situation is the result of all the mass incarceration laws that have been passed. Many of these laws criminalized children.

Still Incarcerated

LL: *How many other prisoners who were tortured are still in prison? Flint Taylor's book, *The Torture Machine*, states there were upwards of 200 complaints, although only a certain number were able to make it into legal cases and go through the court system.*

AP: We have a list of about 100 survivors who are still incarcerated. It's a contested number, so not definitive by any means. It's a number that reflects people who have been in contact, been working and speaking out. This usually means

they are working with attorneys on their own individual cases. They have a consciousness around how to fight while incarcerated. It may sound odd to say, but these survivors have accepted that they were tortured.

There's a lot of repression and denial with torture survivors that mirrors other forms of torture such as rape. We don't really define rape as torture in the United States, but it is internationally qualified as a form of torture.

As with rape and sexual assault survivors, there's the denial that it could happen to them. There is the repression of memory and all those survival mechanisms kick in. That happens similarly with torture. People may not be ready for a wide variety of reasons to be public about having experienced torture. Also, there is the gendered aspect of who has been able to come out as a survivor as well.

There are women who were tortured and consciously do not want to be publicly known. La Tanya Jenifor-Sublett, who is now on staff at the Center organizing our Peer Reentry Program, is the only public woman survivor of torture. There are just many factors that play into people not wanting to be public.

LL: *I remember reading in The Torture Machine that either a relative or a friend was brought into an adjacent interrogation room and forced to listen to the screams throughout the night. But are you talking about women who endured physical infliction of torture on their own bodies?*

AP: Yes and were then incarcerated. Your point is important because if we look at the effect, that's a form of psychological torture, where that person was forced to listen to their loved one experience these pains, excruciating pains that bring you to the point of death. Some people died and came back like Anthony Holmes, a torture survivor who talks about how they electrocuted him. He died and then came back over the 24-hour period he was being tortured.

Listening to that is a form of torture, but the way that the construct of survivorhood has been commonly framed it doesn't include those people. When we include that, then we understand its much larger impact, much larger on the family.

DF: *We know something about the role of the survivors in organizing and defending themselves but what about their families? Where did they find their support?*

AP: The moms have really led the organizing work on the outside. In the early days, it would just be the moms fighting for their child or trying to advocate for one of the others in prison. People like Mary L. Johnson whose son is still incarcerated and has been fighting for over 30 years. In the early days, she was the only one who would show up to a court date.

Mark Clements's mom, while he was incarcerated, would be out there fighting for him. Even as she was battling cancer she was still out there fighting. Rosemary Cade, who's fighting for her son Antonio Porter to be released, is undergoing cancer treatment now.

These moms have been the ones on the front lines leading this and aren't given enough credit for their work and their tenacity. Mary L. Johnson talks about how she suffered two breakdowns. The toll of this work has just been so massive on their bodies. Because of moms like Armanda Shackelford, Gerald Reed's mom, the community successfully rallied around him.

Continuing Trauma

DF: *You say that the Center is open to not only the immediate victims but also to their families. Could you talk about trauma, especially in the light of the Chauvin trial? I think many of us did not understand the trauma those witnesses suffered as they saw George Floyd being killed. For the world, it was a deeply moving experience to witness the trauma that they're suffering a year afterward. Dealing with trauma must be a big part of the Center's work. How do you do that?*

AP: That is so important. In hearing the witness testimony at the Chauvin trial, viewers across the world and in this country were able to see a real-life example of how pervasive the consequences of police violence are. They could see the ripple effects of terror and trauma that then reverberate beyond the individual who experienced torture.

The trauma and the violence are also experienced, in different ways of course, by the witnesses and then by family members and community at large. That gives us a better understanding of the true breadth of who is affected by state violence and police violence.

It is way more than just the one individual. Part of the families were also doing time. The families were also affected by the incarceration. That trauma is being held in multiple ways that our dominant society makes invisible and then erases from consciousness.

The Chauvin trial and witnesses' testimony and experiences give visibility and language to acknowledging the real consequence of policing in communities. This one example is being constantly multiplied. Just during the trial, an average of three people a day were killed by police. Magnify that by the number of people affected and the trauma reverberating across the country. That's a lot of people experiencing trauma, experiencing the psychological, the socio-emotional effects of state violence and state terror. We can draw on our popular knowledge of rape survivors to find the many implications of how this continues to play out.

I return to the case of rape because it's so similar as a form of torture. We understand that rape survivors develop survival strategies to protect themselves from a variety of situations ranging from being able to be emotionally intimate to sleep disturbances, panic attacks and anxiety, depression, and becoming a hermit, scared of the outside world (agoraphobia). All those consequences are then reverberated and magnified if we think about the true cost and social effect.

LL: *Over the course of the Chauvin trial, particularly because several police officers — and even the chief of police — testified for the prosecution, Derek Chauvin was portrayed as a "bad" cop. Chauvin's conviction on all charges was a victory, but that doesn't stop the murders!*

AP: That's absolutely right. If it's a victory, it's in the sense that we were able to force the legal process to acknowledge the loss of one in its own army, which it is not designed to do. But we know that that doesn't stop police. Just before the trial started there was the killing of Daunte Wright in Brooklyn, Minnesota and just 20 minutes before the Chauvin guilty verdict was announced, police killed 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant in Columbus, Ohio.

We know that even with convictions, police violence is not going to stop. Former police officer Jason Van Dyke was convicted of second-degree murder of Laquan McDonald along



Torture survivors honored, February 13, 2016.

Sarah Jane Rhee

with 16 counts of aggravated battery and sentenced to almost seven years in prison. That hasn't stopped the killing — but the rate has decreased.

I try to be scientific about why that decrease occurs. Is it the conviction or is it the movement? Of course, those aren't separate. The movement is why the convictions happen. *Scientific American* released an article about a month or two ago (March 1, 2021) that pointed to data that suggests in areas where mass movements have been continuous, the result is a decrease in police killings. If we're going to be scientists and look at cause and effect, based on the data, it's the vitality of the mass movement. It's people getting in the streets and organizing to protest systemic killings.

I think we're still as a movement figuring out our demands. For example, what does it mean to call for the abolition of policing? I think the call to defund is a great demand because it puts the system in crisis and it forces a political crisis. I think, but what does that mean — because capitalism isn't going to defund its domestic army. It's always going to need a domestic army to repress the working class and the constituents within it that the government finds threatening.

How are we prepared to address the crisis? I think there are movement questions that I have not even solved, other than, of course, saying we must overthrow capitalism. But in terms of the actual details of what that means, I haven't resolved those answers. These are questions we need to discuss.

DF: I think one aspect is that people are now seeing, "Gee, this person got killed because they had an expired license or that person got killed because maybe they passed a phony \$20 bill." These are petty offenses. Why is society asking uniformed and armed police to handle these issues? If we look at all the people who have mental stress and their family calls for help, they are 18 times more likely to end up dead than other civilians. Is this the army that we send to deal with these issues?

Let's look at other models. For a decade Eugene, Oregon has had a program of unarmed civilians trained in deescalation methods. Models like this show people we don't need armed guards to be safe. We create problems of homelessness or drug addiction and then we send the cops out to resolve them.

AP: I think you're absolutely right. All these are products

of capitalism, all the disparities and unequal conditions that force deprivation and limit options for coping. It has created crises, manufactured crises, producing massive unemployment, racism, segregation, all those things. I think your point about helping people unlayer, unroll and disentangle concepts of public safety is really, really important. The narrative that policing provides safety has been an effective propaganda tool to obfuscate their actual role.

We need to be able to have a conversation around how we create public safety. We need to develop an effective strategy to dislodge public safety from policing. We want people to have what they need so that they don't go from crisis to crisis. And when they're in crisis, they can get the help they need and not be killed.

Public Health Disaster

LL: What's been the impact of COVID, not only on survivors but on all prisoners? What's the consequence in the failure to release prisoners? And shockingly, Mayor Lori Lightfoot used COVID relief funds not for building up social services that had already been cut to the bone, but increase the already-bloated police funds. Where does the money for Chicago get allotted when it comes from the state and the federal government?

AP: Mayor Lightfoot put 65% of the Discretionary CARES Act money into policing! That is such an indictment of her craven inhumanity and demonstrates where her allegiance has always been. We, as a movement, have been trying to inform folks that this is who she is. This should not be a surprise. She has always defended cops. She's a cop.

It's been preventable horror after preventable horror as we see the number of folks who have died in U.S. detention facilities due to COVID. Our fragile public healthcare system has been decimated over the last 40 years. We have lost 200,000 public healthcare workers.

Our private healthcare system is not designed to figure out how to provide care for a national population. It's designed around figuring out how to monetize care in a specific area, which means that it doesn't function to prevent a global pandemic from decimating the population.

It's just been example after example of why the United States has been in an uprising over the past year. I think all those factors are threaded together. There was, at the height,



Rally for Reparations, a people's hearing.

Sarah Jane Rhee

30 million people unemployed across the country. In 2019, official Black unemployment stood at five percent but by January 2021, it was 13.5%, almost triple.

We know that the folks who have been hit hardest by unemployment have been in the service industry. That means people who already were surviving on poverty wages have been forced into deeper poverty. They are struggling to survive off three stimulus checks while Jeff Bezos becomes the world's first trillionaire. It's a slap in the face.

All of this is happening as police continue to kill at a rate that has remained unchanged even though many of us are at home and sheltering in place. There're so many things that point to how this system is not working for us, is not designed to benefit the majority, and is killing us. COVID has probably best crystallized our crisis in a very acute way.

DF: As you think about the role of the Chicago Torture Justice Center and maybe for the larger movement, what do you see as priorities?

AP: We need to continue organizing and continue being in the streets. Almost with every case, with every instance of the CPD killing someone, there's a protest and there's organization around the case. Protest needs to be a permanent feature, that needs to be what the CPD can expect, and then it should broaden. Now we're seeing the movement broaden to include the demand to end home raids.

This is the result of Anjanette Young, who was forced to stand naked for over two hours when CPD did a so-called botched home raid. But *most* of these raids are "botched." We're seeing a widening of understanding about the horrors that are being inflicted on people and demands to end them.

The fight to get cops permanently out of the Chicago Public Schools should ramp up. We just got the notice a week ago that CPS voted to remove all police from schools for the rest of the year, which is great, but that needs to be permanent. I think it's very, very realistic that we can win the permanent removal of cops from all our public schools. I think we can do it this year.

My best friend's little brother was killed by CPD. Since I was eight years old, we lived right next to each other and

walked to school together, both in grammar school and high school. When we were in our senior year her brother was killed by the police. There was no movement then. There was no protest. No family should experience that and be forced to suffer in silence.

We should be up in arms every time an incident happens and force police to feel they're constantly being watched. We should keep widening the net and organizing around every single instance of police violence. Every time they kill someone, we should be out there.

Teaching as Healing

LL: One of my close friends is a teacher in Washington High School on the southeast side. She told me how important it is in teaching the curriculum about CPD torture that the Center can send survivors to talk to the class. The bonds of solidarity and love created, despite the

pain and suffering, seem magical. However uneven implementing the curriculum has been, this seems to be an important gift that the Reparations Ordinance has brought forward.

AP: Thank you for sharing that insight from your teacher friend. What I've heard from some of the survivors we send out is that it is a healing experience for them. Many talk about going into the classrooms and feeling rewarded in their sharing their story. For decades, their story was not being heard by anyone — not by attorneys, judges, or even a doctor.

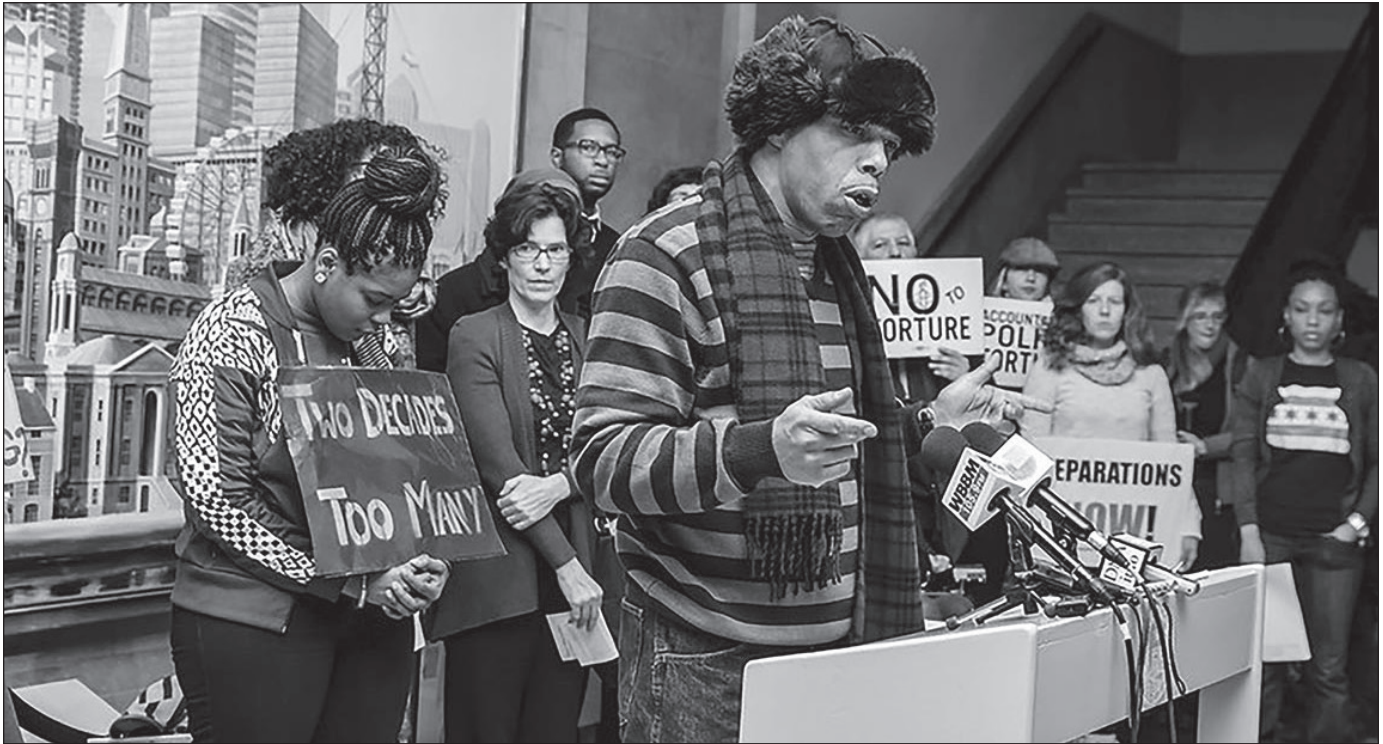
Now, they're able to share it. There's so much power that I have heard them talk about feeling when they're able to tell their stories to students and young folks in other spaces. Just as in any kind of therapeutic experience, when you talk about what has happened, you have those internal realizations: "Oh, I'm teaching them, and I'm teaching myself." They talk about that too, as being a generative experience and part of their healing work.

LL: Even scaled down, the Reparations Ordinance is still unprecedented. Has it laid the basis for developing reparations as an active reality — not just around torture, but also around centuries of discrimination? I know our neighboring city, Evanston, voted for a reparations program based on its history of segregation and discrimination.

AP: Yes, which is amazing. I was involved myself in the grassroots organizing component of the reparations struggle when we did a targeted push to get it out of committee, where it had been stuck for three years. When the Laquan McDonald assassination video was finally released, Mayor Rahm Emanuel faced a political crisis. We targeted him and used that weakness to force him to get the ordinance out of committee.

Throughout that organizing work, I didn't believe we were going to win. I was used to working on campaigns where you fight, you fight, you fight because it's the longterm struggle. But here we won. It's still amazing that it happened because it's so transformative and it doesn't exist anywhere else. It needs to exist everywhere, and needs to be expanded here in Chicago.

I sit with both realities all the time. I'm still in amazement because it's so trailblazing and should be emulated and expanded. ■



Chicago City Hall, March 18, 2015 — Mark Clements, explaining the need for passage of a strong Reparations Ordinance.

Sarah Jane Rhee

A Torture Survivor Speaks interview with Mark Clements

MARK CLEMENTS, A survivor of the Chicago Police torture ring, was interviewed by Linda Loew and Dianne Feeley for *Against the Current* on May 17, 2021.

Linda Loew: As a torture survivor, what are your thoughts about the reparations campaign?

Mark Clements: Reparations was a great achievement. However, absent jobs, healthcare and housing, that ordinance still remains inadequate for sustaining someone's life.

It took a lot to achieve reparations but there was no true acknowledgement by the Cook County State's Attorney, who at that time was Anita Alvarez. I wanted an official letter written to prosecutors, asking that they consider dropping cases where torture had occurred.

I also felt that the apology should be at a ceremony where the mayor would issue an apology directly to the torture survivors, to their families, and to the Chicago community. Instead it was issued while we were still roaming the hallways of City Hall.

Until the agreement was reached, I fought against it. I fought against it because I believe if you don't have a way to sustain yourself from A until Z, something's going to fail.

All these houses in Englewood, Roseland, Chatham communities that lay vacant could have been fixed up by the city and given to torture survivors. That way, when guys were released from prison they would have had a head start. As well, they should have been promised a job through the city of Chicago.

What I asked was: what are people going to do two, three years down the road? While the ordinance was a great accomplishment, and I don't want to take away from that, the city council didn't realistically think through the problem over the long haul.

They rejected the demands for housing and jobs. It's a psychological game. If you wave money in front of people's faces, they're going to snatch it, and that's exactly what happened.

I think 70+% of torture survivors are jobless and homeless today. Many are suffering from the effect of their torture and incarceration. When it's survival out here and you want to repair someone, you've got to make them equal again. The only way you're going to make them equal is when a person has a place to stay and a way to sustain themselves — a lot of people don't look at that.

Another problem was that there was only a 90-day timetable for recognized torture survivors to apply for their monetary compensation. That means only 57 survivors — all men — were certified. We have since located at least three women who were tortured; none of them were eligible.

They should not have put a timetable on when a person could seek reparation. It should have remained open. They gave approximately a 90-day apply process. From that point on, they gave those 57 people reparations.

Dianne Feeley: How has the Chicago Torture Justice Center attempted to meet the needs of the torture survivors and their families?

MC: The survivors made the decision to open it up to everyone and not limit what it can offer because so many people are impacted by police crime.

What we tried to do is to look back upon our own experience and use that as a guide to help our brothers and sisters. It's been a tough challenge, but it has worked for many who have been released from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC).

After all, when prisoners return home they have to figure

continued on page 25



Chicago City Hall, May 6, 2015: The Reparations Ordinance is announced (Joey Mogul standing with arms folded).

Sarah Jane Rhee

An Activist Attorney's View: Torture, Reparations & Healing interview with Joey Mogul

JOEY MOGUL, A partner at the People's Law Office and a longtime activist in the struggle around the Chicago Police torture machine, drafted the Reparations Ordinance. Mogul was interviewed on May 13, 2021 by Linda Loew and Dianne Feeley on the movement and its impact on survivors' attempts to heal.

Linda Loew: We want to step back just a little bit in time and ask about your experience giving testimony on Chicago torture cases to the United Nations Convention Against Torture. What impact did the international attention have on the exposure of torture in Chicago? How did this contribute to the idea of reparations?

Joey Mogul: It was Standish Willis, a member of the National Conference of Black Lawyers and a founder of Black People Against Police Torture, who came up with the idea that we needed to bring the Burge torture cases to international fora. He was following a long tradition of Black radical activists in thinking that we needed to take this racist state violence to the international human rights community. This is in the tradition of the We Charge Genocide petition by William Patterson and others to the United Nations in 1951.

Stan, unfortunately, was unable to go because he had to argue a case in the Seventh Circuit Court. I found out that I was going to be traveling to Geneva, Switzerland, to present this testimony to the UN Committee Against Torture less than 24 hours beforehand. Sponsored by the Midwest Coalition for Human Rights, I had eight hours on the flight to figure out how I was going to boil down 20-plus years of work into a three-minute presentation to the UN Committee Against Torture.

This occurred in 2006, after the Bush administration had invaded Iraq. In addition to misrepresenting the "fact" that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Bush declared that one of the reasons for the war was that Saddam Hussein was

torturing civilians. But we know that during the so-called war on terror, and particularly during the Iraq war, U.S. military officials were torturing Iraqi civilians. This was happening both at Guantanamo and black sites around the world.

The U.S. government came to the UN Committee Against Torture to defend the government's record about complying with the Convention Against Torture. Essentially its argument was "yes, given 9/11, we've made some mistakes in the war on terror, but domestically the United States is a beacon of human rights."

Impact of UN Report

When the UN Committee Against Torture heard my presentation on the Burge torture cases, they were very anxious to learn more about what was going on domestically. I had the opportunity to work with Andrea Ritchie who had drafted a report, *In the Shadows of the War on Terror: Persistent Police Brutality and Abuse of People of Color in the United States*. We were the ones discussing U.S. racist police violence, with the Burge torture cases example A.

After reviewing our evidence and the testimony I provided, the committee issued findings noting the limited investigation and lack of prosecution in the Burge torture cases and calling on the U.S. government to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The committee also found that the U.S. government did not comply with the Convention Against Torture around Guantanamo Bay, that there was torture at Abu Ghraib in Iraq. This was significant because there's been a long history where our government is willing to acknowledge that torture occurs outside the country but when we see acts of torture that are racially motivated, particularly affecting Black and brown people inside the United States, it isn't called torture but "abuse allegations."

When the findings came out on May 19, 2006 I was back in Chicago and we were having a court hearing that day about whether the special prosecutors' report would be released. This was the result of a campaign that I helped found called the Campaign to Prosecute Police Torture.

We had gone into court demanding that special prosecutors be appointed to investigate the crimes of torture committed by Burge and his henchmen — not just the crimes of torture, understanding that the statute of limitations had expired, but also investigate perjury and obstruction of justice. This wasn't just a litigation strategy.

We held rallies and events to support this Campaign to Prosecute Police Torture. We went to Gospel Fest and circulated petitions, submitting over 2000 signatures.

As the UN findings were released, the special prosecutors had just finished their four-year investigation, which cost seven million dollars. We expected them to release the report and then say, "Too bad, so sad. Yes, torture occurred, but we can't do anything about it. It's time to close the book on this."

The press was all there but the report wasn't released that day, so they had nothing else to report on but the committee's findings. It was monumental to have an international human rights body, one of the highest human rights bodies in the world, draw this conclusion.

It also had a profound and healing effect on the torture survivors because not only had they been tortured and incarcerated based on coerced confessions, but they had gone into court and told their lawyers, the prosecutors, and the judges that they were tortured. Time and time again, they were disbelieved, discarded and dehumanized. I can tell you as a movement it stirred us on. It propelled us to fight on.

By learning about international human rights and specifically the Convention Against Torture, we also read General Comment Three, where they talked about how you redress these egregious human rights violations and discussed the essential elements of reparations.

One is that there must be financial compensation, but they also talked about the need for restitution, the need for rehabilitation, the need for satisfaction from being found to be telling the truth. There is also a commitment not to repeat the violation. For me, that was quite an education about the essential elements of reparations.

Of course, I'm also grateful for all the work of so many Black radical organizers and activists in the United States who have been fighting for reparations for people of African descent for over a century. I learned from N'COBRA (National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America) that reparations are always more than an apology and a paycheck, but it was helpful to have those elements spelled out in the UN Committee Against Torture's legal doctrine. That's what helped inform me when I was drafting the reparations ordinance.

Dianne Feeley: It sounds like there were many organizations that were working to expose the torture cases. You have already mentioned the National Conference of Black Lawyers and Black People Against Police Torture. And of course, you wear two hats, as an activist as well as a lawyer. Tell us a bit about the early days of this struggle.

JM: There has been a lot of organizing and some-

times a breakthrough we didn't expect. Back-in-the-day I was part of Queer to the Left. Around 2001 or 2002 we teamed up with Gay Liberation Network to drive Dick Devine, then Cook County State's Attorney and longtime Daley operative, from the gay pride parade.

While the network was angry that Devine wasn't prosecuting cops who harmed gay people, we raised the issue of the Burge torture cases. We organized an entire contingent and jumped in front of his contingent with our sign, "This Dick is not so divine."

Although he'd been a regular in the annual gay parades, he never came back. I always think whether you're in a queer group or not, it's always women and queers who are really the backbone of the organizing efforts. We're the ones calling the meetings, we're the ones facilitating, we're the ones making and passing out flyers.... It's just the truth. Yet it's often the women and queer people who get erased from the struggle.

Certainly, if we look at this long organizing campaign, it was driven by the torture survivors and their family members. It was mothers who were out there from the beginning.

The guys on death row organized themselves. They called themselves The Death Row 10. Then they reached out to their mothers and family members and said, "go connect with others on the outside for us." The mothers became the spokespeople for their children; they were the organizers out on the street. They brought people together and insisted "You need to care about my child."

JoAnn Patterson, Louva Bell, Castella Cannon. Now, we have Armanda Shackelford, whom you probably met when Gerald Reed was recently released. Jeanette Plummer, whose son Johnny Plummer I represent, used to come to all these events. She's now physically unable to attend, but the mothers are always the ones who show up, who keep struggling.

DF: Could you speak about the trauma of so many of those who were tortured at such a young age — 13 years old, 16 years old? The violation of their bodies and their minds, and the trauma paradigm so early in life is horrendous.

JM: We're dealing with anti-Black archetypes, particularly of Black youth. Mark Clements was 16, and that was in the early '80s. You're talking about Marcus Wiggins and Damoni Clemon and Diyee Owens and Clinton Welton, all of whom were brought into Area 3 and tortured.



Train takeover for reparations: with signs, flyers, spoken word, chants and speeches, We Charge Genocide spread the reparations message.

Sarah Jane Rhee

My client Johnny Plummer was tortured at Area 3 when he was 15 years old. The language about the so-called super predator, Black youth wilding and other racist tropes led to the passage of the Violent Crime Act of 1994. We see this demonization of Black youth, of an entire generation. We see this impact in the way the torture was being used.

LL: *Except for investigative reporter John Conroy's "House of Screams" 1990 feature in the Chicago Reader it seems the international spotlight is what generated more coverage and attention.*

JM: It's true that once we got these findings from the UN Committee Against Torture in May of 2006, the movement got bigger. By October 2008 Burge was finally indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice.

It wasn't just the local U.S. attorneys who were involved in that case, it was also the U.S. Department of Justice. U.S. officials in Geneva were having to answer about these torture cases. I do think that made a difference.

Now was the prosecution of Burge enough? No. Did it meet the material needs of the torture survivors? No. Did it serve to rectify all the harm and devastation wrought on the torture survivors, their family members, and affected Black communities? Absolutely not.

I think we're living through a time where we can see that prosecution of police officers is not enough. It's feeding a criminal legal system that we're trying to dismantle.

Dehumanization Continued

One aspect of the court is that the torture survivors don't have the ability to speak and in the way they need to tell their truths. Court is so limiting. You get asked a direct question. You can only answer that question.

You get cross-examined and to be honest, during Burge's trial, it was not a healing for Anthony Holmes, Mark Clements, Gregory Banks, and Melvin Jones to have to relive their torture experiences and then be cross-examined with this anti-Black racism about what gangs they belonged to or what criminal activity they were involved in.

It was just part of the dehumanization they had experienced. When Anthony Holmes testified against Burge, he looked him in the eye and shared the pain and the trauma he experienced. Anthony walked out of that room and went to a side room where he broke down and cried for 45 minutes.

That's when I recognized that this criminal proceeding was just re-traumatizing him. This is what INCITE! Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Transpeople of Color Against Violence tells us. Just as with rape survivors, it's not healing to go through a criminal prosecution. It's not providing survivors with any of the tools they need to cope and live on. That's why we needed reparations.

I'll continue to be a lawyer, but I understand it's the organizing that creates the container that, in Mariame Kaba's words, allows us to all come in and fight alongside one another. It's how we are horizontal in our work together.

When we are doing this organizing work, the torture survivors are with us side by side. In fact, they're the ones whom we center. They're the voices we need to hear. At every single reparations event, we ensure that torture survivors are front and center.

In the reparations campaign, the questions were: "What do you want in a reparations campaign? What do you want in the

legislation? What do you want to tell people?"

Often when we ask people directly affected by police or state violence, we ask them, "Tell us what happened to you?" The question forces them to relive their trauma. Instead, we need to ask them: "What should be done? What are your hopes and dreams? What can provide you with healing and nourishment?"

I saw the futility in some of what Burge's prosecution and conviction meant. That's why we went on to push for reparations, which I believe was an abolitionist struggle.

LL: *How did the reparations ordinance come about?*

JM: Stan Willis and Black People Against Police Torture were the ones who originally put out the call for reparations. For years we had talked about how many of the torture survivors never had access to financial compensation because the torture had occurred decades ago. Many of them were incarcerated and unable to sue. The statute of limitations expired years ago.

Black People Against Police Torture wanted there to be a Chicago Torture Justice Center. In the United States, there are 20 or so psychological counseling centers that receive federal funds to provide mental health services to people who've been tortured. However, the U.S. government only provides funding to those who've been tortured outside the United States.

We have one of those torture victims centers, called the Kovler Center; we had been working with and in solidarity with them. Black People Against Police Torture saw that as a model for the Burge torture survivors and family members.

After Burge was convicted, I felt the conviction was not meeting the material needs of the torture survivors. It wasn't providing them access to mental health services. It didn't provide them financial compensation. It didn't challenge the dominant narrative. I helped co-found Chicago Torture Justice Memorials.

We convened a group of artists, educators, torture survivors, family members, activists. We put out an open call and invited everyone under the sun to submit a speculative memorial. How would they memorialize the Burge torture cases?

We wanted not only reckoning with the heinous racist violence that these cases involved, but to do justice to the perseverance and resilience of the torture survivors and their family members.

We promised everyone that all submissions would be in the exhibit. In October of 2012, we had an exhibit of over 70 submissions at the Sullivan Galleries, which is part of The Art Institute of Chicago.

In addition to sculpture, photographs and audio, we had people submit how they would teach the torture cases in their sociology class or international human rights class. An art teacher from Bowen High School — which Burge attended, now an all-Black high school in an all-Black neighborhood — invited his students to imagine how they would memorialize those cases. As part of the speculative memorial, I drafted a reparations ordinance. Never in my wildest dreams did I think we were going to file this.

It was amazing to have the torture survivors walk through the galleries and see their lives reflected on the walls. I'll never forget Anthony Holmes, one of the first survivors

tortured by Burge, talking about how amazing it was that in this gallery, with its pristine white walls of art, was his life in the gray, dingy, dark, dirty cells of Pontiac and Illinois Department of Corrections.

We invited people to reflect on the work. What would a public memorial look like? That then led CTJM to take a deep dive into what other public memorials look like in the United States as well as around the world. We looked at memorials in Chile, in Argentina, in Germany and South Africa.

What Reparations Look Like

I also started to look at the reparations legislation from Chile, Argentina and from Kenya with the Mau Mau people. We also met with Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. He came to Chicago to meet with torture survivors. He talked about his experiences when he was tortured in Argentina's Dirty War and the work they were doing to seek redress.

We held another exhibit, "What do Reparations Look Like?" I had been very much moved by people's contributions and comments at the first art exhibit and in getting the torture survivors' input and experiences. Many people focused on the need to educate people about the Burge torture cases.

I knew that when the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 passed, part of the redressing how Japanese Americans were rounded up and put in concentration camps during World War II included \$5 million to educate about that injustice.

What demand could we put on the city of Chicago to educate about the torture cases? The city controls the public schools, including the city colleges. These colleges should be free for the torture survivors and their family members, including grandchildren. Youth and particularly family members can have a curriculum that teaches their history and recognizes the generational trauma that has occurred from this long legacy of violence. We now have a curriculum that was crafted by teachers in the Chicago Teachers Union, torture survivors and others.

We mounted a grassroots campaign for the reparations ordinance. It was a multi-racial, multi-generational effort of many organizations including the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials, We Charge Genocide and the work of Mariame Kaba, and Project NIA.

Mariame Kaba is the all-time best organizer. She is the Beyonce of social justice — and made sure there was a youth of color delegation to the UN Committee Against Torture in 2014. We then also teamed up with Amnesty International USA.

We mounted a campaign in 2014 and 2015 during the first tidal wave of the Black Lives Matter movement. It was also in the midst of heated mayoral and aldermanic elections, where we demanded the reparations legislation get passed.

We did something every week. We had rallies, we had



Mothers of the torture victims never gave up their fight for justice in defense of their children. This reparations event celebrated their work.
Sarah Jane Rhee

demonstrations. During winter, We Charge Genocide took over the transit system and went on trains to organize. We had Twitter power hours.

We held teach-ins on the Burge torture cases in 13 different venues. In the process of organizing for reparations, we created communities of care. When Anthony Holmes, who talks about how he was just disbelieved for years, is on the stage sharing his experiences with hundreds of people and asking them to fight for reparations, now he and the other torture survivors are being believed, they are being embraced, they are being loved.

We passed out a voter's ballot guide on the right of reparations. Over half of City Council agreed to support the reparations legislation. Rahm Emanuel initially didn't win the primary and was in a runoff against Jesus "Chuy" Garcia.

That's when Emanuel's administration opened negotiations. But we remember back when Rahm Emanuel and his Corporation Counsel Steve Patton came out and told us, "No, we don't owe you anything."

Did we get everything we wanted? No, of course we did not. Were there compromises made? Yes. What I can tell you is that our principle as part of the coalition was that if the torture survivors said they wanted us to take the deal, we would. We reached out to every torture survivor we could find, including those who remain incarcerated. We asked every single one.

We did win an official apology from the City of Chicago for the pattern and practice of torture, financial compensation for some. We were able to create the Chicago Torture Justice Center that has become a hub not only in providing healing around police violence but in thinking out ways of organizing against police violence. The center is located on the south side, the area where people are the most affected and impacted by the violence.

It was the organizing campaign that won these reparations, not a legal battle. Rehabilitation and public education could only have been accomplished through an organizing campaign.

At the May 6, 2021 press conference on the sixth anniversary of the passage of the Reparations Ordinance, we were excited to announce that an art funder has given \$500,000 toward building the memorial. The Chicago Torture Justice Memorials has been through an entire process of calling on artists of color to submit bids for designing it and then having a jury composed of torture survivors, art members and members of the public to select the design.

We are now struggling with the city of Chicago to get that memorial. The torture survivors want it located on the south side, where they were tortured. We won't take no for an answer.

LL: The apologies I've read, say, "And now we're turning a new page." Of course, torture continues even after they turn that very thin page. The apology is important for the record. I've come to understand it that way.

In the coverup of the Laquan McDonald murder in 2014, the mayor refused to release the video that proved he was shot 16 times as he was walking away from the police. Again, it took a series of demonstrations to force the court to order the dash cam video released. More than a year passed before the video revealed the truth and when boxed in, Emanuel issued an apology. How genuine does that feel to anyone?

JM: It meant a lot when George H.W. Bush apologized to the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in concentration camps. I think the apology for us is about creating the dominant narrative. Even if Burge was convicted, you were still going to have people say, "Oh, we're not sure this happened" or even come out and say, "Well, we think Burge's got a bad rap."

Well, what you think is not based in fact. We have an official apology that recognizes this occurred. And that apology is going to launch us into getting a memorial. Since the ordinance passed, we've gotten more guys out of prison and we're fighting to get more out. Even the judges who deny us now say, "Well, torture did occur." For decades they weren't willing to say that. Now no one can deny it.

Still Incarcerated

LL: What challenges remain in gaining the freedom of those still behind bars unjustly and reparations for all those who are incarcerated? I understand there are at least 13 identified torture survivors still in prison.

JM: I'm still representing two Burge torture survivors who are behind bars. Burge spent most of his career in Area 2 and engaged in torture there. But in 1986 he became commander of Bomb and Arson, and then commander of Area 3. He brought a lot of his detectives from Area 2 to Area 3.

While the courts now acknowledge that torture occurred in Area 2, they're not concluding the same thing happened at Area 3. I also think the courts want to say, "Once Burge was fired, the impunity stopped."

It's one thing to fire Burge, and that happened because a movement made it happen, but then they should have reinvestigated every case he touched. They never did. No other

officers were ever disciplined. We need to educate people about how Burge's henchmen continued.

Fortunately, I think we are seeing a rupture in our society and it's far beyond the Burge torture cases. We're seeing that the whole system of policing is predicated on anti-Black violence. It stems from the slave patrols that existed during slavery. Policing isn't about safety and freedom from violence.

We need to take the power and resources away from our police departments because they're not making us any safer. In fact, they're just bringing more violence.

DF: We need to show people that we don't get public safety through armed, uniformed and trained shooters, but through de-escalation teams, trauma centers and a quality of life. When you mentioned there's one trauma center focused on violence within our country, I think of the way tax foreclosures and evictions are carried out in Detroit, a Black city. The threat of water shutoffs and evictions is traumatic.

JM: Critical Resistance is doing groundbreaking work. I think they're leading the way in figuring out how we can look to alternatives to the system, the Prison Industrial Complex, in terms of thinking about safety and freedom from violence.

Police shouldn't be involved with traffic violations. We shouldn't criminalize sex work or drug usage. Even with the legalization of marijuana in Illinois, an article recently reported that arrests of Black people for marijuana possession have increased.

I think the movement is way far ahead of where our institutions are, where our criminal legal system is. It's not that people are saying, "We don't want people to be safe or free from violence." What we're saying is, "This is not working and in fact, it's harming people. We need to create alternatives to violence and alternative ways for conflict resolution."

We still need to obviously push to get people out of prison and we need to get people to understand you don't have to torture someone to get them to confess. There are so many psychological tactics that are being used that are resulting in coerced confessions. I think we need to re-examine the entire way the policing works, including how we get these confessions.

We need a radical reevaluation of our values, and I think that that includes in the words of Grace Lee Boggs from Detroit, who followed in Martin Luther King's steps, that radical "revolution of values." I think that we need to have a radical paradigm shift in the way we think about freedom from violence. I think that that's one that doesn't include the police.

An important part of that is the Chicago Public School curriculum. Anthony Holmes, Darrell Cannon and Mark Clements are getting standing ovations when they speak in the schools, they're the authorities.

Many of these young Black and brown students have been harassed by the Chicago police and look up to the torture survivors as heroes. They see these guys, who were tortured and incarcerated, standing there speaking truth to power. This bond creates a whole other kind of effective quality beyond any material redress we got from the reparations legislation. ■



Sarah Jane Rhee

The Windy City Torture Underground By Linda Loew

The Torture Machine:

Racism and Police Violence in Chicago

By Flint Taylor

Haymarket Books, 2019 (hardback), 2020 (paperback), 556 pages, \$19.95 paperback.

THE "CITY OF broad shoulders" and architectural gems, Chicago also has a dark chapter in its history: torture of African American men carried out for decades by the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Flint Taylor's *The Torture Machine: Racism and Police Violence in Chicago* spans nearly 50 years in more than 500 pages.

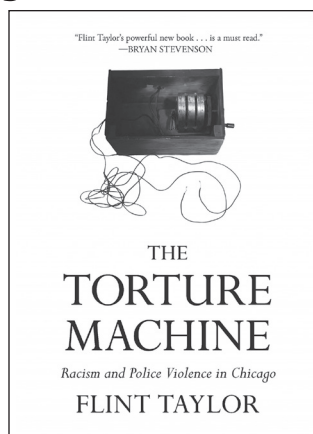
The book delivers a harrowing account of the police torture carried out by Commander Jon Burge and the officers he supervised, between 1972 and 1991. With over 120 known victims, mostly African American males, one as young as 13 years old, the book details several cases and the scope of denial and cover-up.

It hails the struggle to prove that it happened, to hold those guilty of torture and its cover-up accountable, and to win justice for victims. It is not easy to read, but important to know.

The opening chapter, "Murder by Night," recounts the December 4, 1969 assassinations of Black Panther Party Chairman Fred Hampton and leader Mark Clark. Taylor, then a law student, joined the civil suit filed on behalf of the families and survivors of the murderous raid.

He and other young lawyers from the newly founded People's Law Office (PLO) helped win an unprecedented settlement in 1982. The 13-year suit also revealed the raid to be an integral part of the FBI's COINTEL-PRO program. These revelations changed

Linda Loew is a longtime socialist, feminist and union activist. She is retired from a staff position at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, where she served as recording secretary and solidarity chair of AFSCME Local 1989. That local led the successful passage of the first Black Lives Matter support resolution before the AFSCME Illinois state convention. Currently she is a member of Chicago for Abortion Rights, Jewish Voice for Peace-Chicago and Illinois Single Payer Coalition. With Dianne Feeley, she conducted the interviews on police torture and reparations in this issue.



electric shock device used on many of the interrogated suspects. "Torture machine" also refers to the system of law enforcement and government (police superintendents, judges and elected officials all the way up to mayor) who were complicit in denying, condoning and covering up crimes. Many lied under oath or delayed justice for victims.

Torture: Vietnam to Chicago

By the time the Hampton/Clark suit was settled in 1982, another reign of terror was underway. The CPD conducted a sweeping "manhunt," through predominantly African American neighborhoods of Chicago's south side, kidnapping and arresting suspects for the murder of two police officers. If there was no immediate evidence, they would beat and torture confessions out of their suspects.

The victims and the cops who tortured them fell on two sides of Chicago's racial divide. In one of the most segregated cities in the nation following the Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities, these neighborhoods suffered decades of deep inequality and rampant neglect in housing, health care, jobs and education.

The victims from these neighborhoods were treated by the system as less than human, not to be believed by their interrogators, the courts, or the public. During one early trial seeking justice for torture victim Andrew Wilson, Judge Duff referred to Wilson as "scum of the earth." (122)

In contrast, working class whites made up (and still do) a disproportionate number of Chicago's police force.

the narrative on the racist nature of police practices in Chicago, setting the stage for the "torture wars" to follow.

"Torture Machine" has two intertwined meanings: one is the

Jon Burge had served as a military police sergeant in a prisoner of war camp in South Vietnam during the height of the war. He oversaw interrogations that included murder and torture with electric shock.

Burge returned a "war hero," and went on to head the Violent Crimes Unit at CPD Area 2, and later Area 3 on Chicago's south side. Burge and his team were portrayed by the system as hard working cops in high-crime neighborhoods who faced danger every day. Even as the torture was taking place, Burge was promoted from detective to commander in record time.

In the public image, "Burge and his men gave new meaning to the 'war on crime' politics gripping Chicago and the nation, churning out an impressive record of arrests, confessions, and convictions that fueled the mass incarceration of young African American men." (67)

The acts and instruments of torture were varied and rotated at the whim of individual cops. These included suffocation with plastic bags (often typewriter covers,) known in military jargon as "dry submarino," beatings on the bottoms of feet and on testicles, being handcuffed to the wall or window while being spread over a hot radiator; all while being interrogated.

The legendary "black box" was clipped to suspects' hands or ears, then cranked like a telephone, sending electrical charges through the victim, causing shocks and injuries to organs, head and hands.

It bore a striking resemblance to torture techniques applied by the U.S. military in Vietnam, in Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq, and at Guantanamo.

This method was often used last to put the finishing touches on hours of torture in order to extract a confession. A State's Attorney would wait in an adjacent room, ready to grab the signed confession.

The Iceberg Surfaces

The decades-long case of Andrew Wilson is a central thread through the book. Wilson endured many of the practices in the Burge torture playbook. The judge in his first trial refused to allow documents that supported Wilson's torture claims. He was found guilty by an all-white jury and sentenced to death.

Eventually granted a new trial, the civil

suit he also launched for damages, taken on by Taylor and a PLO legal team, led to investigations into the torture of many other victims.

The initial victims turned out to be the tip of the iceberg on torture carried out in CPD Areas 2 and 3. Each investigation led to others. Taylor and his team traveled to all corners of the state to take testimony.

Another compelling example is Darrell Cannon. His testimony given from prison described being taken to a remote area of Chicago's southeast side in 1983, subjected to electric shock on his genitals and mock execution with a shotgun held in his mouth, while racial epithets were shouted at him.

Despite vivid testimony at his first trial and again in 1993 and 1994, his conviction stood. He was resentenced to life in prison, although his confession was based on torture. These rulings were eventually overturned by a Judge Wolfson in 1997, who declared that "...in a civilized society torture by police officers is an unacceptable means of obtaining confessions from suspects." (238)

Despite being granted a new trial, due to complications, Cannon would remain in prison until 2007. The physical, psychological, and legal nightmare endured by Darrell Cannon repeats in the lives of many others.

Several cases progressed at the same time. The names of all victims are too numerous to list here. All their suffering matters, regardless of their status of innocent or guilty of alleged crimes. Together, their experiences formed the basis for charges of a "racist pattern and practice" that was difficult to prove and resisted by the system, until the mountain of evidence was too huge to bury or deny.

A major breakthrough came in 1990 with the investigative journalism of John Conroy, writing for the weekly *Chicago Reader*. His article "House of Screams," detailing the torture of Andrew Wilson, was read by a large audience and captured the attention of Amnesty International. It eventually brought international attention to police torture in Chicago.

Global conferences and reports took up the cause. Lawyers for torture survivors as well as Chicago community leaders presented cases before the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) as well as the Human Rights Committee in Geneva in 2006.

One of the reports led to the first call for reparations as a vehicle for bringing justice to torture victims. This international spotlight was huge, coinciding with growing protests in the streets of Chicago, and increased media coverage around the country.

The Importance of Protest

"Out of the Court and into the Streets" (Chapter 8) underscores the role of commu-

nity protests, including demonstrations led by the Task Force to Prevent Police Violence and the Citywide Coalition Against Police Abuse.

By 1989, this coalition of 29 groups led a demonstration at police headquarters, declaring that cases of racist police abuse were on the rise all over the city. They delivered a petition to Mayor Richard M. Daley and Police Superintendent Martin, raising for the first time the idea of reparations from the CPD to the victims of police torture.

More marches, tribunals on campuses, protests in and outside courtrooms, all contributed pressure. There was mounting irrefutable evidence of torture that the political machine could no longer cover up. Witnesses came forward, including a few from the ranks of the police.

The torture wars had their very own "Deep Badge," an unnamed detective sending documents that corroborated the torture that transpired in Area 2 and Area 3 interrogations. Another detective, Frank Laverty, also busted the code of silence, coming forward about the frame-up of George Jones, an innocent young man just out of high school, who spent five painful months in Cook County Jail for a crime he did not commit.

Laverty helped reveal the existence of "secret (aka street) files" which led to Jones' release and later exonerations of others falsely convicted. Demoted and shunned by his fellow detectives, Laverty's fate reflects the atmosphere of fear and intimidation facing cops with a conscience.

The crisis of police violence is not about "bad apples." It is an institution formed and mired in centuries of systemic racism. Those with a conscience often have to leave the force to preserve their humanity.

Additional key witnesses were finally allowed before juries. Among them was Dr. Jack Raba, Director of Medical Services at Cook County Jail, whose earlier requests for investigations of torture at Area 2 had been ignored. Joining him were experts in post-traumatic stress disorder. Many torture survivors continue to struggle with PTSD.

Solidarity was also important inside the prisons. A group of prisoners, previously unknown to each other, began a study group through which they discovered that each had been victims of torture. They became the "Death Row 10."

Aided by the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, their cause was boosted by a major Chicago Tribune article featuring one of the wrongfully convicted, Aaron Patterson. In January 2003, just hours before leaving office, Illinois Governor George Ryan declared a moratorium on the death penalty, commuting the sentences of all current death row inmates to life in prison or less, the largest emptying of death row in history. This includ-

ed the Death Row Ten.

In an impassioned speech, Ryan quoted U.S. Supreme Court Justice Blackmun's 1994 assertion that "I can no longer tinker with the machinery of death." Ryan added "The legislature couldn't reform it; lawmakers won't repeal it. But I will not stand for it. I must act. Our capital system is haunted by the demon of error." (295-6)

Journalism professors and students at Northwestern University's Medill Innocence Project played an important role in the lead up to this historic act by Governor Ryan.

In March of 2011 Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed into law the abolition of the death penalty, and he commuted the death sentences of another 15 Death Row inmates to life in prison.

Justice Delayed

While Commander Burge was suspended in 1991, and fired in 1993, his conviction did not come until 2010. After years of denials, lies, invoking of the Fifth Amendment and being aided by judges to elude justice, Burge was finally convicted of perjury and conspiracy to obstruct.

Despite a regrettable statute of limitations on conviction for torture, and a prison sentence of a mere four years, Burge's conviction helped open doors to admission of torture evidence in several cases.

In January 2012 the Chicago City Council passed a unanimous resolution making Chicago the first U.S. city to formally oppose all forms of torture. Real justice still lagged behind this largely symbolic gesture.

While no elected official was ever held legally accountable for the crimes committed on their watch, the city itself was finally forced to reckon with and pay for the torture inflicted by Burge and his cohorts.

On May 6 2015, the Chicago City Council unanimously passed the Reparations Ordinance, a historic and unprecedented measure, first in the nation. It was drafted by Joey Mogul, a co-lead counsel in several of the cases representing Burge torture survivors, as well as a founding leader of the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials.

The CTJM helped spearhead a multi-pronged, multi-racial, multi-generational organizing campaign to bring material justice to torture survivors. (For details on the ordinance, see interviews with Aislinn Pulley, Mark Clements and Joey Mogul in this issue of *Against the Current*.)

Burge's conviction and time served, the elimination of the death penalty, a series of exonerations, commutations, and ultimately the Reparations Ordinance are victories which also proved the fact of torture. The "black box" may have ended up at the bottom of Lake Michigan, tossed overboard from Burge's aptly named boat, the "Vigilante," and torture by Burge ceased, but torture

did not end in Chicago.

As recently as 2020, there were regular protests to close the Homan Square detention center, a police “black site” where more than 10,000 mostly black and brown men were arrested and detained (“disappeared.”)

As revealed by a series of articles in *The Guardian* newspaper, detainees, including political protesters, were held for hours or days, without access to lawyers, bathrooms, or water. Many suffered some of the same physical abuse as in the Burge days. Lasting for more than 15 years, legal cases continue for victims of abuse at this location.

A Widening Discussion

During and since the trial of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd, there have been an average of three racially motivated police shootings every day. Videos of police violence and the resulting public outrage have transformed the national conversation.

There are continued calls for investi-

gations of pattern and practice in police departments, no-knock search warrants (like the one where police murdered Breonna Taylor in Louisville), and split-second-decision defenses.

The Chauvin conviction, widely hailed as a victory, is an important but small step on the long road to justice. An important Chicago victory is the removal of police from public schools for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

Even before that announcement, 55 Chicago high schools were drafting safety plans based on restorative justice and crisis management, to be reviewed by local school councils for implementation next year. If they're successful, the school district would spend \$24 million over the next three years to address student trauma and mental health.

Given decades of disinvestment in public education, massive closure of schools and mental health clinics, this amount is a drop in the bucket. To keep things in perspective, Chicago's Mayor Lori Lightfoot used \$281.5

million of federal COVID-19 relief funds on Chicago Police Department Payroll costs.

Nothing can bring back lives lost or decades spent behind bars for those wrongly convicted. Reparations begin to address the physical and psychological scars suffered by victims and their families. But an estimated 100 survivors still languish behind bars.

Many involved in the mass mobilizations to demand justice are beginning to grapple with a growing understanding that there will never be full justice until the deeply systemic racism in all realms of society is dismantled.

This means transformative change not only with police and prisons, but in health care, education, housing, jobs and the environment. A range of ideas are being examined and debated from calls to defund the police, abolish the police and reimagine public safety.

The fight for justice for torture victims and all victims of racism continues. Flint Taylor's call to action in the closing pages of his book is absolutely true: *¡La Luta continua!* ■

A Torture Survivor Speaks — continued from page 17

out “how am I going to get my ID, my birth certificate, my social security card? With my record, how can I get a place to live or a job?”

Most of these guys have been locked up under about the worst of the worst conditions imaginable, and there are going to be psychological effects that linger on.

The Mothers' Legacy

The Center's existence is primarily due to our mothers, many of whom have since passed on. It's a way to further their legacy. It's the shell of their body upon this earth. I just keep it 100, as the kids say. Had I not had a little old mother, I would still be in prison.

They did a great job along with torture survivors, as well as with the community. Primarily, it was done through the Freedom School, BYPI00 (Black Youth Project) and Mariame Kaba as well as various other organizations that played a role.

A lot of people fail to realize that having a child in prison is a form of slavery. Mothers had to either abandon their jobs or else abandon their children. Their kids would not be free if they had not attended meetings and news conferences.

Even today, the media still protects the so-called legacy of Jon Burge despite the fact that he was a torturer, a thug and a criminal. We may say that during a news conference but you don't really hear the reporters repeating it. A lot of people seem not to understand we have a corporate dictatorship when it comes to media.

I go to a lot of legislative meetings and court hearings — although with the pandemic, they are all on Zoom. If I were governor, we wouldn't even need legislation. I would just sign an executive order. “Everyone who served 10 years and one day, you're released.” I would empty our prison systems out and pour money into their communities.

It seems like every time there's a murder in the Black and brown community, it's guaranteed that a lawmaker claims he can fix the problem. He fixes it by increasing the sentence

upon a penalty.

Penalties don't deter crime. If crime could be deterred with a penalty, there would be no crime in states where there's still a death penalty. What we need is restorative justice.

DF: *What do you see as elements of restorative justice?*

MC: Restorative justice is having a person acknowledge their crimes to society and seeking ways to give back to society. Restorative justice to me looks like an opportunity to give back to the young kids in the community. Now being a part of this organization, which is about restorative justice, I'm going to mentor you to stay out of the prison system.

Giving back should not mean absent jobs, absent proper education, absent an opportunity to sustain your life. Restorative means trying to put you on an equal playing field with all of society. Unfortunately, we have residents who don't believe that theory.

Healing is key. The only way healing is going to come is with dollars being invested by the state, city and county into programs that concretely help. People are hurting. I believe crime occurs because people need jobs — not just minimum wage ones so they have to work two or three jobs.

LL: *You have emphasized the role of the mothers of torture survivors, including your own. What has been the role of the larger community?*

MC: Protests have made a big difference and they continue to do so today in this time of COVID. That's how Gerald Reed was recently freed. Continuing to put pressure on the governor during COVID has reduced the Illinois prison system from 47,000 to where it is now, at 27,000.

COVID was an invisible weapon, a form of torture for those languishing behind bars. If we stop protesting we're in trouble! We face systemic issues because the government stripped services away from poor people's communities.

Hopefully, in 10 years or so, we may have a little sky open. As I say, that's when we run through that opening. ■

Responding to Israel's Assault: Palestinian Americans Take the Lead

By Malik Miah

LED BY PALESTINIAN Americans and especially young organizers, support for resistance to Israeli occupation is growing, as solidarity from other groups such as the Black Lives Matter movement has inspired them to stand up.

Many American Jews have joined the protests, including supporters of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). Supporting full equality for Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, JVP is the only major U.S. Jewish group to support the Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

Marches and rallies in solidarity with Palestine have stretched from California to New York. May 15 marked the 73rd anniversary of *al-Nakba* or “catastrophe” in which more than 700,000 Palestinians were driven from or left their homes during the war that created the state of Israel.

A rally held in Santa Rosa, the heart of California wine country, was sponsored by the North Bay Coalition for Palestine. Reported by the local *Press Democrat*, speakers called for justice.

Voices from Marchers

“We are here because we are human beings who care about the suffering of other people,” said Therese Mughannam. She was born in Jerusalem before the British withdrew from Palestine and the creation of the Israeli state.

Protesters in many cities showed up with handmade signs, marching and chanting through megaphones their solidarity with the Palestinian community. As reported by CNN, one protester said: “I definitely feel that the tide is turning in the American public. I feel that we have a lot more support from individuals that are coming out to our protests, that are joining us. They have begun to see Palestine and the liberation of Palestinians as another social justice cause that they should be concerned about.”

Another Palestinian activist added, “I’ve seen on social media like a huge shift of support towards Palestinians. I think what’s really different this time is that people’s communities have grown and expanded and so have our definitions and concepts of

Malik Miah is an ATC advisory editor and long-time activist.



Barbara Barefield

liberation. I just want people to know that Palestinians are human beings just like anyone else in this world and we deserve our right to self-determination.”

Adil Abbuthalha, 23, grabbed his camera and made his way to downtown Sacramento, California on May 16, motivated to march the streets of the state’s capital in solidarity with Palestinians, he told CNN.

“As a Muslim, our prophet teaches us that humanity is like a body — when one part hurts, the rest of the body hurts,” he said. “The unity we saw, regardless of religion or ethnicity, it speaks volumes for the people in Palestine.”

Demonstrators filled the steps leading to the entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Black and Brown Coalition of PHL told CNN that protesters marched from Rittenhouse Square Park to the museum. Many Palestinians had participated in the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020.

Supermodel Bella Hadid, of Palestinian heritage, attended a New York City protest. “The way my heart feels. To be around this many beautiful, smart, respectful, loving, kind and generous Palestinians all in one place... We are a rare breed!!,” a caption on one of Hadid’s Instagram posts read. “It’s free Palestine til Palestine is free!!!”

Rehma Mohamed, 26, joined a big protest in Dallas, Texas. She said she’s never seen a turnout like this before. “I’ve attended every Palestine protest in Dallas, and even during the war in 2014 ... the turnout was only in the hundreds.”

Febi Ramadhan, 27, and his wife, Annisa Mawarni, 25, took to the streets of downtown Chicago and posed for a photo with handmade signs.

“I was saddened and enraged by these continuous acts of violence, and I participated in the rally in downtown Chicago to fight together with Palestinians against this pogrom until the liberation of Palestine actually happens,” Ramadhan told CNN.

BLM Stands with Palestinians

Black Agenda Report (BAR) senior columnist Margaret Kimberley wrote of the freedom struggle: “There aren’t many issues which clearly and unequivocally delineate right from wrong. The question of justice for the Palestinian people and their right to be protected by international law is one which gives no wiggle room for ifs, ands, or buts. Israel’s apartheid system is of such long standing and is so brazen that millions of people feel not only outrage but an insult to their own personal integrity and now speak up though they once demurred.”

“We understand that the liberation of Black people in the United States is tied to the liberation of Black people all over the world, and tied to the liberation of oppressed people all over the world,” said Melina Abdullah, co-founder of the Los Angeles chapter of Black Lives Matter.

“Being in solidarity with the Palestinian people is something that’s been part of our work as Black Lives Matter for almost as long as we’ve been an organization.”

Reuben Telushkin, a Jewish African-American and organizer for JVP, attended the mass rally and march of the Arab-American community in Dearborn, Michigan on the day of Biden’s visit. Telushkin was quoted by Julian Borger in *The Guardian* (May 21, 2021) about how Palestinian and Black activists linked up around the Black Lives Matter actions.

“People were connecting in the streets, connecting online and so pre-existing solidarities were deepening,” as well as polit-

continued on page 28

Zionist Colonization & Its Victim By Moshé Machover

The Hundred Years' War on Palestine:

A History of Settler-colonial Conquest and Resistance, 1917-2017

By Rashid Khalidi

Metropolitan Books (McMillan), 2020, 336 pages, \$20 hardcover.

AS PART OF part of their professional training, historians are warned against injecting their personal narrative into their account of events. Rashid Khalidi's book is a valuable violation of this taboo.

He is a historian, author of scholarly works on nationalism and colonialism in Palestine and the Middle East, and holds the Edward Said professorship of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University.

Khalidi is also a Palestinian American scion of an old aristocratic Jerusalem family, with privileged access to his family's rich archives, and to direct oral eyewitness accounts by his older relatives. He himself witnessed some of the key events in the latter part of the period covered by the book, whether as a critical close observer or marginal participant.

The result is a riveting, informative, powerful and brave book: a blend of objective historiography and personal memoir, including some relevant bits of family history.

It is aimed at the general reader, not at academics; but the evidence provided in the main text, and especially in the footnotes, is rigorous and abundant. Even readers familiar with the main facts will find useful references to primary sources not previously known or available to them.

While not a conventional academic work, the aspect of history covered in this book is conventional: a chronicle of diplomatic, political and military events. For a social and economic history of the colonization of Palestine, the reader must look elsewhere.

The narrative is organized chronologically in six chapters, headlined as successive "declarations of war" against the Palestinian people.

The first chapter covers the period 1917-

Moshé Machover, a founding member of the socialist Matzpen group in Israel, writes frequently for the British Weekly Worker, where this review first appeared (November 6, 2020).

PALESTINE: Essential Reading

WE PRESENT HERE reviews of four recently published works on Palestine, covering important areas of history, current struggles including the rapidly changing political debate in the United States, and what a future "decolonized" and liberated Palestine could look like. We especially encourage our readers to consult these books to understand the background to the latest carnage in Gaza and Israel's continuing ethnic cleansing and repression occupied east Jerusalem and all over Palestine. Other statements and discussions of the unfolding current crisis can be found at our websites:

<https://againstthecurrent.org> and

<https://solidarity-us.org>. ■

39, starting with the Balfour Declaration and ending with the brutal suppression of the Palestinian uprising by massive British forces, aided by Zionist paramilitaries.

Chapter 2 is focused on the 1947-48 war, resulting in the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe). Chapter 3 deals with the 1967 war, which, while not involving the Palestinians directly as belligerents, had calamitous consequences for them.

The fourth chapter centers on Israel's 1982 devastating, deep invasion of Lebanon. The Palestinian resistance forces (which had been expelled from Jordan in the Black September of 1970) were now forced to move out of Lebanon and decamp to Tunisia and other remote places.

The invasion culminated in the Sabra and Shatila massacre of Palestinian refugees by rightwing Lebanese gangs, with barely disguised Israeli encouragement.

The author, accompanied by his young family, was then living in Beirut where he was teaching at the American University. His scary personal account of the Israeli siege and massive bombardment of the city adds an extra dimension to the narrative.

Chapter 5 covers the years 1987-95, beginning with the first Intifada and ending with the Oslo accords. The author was a close observer and occasional participant — albeit a marginal one in an advisory role —

in the series of negotiations held in Madrid, Washington and Oslo.

In my opinion, this chapter is a particularly important part of the book. I will return to this below.

Forthright Critique

The sixth chapter is concerned with the period 2000-14. Israel, having been defeated by Hezbollah and forced to withdraw from south Lebanon after 18 years of occupation, now turned its merciless machine of slaughter and devastation against the people besieged in the Gaza Strip — the most impoverished part of Palestine.

As usual, Israel's imperialist allies and protectors gave it moral and material cover, affirming Israel's right to "self-defense" and hypocritically calling on "both sides" to refrain from violence. Those who condemned Israel as a colonial aggressor were smeared as "anti-Semites."

A final concluding chapter summarizes the book and takes its narrative a couple of years beyond 2017, with a brief discussion of Trump's "deal of the century."

While championing the rights of the Palestinian people — the victim of Zionist colonization sponsored by the imperialist powers — Khalidi is not a one-sided propagandist. On the contrary, he is not only forthright in condemning atrocities committed by Palestinians, but is critical of the leadership of the Palestinian national movement for its disastrous strategy.

This has veered from misconceived and counterproductive armed incursions into Israel from bases around it, to naive trust in the United States. Armed operations, largely against civilian targets, were first mounted by the Palestine Liberation Organization; later, after the PLO abandoned armed struggle in favor of a U.S.-mediated two-state "solution," this strategy was adopted by Hamas.

The author describes as "risible" the idea that "such attacks on civilians were hammer blows that might lead to a dissolution of Israeli society."

"This theory is based on a widespread, but fatally flawed, analysis of Israel as a deeply divided and 'artificial' polity, which ignores the manifestly successful nation-building efforts of Zionism over more than a century, as well as the cohesiveness of Israeli society in spite of its

many internal divisions.”

The Palestinian leadership failed to come to terms with the fact that Zionist colonization created a new Israeli settler-nation in Palestine:

“Most [groups in the Palestinian national movement] felt no sense that there were now two peoples in Palestine, each with national rights; to them Israelis were no more than settlers, foreign immigrants to their country. This position exactly mirrored that of most Israelis, for whom there was only one people with national rights in Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel, and that was the Jewish people, while Arabs were no more than transient interlopers.

“[According to this view] the Israeli Jews were part of a religious group only, not a people or a nation... [Thus] the single democratic state proposal did not recognize the Israelis as a people with national rights.”

Khalidi is too much of an open-eyed historian to be a blind nationalist.

He pointedly remarks that “the constructed nature of all national entities, enraging to apostles of nationalism, is self-evident to those who have studied its genesis in myriad different circumstances.”

Advantage Squandered

Chapter 5 is the most heart-wrenching part of the book. For over a hundred years, the Palestinian people have been subjected to Zionist dispossession and colonisation, supported by imperialist powers. They have suffered defeat after defeat. During almost the entire period, they were at a huge disadvantage against their oppressors.

The only exception was the first Intifada (beginning in December 1987 — ed.). This truly popular mass uprising, led by grassroots committees, using no other weapon than sling-propelled stones — exactly the same as deployed by David against Goliath in the biblical story — put Israel on the back foot.

The Palestinians had a relative advantage not only morally, winning the sympathy of world public opinion, but also operationally. Israel found itself unable to control the Palestinian masses. Suppression of the uprising was exacting a very high price in Israeli military manpower, mobilization and morale.

At this very point Israel found a solution: a proxy that would control the Palestinian masses on its behalf:

“The intifada had brought Rabin and the Israeli security establishment to the realization that the occupation — with Israeli troops policing densely populated Palestinian centers simmering with anger — needed modification.

“The result of that realization, the Oslo framework, was designed to preserve those parts of the occupation that were advantageous to Israel — while offloading onerous responsibilities and simultaneously preventing genuine Palestinian self-determination, statehood



Palestinian activists and allies rally in Dearborn, Michigan.

Barbara Barefield

and sovereignty. Oslo I [the first Oslo accord of 1993] was the first such modification, with others added in subsequent years — all of them aimed at maintaining the disparity of power, irrespective of who was Israel's prime minister.

“Oslo I also involved the most far-reaching modification, which was the decision to enlist the PLO as a subcontractor for the occupation — this was the actual meaning of the security deal Rabin made with Arafat, which my colleagues and I had announced to the American diplomats in June 1993.”

The reasons why Arafat agreed to this sellout — exchanging the achievements of the intifada for the illusory promises and humiliating conditions imposed by Israel — are a combination of hubris, naive trust in American goodwill and a jealous desire to reassert leadership of the Palestinian movement and

wrest it back from the popular committees.

The rest, as the saying goes, is history. From their high point of popular resistance, the Palestinian people descended back to being the victims of intensifying oppression.

Divided between the world's biggest prison camp — the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip — and the West Bank, policed by the PLO on Israel's behalf, their situation is worsening by the day. In this situation it is difficult to look to the immediate or medium-term future with any degree of optimism.

Khalidi manages to find some hopeful signs in the growing support for Palestinian rights in world public opinion. I would like to share this hope: it may at least be possible to mobilize it to prevent the very real danger of another *nakba*: a major ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. ■

Palestinian Americans Take the Lead — continued from page 26

icizing previously uninvolved folks.

In the Ferguson, Missouri 2014 protests, “Palestinians were demonstrating their solidarity by sending tweets to protesters in Ferguson about how to treat teargas.”

Blood on Biden's Hands

President Biden, like former presidents Trump and Obama, has come under protest and pressure from Palestinian American and their allies because of the U.S. government's total support to the criminal acts of Israel.

Biden's pledge to defend Israel's “right of self-defense” over occupied people who have no air force, no real military for protection from Israeli bombs, is like saying that slaveholders had a “right of self-defense” as they beat and lynched slaves who dared to revolt.

Biden has blood on his hands. But some

in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, led by Rashida Tlaib from Detroit, the only elected Palestinian congresswoman, have begun speaking out about Israel's oppressive system.

Historically in South Africa, apartheid wanted Blacks separated into Bantustans. Today's eviction of Palestinian homeowners in Jerusalem, leading to the current resistance and war, is a continuation of the historic Zionist goal to remove and replace Palestinians from all the land Israel occupies.

Protests will continue. The example of the 2020 mass protests against police violence lives on.

The truths about Israel and U.S. policy are beginning to be told because of the resistance shown by Palestinians around the world. Self-determination and in the end a secular democratic state can be won. ■

Toward One Democratic State? Conceiving Decolonization

By David Finkel

Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine.

Zionism, Settler Colonialism, and the
Case for One Democratic State

By Jeff Halper

Foreword by Nadia Naser-Najjab

Pluto Press, 2021, 208 pages + notes and index,
\$19.95 paperback.

THIS IS A powerful and challenging text that poses as many questions as it answers — particularly at the terrible moment of Israel's May 2021 assault on the all-Aqsa mosque, the pending ethnic cleansing of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, and the latest round of murderous bombing of Gaza.

Jeff Halper asks:

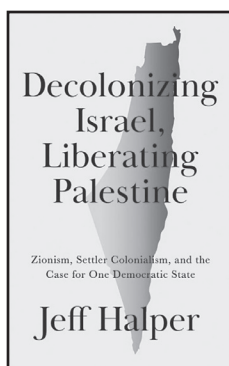
"What does decolonization entail? What replaces a colonial regime? How do we overcome Israeli opposition to a single state (and no less Israeli indifference to the entire issue), as well as the unconditional support Israel receives from the world's governments? What is our strategy for reaching a just, post-colonial reality?"

"(N)o one has really thought through the entire process of decolonization, very different from conflict resolution but the only way out of a colonial situation," he maintains, "the one-state solution might, indeed, be 'in the air' (but) is not yet a viable alternative." (7)

This entire book is presented as "really a kind of working paper" (11) to think through some answers. Importantly, the ideas are not Halper's alone, but what he describes as the collective efforts of some 50 Palestinian and 20 Israeli intellectuals and activists gathered in the One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC) that Halper co-founded in 2018.

The author identifies as a "colonizer who refuses" (i.e. refuses to happily accept the benefits of privileged status) in the spirit of the Tunisian anti-colonial Jewish writer Albert Memmi. This reminds me of Michael Warschawski, the Israeli activist whose memoir *On the Border* discusses a double struggle trying to defend the Palestinian "border" against Israeli depredations, while fighting to open the Israeli side of the same "border" from its exclusion of Palestinians. Halper of course wants to erase that border

David Finkel is an ATC editor and member of Jewish Voice for Peace-Detroit.



estinian, since we would raise different but no less important issues from our different perspectives." (11)

Halper is an American-Israeli anthropologist by training and from Hibbing, Minnesota — also the birthplace as he likes to point out of Robert Zimmerman (Bob Dylan) and U.S. Communist Party leader Gus Hall. Halper moved to Israel in 1973 and became involved in anti-occupation and peace activism. He's been the longtime organizer of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN — <https://icahd.org>), whose direct-action work on the ground deserves to be widely known.

Anatomy of Settler Colonialism

In the course of this work, Halper has theorized and extensively documented the Israeli "Matrix of Control" over the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). He extends this analysis here to a total "Dominance Management Regime" over the colonized population, the "mechanism for completing the task of colonization" with "the rise of a hybrid regime over Palestine, a deadly combination of settler colonialism, occupation and apartheid." (94)

Halper's previous book is the absolute must-read *War Against the People. Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification* (Pluto Press, 2015), which explains the mystery of "How does Israel get away with it?" In fact Israel's experience, technique and technology of population control and repression, refined in the laboratory of the OPT, has become extraordinarily "useful" to global elites of many varieties. (The book was reviewed in ATC 187, "A Global Matrix of Control.")

Of course a short review cannot capture

together, to the degree it still exists.

He explains that the initial intention was for this book to be co-authored "with a Palestinian colleague, but as we approached the work...we thought it better that an Israeli analysis of Zionist settler colonialism should stand separately from an analysis by a Pal-

the details and depth of Halper's treatment of settler colonialism both globally and in the specific circumstance of Palestine/Israel.

The first five chapters, comprising two sections on "Zionism as Settler Colonial Project" and "Three Cycles of Zionist Colonial Development" naturally contain a lot of material also available in numerous other excellent sources, but are also a masterful introduction for readers new to the subject.

The overview of settler colonialism as a global phenomenon is thought-provoking in itself. Halper cites the obvious and well-known cases of North America, Australia and New Zealand, Spanish and Portuguese colonization in the Caribbean and Latin America, and European powers in Africa, as well as the takeover "of Tibet by the Chinese. Lesser known cases include the Russians in the Kazakh steppe, Central Asia and Siberia... the Indonesians in New Guinea, and the Scandinavians among the Sami." (19)

There are wide differences among these cases as to whether the goal was to simply loot territories of natural resources, to enslave and exploit their populations, or to transfer a sector of the population of the conquering state to the new land (Karl Marx, by the way, called these "colonies properly so-called").

In the distinctive Zionist case, the minority of the Jewish population emigrating to Palestine from Eastern and Central European countries wasn't dispatched by those states, but enabled by other colonial interests and propelled both by the general rise of European nationalist movements and by growing antisemitism. Nonetheless, "(w)hatever its justification, the Zionist takeover of Palestine resembled other instances where foreign settlers, armed with a sense of entitlement, conquered a vulnerable country."

That's why Halper insists, in this and other cases of "unilateral, asymmetrical invasion," that the inevitable Indigenous resistance "can hardly be called a 'conflict.'" The discourse of "Israeli/Palestinian conflict" must be rejected. Rather, "we must speak of Zionist settler colonialism." (19)

Language matters! By the conclusion of "The Occupation Cycle (1967-Present)," Israel has turned to constructing a massive *hasbara* or propaganda apparatus that Halper labels "the Management of Legiti-

macy.” This strategy deploys the language of “conflict” between “sides,” conveying “the image of Israel as the victim fighting for its existence,” and its treatment of Palestinians as “an internal matter” — which anyone witnessing mainstream media knows has been swallowed hook, line and sinker. But:

“If the Management of Legitimacy has had some success in convincing governments that a two-state illusion that leaves Israel free to colonize the OPT is the best tool for conflict management... it has taken an ominous and cynical turn over the past two decades, since the collapse of the Oslo process. Finding it increasingly difficult to argue its case on its merits, especially in light of its massive settlement drive and the specter of annexation, together with more effective Palestinian advocacy, the Israeli government and its advocates have come to portray any criticism of Israeli policy as anti-Semitism.” (107-8)

Those of us in the United States know this too, as a number of state governments and universities, as well as the Trump administration (Biden is more ambiguous) are weaponizing the appalling IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) declaration on antisemitism to criminalize Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions (BDS) activism in support of Palestinian rights.

In response to all this, Halper insists that “resistance on its own is not sufficient... unless it is accompanied by a political program. That is lacking today.” (109)

The concluding five chapters on “Decolonizing Zionism, Liberating Palestine” boldly set out to formulate the decolonization program, and constitute the book’s most innovative and challenging section. While I’ll try to summarize this program and what I see as its difficulties, it’s a rich and essential discussion to read and grapple with.

Challenges of Decolonization

To enter the complexities of the problem, we might begin with Jeff Halper’s principled self-identification as the “colonizer who refuses” — in his own case, someone who could freely leave any time and has chosen instead to remain committed as a “co-resister,” a “(junior) partner in a joint Palestinian/Israeli struggle for decolonization” and a survivable future society.” (9)

It’s a bit less clear how that choice applies, say, to Jeff’s Israeli-born children and grandchildren. Much more important is the question of what it means for the great majority of Israel’s 6.8 million or so Jewish citizens, the majority non-Ashkenazi or Russian, who have no alternative “home” to which to return or relocate.

We are not speaking here of privileged

middle-class Jews coming from America, or the highly subsidized settler thugs who move from places like Brooklyn so they can act like a Jewish Klux Klan in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and now as vigilante mobs in Palestinian neighborhoods inside Israel. (If these goons were acting on their own, they could be dealt with in criminal courts like the January 6 U.S. Capitol mob — but of course that’s not the situation.)

That Israeli-Jewish majority, as Halper would say “indigenous” (small i) to the country but not (large I) “Indigenous” Palestinians, are “colonizers” in the context of a settler-colonial reality. But the decolonization program that Halper seeks must answer the question of what’s in it for them — as he knows of course.

One big question is recognizing that, like it or not, there actually is now a distinct Israeli “Hebrew” or Jewish nation in historic Palestine — an oppressor nation over the oppressed Palestinian one, but with a class structure and economic reality, i.e. not equivalent to the French *colons* in Algeria or the case of South Africa which depends (under both apartheid and post-apartheid regimes) on black labor.

The historian Rashid Khalidi for example, whose work *The Hundred Years War on Palestine* is also reviewed in this issue of ATC, is forthright about this reality. Halper knows it too; but as I read his text (I may be wrong about this) he seems to concede it in passing, and somewhat hesitantly: in a decolonized democracy Jews would freely “carry on their lives as Jews and as members of diverse ethnic, religious, voluntary or even national communities.” (199)*

Might this be one of the difficult programmatic issues in forging agreement among the Palestinian and Israeli participants in the ODSC? To be clear, at a time when Israel refuses recognition of the Palestinian nation and its right to self-determination, it’s obscene to demand Palestinian recognition of the Israeli one — although on more than one occasion the official Palestinian leadership has done so!

In the blessed event of Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationhood, however, I can’t imagine any way out of the mess unless Israeli-Jewish nationhood — *not* Jewish supremacy or “the nation-state of the Jewish people” globally, of course — is mutually recognized too. But this is far from what I see as the biggest problem, to which I’ll return.

Plunging into the thicket of the discussion, Halper draws both on general theories of decolonization and on the specific issues

of Palestine. The general tenets of decolonization revolve around the guiding principle that the strategies, tactics, language and needs of the Indigenous struggle must never be assimilated to or constrained by those of the colonizers, whether sympathetic or otherwise. This insistence infuses the entire text.

At the same time, Halper posits that “A joint struggle against colonialism enables a vision of a shared future,” and that in Palestine after a century of struggle “we are dealing with a particular kind of settler colonialism, in which the settlers and the Indigenous have arrived at a draw. Neither can defeat the other, and both have constructed compelling national narratives.”

The close comparative case he sees is that of South Africa and “the process followed by the ANC (African National Congress) in formulating its detailed vision document and political plan, the Freedom Charter.” (134-5)

Based on this model, “(d)ecolonization aspires to uncouple national feeling and residence in the country from settler colonialism... offering the Zionists a ‘deal.’ If you go through a process of decolonization, then the indigenous Palestinians, now in a position of parity, will agree to integrate you into the new ‘national’ political community.” (137)

It’s a powerful vision. One thing I like is how it corresponds to something that the longtime liberal Zionist Peter Beinart (himself with South African roots) who now supports “a single democratic state” has been putting forward: What matters now is not some “solution” that can be implemented right away, which doesn’t exist, but a programmatic vision that can energize a movement.

Contradictions

What I can’t share is Halper’s optimism, laid out in his Chapter 9 titled “Toward Post-coloniality,” that “(T)he good news is that the campaign to decolonize Palestine is farther along than we realize,” and “in fact, the Palestinians enjoy an advantage over the resistance movement of South Africa.” (171, 172)

In fact, Halper’s book is entirely clear in more than one place that the Israeli-Jewish public in its vast majority has checked out of any serious concern about the Occupation or Palestinian rights, let alone an equitable future on any terms. The implication — rightly, I believe — is that short-term change in Israeli behavior must be imposed *from the outside*, through the power of international civil society influencing global power; with Israeli-Jewish public opinion, we might hope, beginning to shift subsequently.

But here is a fundamental contradiction. While Israeli government action can — and

continued on page 34

* In a complex discussion, Halper lays out concepts and problems of “binationalism,” “shared sovereignty” and “liberal democracy.” (156-162). Without drawing definitive conclusions, he states that “(i)n the ODSC proposal it is up to the collective in question to define the nature of its own identity,” conceding that this “leaves unresolved, however, the national element of Israeli Jewish identity.” The possibility of a socialist future isn’t raised here or elsewhere in the book, although Halper conceives that today’s struggle might become “a stepping stone to the interconnected and multilateral region that once existed” in the Middle East and North Africa. (201)

A Socialist Introduction: Not a Cause for Palestinians Only

By Merry Maisel

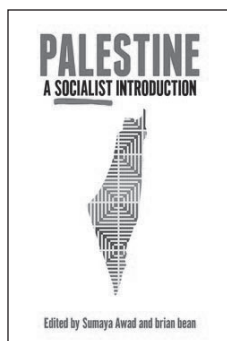
Palestine:

Socialist Introduction

Edited by Sumaya Awad and brian bean
Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020, 244 pages,
\$18.95 paperback.

"The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever he is, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era."

— Ghassan Kanafani



THIS SENTENCE FROM Kanafani's history of the Great Revolt (1936-1939) in Palestine is the epigraph of a superbly edited volume of essays on Palestine from the *Nakba* (1948) to the present.

A well-known Palestinian novelist, journalist, and activist, Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972) was a mentee of George Habash and a founding member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). He was assassinated by the Israeli secret service (Mossad), which claimed to be responding to the Lod airport massacre.

The sentence is also quoted at the beginning of the keynote speech given by Charlotte Kates, international coordinator of Samidoun (the Palestine Prisoner Solidarity Network), at a worldwide Zoom conference on May 1, 2021, called to outline a new vision for an alternative revolutionary path for the Palestinian struggle.

The conference was co-organized by Masar Badil (Alternative Palestinian Path), a group led by members of the Palestinian diaspora in Germany; videos of the keynotes are available at Samidoun.org.

As Kates points out, Kanafani's internationalism is on display. "Many comrades [are] out on the streets today, in cities around the world, holding high the Palestinian flag, the banners of struggle, and the promise for justice and liberation."

That has been so almost every day in recent memory. *Palestine: A Socialist Introduction* appeared in December 2020, the conference was held in May 2021, and the days since have seen a remarkably short tolerance around the world for Israel's latest effort

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to "mow the lawn" once again in Gaza.

Two weeks of giant demonstrations and protests against dispossession in East Jerusalem and worship at Al Aqsa Mosque have shown that the message carried by these heralds and so many others is being received, loud and clear, on all possible channels. This time,

the winds of change are blowing a lot harder.

This book offers an excellent and comprehensive quick course on the history, organizations, methods and outcomes of the Palestinian liberation struggle up to the present moment. Editors Sumaya Awad, a Palestinian activist based in New York, and brian bean, a Chicago-based socialist writer and editor, have assembled nine essays and interviews with socialists, mostly of Palestinian origins, that speak together of the past 73-year period of gradual intensification of Israeli government pressure on the Palestinian people to . . . vanish, poof!

Because this pressure takes various forms, from "legal" discrimination and dispossession to summary execution to mass murder, the volume considers the situation of Palestinians and their allies from every angle (gender, race, class) and locale — within various Israeli borders or in besieged or occupied land, and beyond, into the Arab and Muslim worlds and globally.

An introduction by the editors is followed by a brief timeline to aid readers who may be new to or unfamiliar with the long-unfolding history of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. The rest of the volume is divided into three parts: "Circumstances Given and Transmitted from the Past," "The Road to Jerusalem Goes through Cairo," and a final programmatic section "Workers of the World, Unite."

A conclusion by the editors is appended that might take the place of an introduction for pro-Palestinian socialists. A call to action spurred by the Great March of Return in 2018-19 forms an "afterword," a bit extra like a second coda to a Romantic symphony, that welcomes the reader to the movement that is under way around the Earth.

History, Contradictions, Perspectives

The three contributions that gather and summarize the birth of the ongoing reality are master works of study, wide reading, and lived experience by Awad, Annie Levin (a member of Jewish Voice for Peace), and Egyptian activist Mustafa Omar. If you are young, think of learning from the wise; if a bit older, savor the scholarship and dedication in these essays.

The following group of three articles ("road to Jerusalem") comes to grips with the nearly insoluble contradictions faced by any participant in the struggle who wants to know, going forward, who is an ally? What to make of the "peace process," that phrase which covers a multitude of sins? And finally, how might the contradictions be unraveled?

Palestinian fighters for justice live in a set of nested boxes: The immediate ghetto into which they have been forced (the "Arab quarter" of the "mixed cities" within the current Israeli borders, or the West Bank, or Gaza, or the diaspora abroad) forms the first box; the Arab world, with its reactionary regimes and struggling masses, surrounds the first box; and the rest of the world in which similar struggles roil is the outer box. What must happen, then?

Here Daphna Thier, an Israeli anti-Zionist, contributes the already controversial "Not an Ally: The Israeli Working Class," characterizing Israeli workers as bought-off by their privileged status, and whose organizations, no matter how far left they once claimed to be, are corrupt, deeply Zionist and class-collaborationist.

Her take will undoubtedly offend the doctrinaire or unaware so-called socialist who may dream of alliances between Palestinian toilers and their Israeli brethren. But in practical and tactical terms, she nails it. The old mole must dig too much dirt to emerge from this pile in recordable history. Certainly, the fundamental contradictions of capitalism are at work in this layer, as in any other class struggle — but indeed, it is not the first place to go to find comrades, however valuable they may be if ever they do awaken.

In "The Price of 'Peace' on Their Terms," Tofic Haddad (director of the Council for British Research in the Kenyon Institute in

continued on page 35

When Liberals Fail on Palestine

By Donald B. Greenspon

Except for Palestine

The Limits of Progressive Politics

By Marc Lamont Hill and Mitchell Plitnick

The New Press, 2021, 240 pages,

\$25.99 hardcover.

THE TITLE OF this book is partly based on a label applied to many progressives in the United States: “Progressive Except for Palestine.” *Except for Palestine* argues that progressives and liberals who oppose repressive policies on immigration, racial justice, gender equality, endless wars, LGBTQ rights and other human rights issues, must extend these principles and values to the oppression of Palestinians.

The challenge is particularly timely right now, as the longstanding consensus of the Democratic Party “in support of Israel” is fraying with Israel’s latest brutal assault on Gaza and continuing ethnic cleansing in occupied East Jerusalem. Palestinian American young people today are speaking out and finding growing support among Black Lives Matter activists and their allies.

Marc Lamont Hill is a professor at Temple University and was a commentator on CNN until the network fired him for his support for “free Palestine.” Mitchell Plitnick was a founder and served as a staff person for Jewish Voice for Peace.

The authors’ definition of the “except Palestine” syndrome is encapsulated by their quote from a “progressive including Palestine” commentator, Mehdi Hasan:

“A proud supporter of liberal interventions will back interventions everywhere, except occupied territories. Their heart bleeds for Syrians, Libyans, Afghan, Iraqi, Rwandans, but not for Palestinians.”

The book covers four areas where there has been a historical gap between progressive and liberal principles and values, and their silence and apathy towards Israel: 1) Israel’s demand that the Palestinians recognize its right to exist in general and particularly as a “Jewish state;” 2) the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (“BDS”) movement;

Don Greenspon is on the Steering Committee of Jewish Voice for Peace-Detroit. In June 2014 he was a member of a peace delegation that toured Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

3) The failure to recognize that Trump’s policies, although brash and distinctive on their face, were not really a significant break from longstanding American policies towards Israel; and 4) the horrible humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Right to Exist As What?

Israel’s demand that its recognition be affirmed as a Jewish state, or “the nation-state of the Jewish people,” is historically unique and extremely problematic.

In the international system, states recognize each others’ territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders, and acknowledge (or deny) the legitimacy of their current government.

Most of the world recognizes Israel as a state. While it came into existence by the dispossession of another people through settler colonialism, Israel’s dispossession of its native population parallels what occurred in Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United States — and the world recognizes all of these entities as states, nevertheless. Recognition also entails obligations under terms of international law.

Israel’s demand that its right to exist as “the Jewish state” be affirmed is *exclusively aimed at the Palestinians*, the victims of historical and continuing Zionist settler colonialism. That demand is not directed toward other states.

The function of this relatively new demand is to deny Palestinians their rights and self-determination in their own homeland. Under this irrational and discriminatory demand, Israel wants the Palestinians to affirm its existence (as “the Jewish state”) while Israel has never even defined its own borders.

In fact the Palestinian leadership has recognized Israel on three different occasions: 1) in the Palestinian declaration of independence of November 15, 1988 which accepted a Palestinian state only in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. This implicitly recognized Israel within its 1967 borders; 2) in PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat’s speech to the United Nations in 1988 wherein he recognized Israel’s right to exist; and 3) in a letter Arafat gave to Israel’s Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, during the Oslo negotiations in which he affirmed the PLO’s recognition

of the State of Israel, to exist in peace and security.

It bears repeating that Israel does not demand that other states recognize it as a Jewish state — not the United States, the European Union, nor even the Arab League or the non-aligned states.

Egypt and Jordan have peace agreements with Israel without the unusual recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. The same is true of its recent diplomatic arrangements with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

The authors inquire why Israel demands that it be recognized as a Jewish state, when the world has never recognized Iran as “the Islamic Republic,” Saudi Arabia as an absolute monarchy, Sweden as a constitutional monarchy, or the United States as a federal republic.

Their answer is obvious: Palestinian recognition of “a Jewish state” would affirm the secondary status of Israel’s non-Jewish citizens and tacitly make them accept their own discrimination.

The Israeli Knesset passed the “Nation-State Law” in July, 2018. It specifies that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people and national self-determination in the State of Israel exclusively belongs to “the Jewish people.” As such, it codifies into law that non-Jewish Israelis are second-class citizens.

This would be analogous to the U.S. Constitution stating that the USA is a “Christian” nation. For Palestinians to accept this characterization of Israel would be tantamount to supporting their own oppression. It would immediately compromise Palestinian freedom and ultimately their self-determination.

This demand is not only inconsistent with international law, but also contrary to anything resembling progressive values. It is a profound regression from the basic principles of equal citizenship rights.

Criminalizing BDS

On July 9, 2005 Palestinian civil society, consisting of 170 groups, called for the boycott, divestment and sanctions (“BDS”) against Israel. This call was timed to correspond to the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) holding that Israel’s construction of its wall in the West Bank violated international law.

The BDS call occurred after the end of

the second Intifada, when it was recognized that a nonviolent nonmilitary movement was necessary to secure Palestinian rights.

This movement was loosely modeled after the world-wide opposition to South African apartheid and had four goals: 1) ending the occupation; 2) removal of the separation wall in the West Bank (i.e. the “apartheid” wall); 3) equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel; and 4) assuring the Palestinian right of return as stated in UN resolution 194 and upheld many times since.

Israel initially ignored the BDS movement, but this changed dramatically around 2009-2010 when Israel began to mercilessly attack the BDS campaign. This change occurred because BDS gained tremendous support and momentum within the international community.

It also resulted from Israel’s reputation being tarnished by its vicious attack on Gaza in 2009, which it called Operation Cast Lead; the election of right-wing nationalist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu that same year; and Israel’s fatal attack on the Free Gaza Movement flotilla’s Turkish ship Mavi Marmara on May 31, 2020.

The attacks on the BDS movement in the United States have been relentless. In 2010 the Anti-Defamation League listed the top ten U.S. anti-Israel groups, based primarily on their support for BDS. As of January 2020, 28 U.S. states have passed laws and policies penalizing businesses, organizations and individuals engaging in (or even refusing to disavow) boycotts against Israel.

There have been legal challenges in three of these states, Kansas, Arizona and Texas, and in all cases these laws were struck down as violations of the First Amendment.

In February, 2019 the US Senate passed the “Combating BDS Act of 2019.” This bill, which would have allowed states and municipalities to follow through on laws that were already declared unconstitutional by the federal courts, fortunately did not pass the House of Representatives.

Progressive folks who have always supported popular boycotts such as those against Chick-fil-A for funding anti-Queer groups, Hobby Lobby for its denial of women’s right to contraceptives because of “religious values” and Walmart for its anti-labor practices should be hard pressed to oppose BDS.

BDS is not the only nonviolent legal tactic that the U.S. government and many of its supporters have condemned, including so-called progressives and liberals. These have included legal and diplomatic penalties for Palestinians going to the International Criminal Court and for joining the UN General Assembly.

Those who oppose BDS and other nonviolent legal tactics allow Palestinians only one route to redress their grievances — bilateral

talks with Israel under U.S. auspices, which have been proven utter failures for over a quarter century.

BDS shifts the conversation from states, territories and nations to *equal rights*. Those opposing BDS attempt to censor this conversation, because they cannot win the battle on the terrain of rights. Here again they are completely out of step with progressive values.



Taking the lead, looking for allies. Palestinian Americans challenge the “Progressive Except Palestine” syndrome.

Barbara Barefield

Trump’s Policies

Donald Trump implemented many policies towards Israel/Palestine which many charged were great and dangerous historical deviations from the status quo.

These included recognizing Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights (Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967), moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and cutting aid to the United Nations Relief Works Administration (UNRWA).

The authors discuss whether Trump’s actions were real breaks from decades of U.S. policy or rather only dangerous extensions.

On March 25, 2019 Trump recognized Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights and was rewarded a couple of months thereafter by having an Israeli settlement there renamed after him “Trump Heights.”

There is no question that Trump’s action violated international law. The UN charter specifically forbids the acquisition of territory by force, as Israel did in the 1967 war.

No other country in the world has recognized Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This non-recognition had also been Washington’s official position. The United States, however, never actually opposed Israel’s settlement expansion in the Golan

Heights.

This *laissez-faire* attitude towards Israel settlement activity in the Golan Heights effectively allowed Israel to do as it pleased, especially as Syria was consumed by its civil war since 2011.

Whatever the U.S. official or *de facto* position towards Israel sovereignty towards the Golan Heights, it did not change the facts on the ground. It did, however, take away a bargaining chip to obtain an agreement between Israel and Syria.

In addition, from 1972 to the present time, the United States has vetoed 44 UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel. It also blocks Security Council cease-fire resolutions during Israel’s assaults on Gaza until the Israeli government signals its assent.

Trump’s moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which opened on May 14, 2018, was indeed unique in many ways. In 1947 the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181 which declared Jerusalem to be an international entity not belonging to a future or Jewish state. In 1949 Israel claimed Jerusalem as its capital, a claim not recognized by the international community.

In 1980 Israel passed a Basic Law claiming Jerusalem as its complete and united capital. (This now includes the vastly expanded “Greater” and “Metropolitan” Jerusalem virtually bisecting the West Bank.) Here again, no other country recognized Israel’s claim, and Israel was censured by the UN Security Council.

Yet Trump’s actions relative to Jerusalem, although largely seen as unique and reckless, were actually in line with the gradual change in U.S. policy. During both Ronald Reagan’s and Bill Clinton’s primary campaigns, they supported recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Once in office, however, they did not follow through on their campaign promises.

On October 23, 1995, Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, which required the embassy to move to Jerusalem by May 31, 1999. Clinton neither signed nor vetoed this Act, and it became law on November 8, 1995. But the Act included a six-month waiver which was continuously renewed until 2018.

In conclusion, Trump did not drastically overturn U.S. policy towards Jerusalem, but instead fulfilled legislative policy which gradually approved of the embassy move over time.

The Refugee Crisis

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) was created in 1949 to provide protection, social services, education and relief to the Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1947-48 war. Israel grudgingly accepted UNRWA for a couple of reasons. First, it faced overwhelming world criticism for creating the refugee problem in the first

place. Second, it gave itself an excuse for not being responsible for the refugees.

On August 31, 2018 Trump cut all U.S. financial aid to UNRWA, comprising a third of its budget. There were a couple of ostensible reasons for Trump's actions. It demonstrated his overwhelming support for Israel, and was another way of attacking the Obama administration which never cut aid to UNRWA. (Biden has restored UNRWA funding — ed.)

Aside from these reasons, the authors offer a symbolic and potentially much more important explanation. By attacking UNRWA Trump wanted to take the important issue of refugee right of return off the table.

Advised by neoconservative Zionist forces, Trump believed that the five million refugees and descendants of refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars would no longer have refugee rights as defined by UNRWA.

Trump's position was totally misguided. Palestinians right of return is not based on any UNRWA definition but on international law. This right of return is sanctioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN General Assembly resolution 194, which has no "statute of limitations" for terminating refugee rights.

Hill and Plitnick maintain that Trump's position on defunding UNRWA and Palestinian right of return was no great break from U.S. policy.

For example, in a letter from President George W. Bush to then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Bush stated there should be no expectation that Israel would allow return to Palestinian refugees to Israel's internationally recognized borders.

This was also in line with other U.S. policies, reducing aid to the Palestinian Authority, closing the PLO office in Washington, and the State Department's position that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories weren't inherently illegal.

Gaza's Continuing Disaster

Gaza is home to approximately 1.8 million Palestinians, most of them refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars. It is generally referred to as an "open air prison" with Israel and Egypt controlling the entrance and exit of all people and goods. The situation was catastrophic long before the horrors of May, 2021.

In September, 2015 the UN Conference on Trade and Development issued a grim report on Gaza, finding that it had a 44% unemployment rate, GDP had plummeted by 30% since 1994, 72% of the population was food insecure, and 95% of the water in coastal aquifers is not drinkable. Several years ago the United Nations stated Gaza would be essentially uninhabitable by the year 2020.

From 1970-2001 Israel established 21 Jewish-only settlements in the Gaza strip. As

the second Intifada waned, Sharon withdrew these settlements.

As the renowned Palestinian writer Edward Said stated, Gaza became a millstone around Israel's neck for which it did not want responsibility. Rather, Israel wanted to use Oslo to give Gaza to the Palestinians and keep the best lands elsewhere for itself.

A watershed event occurred on January 20, 2006. In the first Palestine Legislative Elections held since 1996, Hamas unexpectedly won the majority of seats in the Palestine Legislative Council (PLC). Although the United States had designated Hamas a terrorist organization, its victory was mainly attributed to its rival, Fatah, being seen as ineffective and corrupt.

According to Noam Chomsky, Gazans committed the cardinal sin of "voting the wrong way." As a result in May, 2006 Congress passed the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006 which forbade aid to the Palestinian Authority unless the President certified that no PA ministry, agency or instrumentality was controlled by Hamas.

This Act was co-sponsored by 294 members of Congress. In the House only 31 Democrats and six Republicans voted against it, and in the Senate it had 91 co-sponsors. Even Representative Betty McCollum, widely

recognized as the most principled defender in Congress of Palestinian rights, still supported the milder Senate version of the law.

A subsequent U.S.-supported abortive coup left Hamas in power in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank, an impasse frozen until the present day. On December 27, 2008 Israel launched a major military operation against Gaza, called "Operation Cast Lead," the first of four major attacks on Gaza in the next six years.

According to Al Haq, a Palestinian human rights organization, Israel killed 1409 Palestinians, of whom 1172 were civilians including 342 children. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) authorized a fact-finding mission to investigate this operation which was led by Richard Goldstone, a Jewish South African jurist with strong connections to Israel.

The 450-page report which followed found that Israel, Hamas, and other Palestinian groups were guilty of "violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws and possible war crimes, and crimes against humanity."

Israel, which refused to participate in the investigation, expectedly denounced the findings, as did the Obama administration and a large bipartisan majority in Congress.

Goldstone, under widespread attack from

Conceiving Decolonization — continued from page 30

must — be constrained by global outrage, the threat of sanctions and "pariah state" status, what can't be imposed from outside is democracy, much less "One Democratic State"! Nor will it arise from military forces.

Halper observes that apartheid "South Africa hardly had the strategic importance that Israel has" (172), which did become true of South Africa at least with the end of the Cold War, but his own book *War Against the People* shows precisely that Israel's export of the means and methods of state terror make it a powerful asset to global and regional oppressors.

What's more, where Halper argues that "the Israeli/Palestinian issue has been viewed as a major source of disruption throughout the Middle East and thus of key interest to the global powers to resolve" (173), the debacle of the endless "peace process" suggests to me instead that Palestine has become increasingly marginal to the concerns of U.S. imperialism except for periodic explosions, while Europe is in too much of a mess to do anything serious about it.

Most important of all, I'm afraid, much of the pro-Palestinian solidarity movement has the illusion that South African apartheid was brought down by the power of international sanctions and boycotts, which can be replicated to free Palestine. This is radically mistaken: Democracy was "imposed" on the 20% South African white minority, but

international pressure although important was secondary to the power of the African working class that could threaten to paralyze the economy and make the country ungovernable. *Non-racial democracy, with its advances and its limitations, emerged in South Africa from the inside.*

Indeed, it was that black working-class threat (moral pressure was secondary) that propelled imperialist regimes and global finance to break from their decades-long friendly tolerance — "constructive engagement," in the sickening language of the time — with the apartheid regime.

Because of the way Zionist settlement and state construction proceeded, there is no such power of the Palestinian working class to challenge the Israeli state. Palestinian labor of course is exploited, because capital exists to exploit labor wherever it exists, but it's not central to Israel's capitalist economy or state structures. And that also helps explain global relative indifference.

The future is volatile and unpredictable, but it's hard to see anything like "post-coloniality" in Palestine without a long, hard struggle on many fronts. None of this detracts from what Jeff Halper and his ODSC comrades are working to accomplish, which is part of that struggle, or from the value of his dissection of Zionist colonization and the entangled societies it has produced. An important read! ■

all sides, especially Israel, eventually gave in, and in an April, 2011 op-ed undermined some of the report's findings (i.e. that it was Israel's strategy to harm the civilian population of Gaza). He did this without consulting the report's two co-authors.

Israel again launched a large scale military assault of Gaza in the summer of 2014 called "Operation Protective Edge." During the 50 days of fighting 2202 Palestinians were killed, including 1371 civilians, as well as 68 Israelis.

In Spring 2018 tens of thousands of Gazans began taking part in unarmed protests at the Israeli border organized by grassroots activists and civil society. The goal was to focus attention on the siege of Gaza and to bring to the forefront the Palestinian Right of Return enshrined in UN Resolution 194. After one year of continuous demonstrations, Israel had killed approximately 266 Palestinians and wounded over 30,000.

In all these military operations and attacks on protests, Israel engaged in what only can be described as collective punishment, violating international law. Despite this, most Democrats, including those who consider themselves to be progressive or liberal, have been as silent as Republicans in speaking out against Israel's vicious attacks.

Conclusion: The Picture Changes

"To move beyond the current limits," Hill and Plitnick contend, "progressives must embrace a more principled politics, one that begins by recognizing the fundamental humanity of Palestinians...entitled to the same rights to freedom, justice, equality, safety, and self-determination as everyone else around the world. Only from this place can equal human, civil, individual, and national rights for both Israelis and Palestinians be achieved."

Despite the authors' criticism of progressives and liberals for not extending their human rights principles and values to Israel/Palestine, they are optimistic about the future. They cite the positions that Bernie Sanders took in his 2016 presidential campaign where he criticized the Netanyahu government's rightwing policies, labeled the Israeli policies in Gaza "disproportionate," and described U.S. policy towards Israel in general as "one-sided."

They also mention the significance of the two Muslim women elected to Congress, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar. Both are supporters of BDS, which did not appear to negatively affect their successful campaigns.

Opinions are changing at the base. The authors describe polls demonstrating that Palestinian rights have become more popular with the America public over time.

A University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll released in December 2018, one month after the mid-term elections, revealed that 56% of Democrats would agree to "impose

sanctions" or "take more serious action" towards Israeli settlements while only 39% would agree to "do nothing" or "criticize but do nothing more."

In Pew Research Center polls, while in 2016 48% favored Israelis and 29% favored Palestinians, by 2018 27% were sympathetic towards Israelis and 25% were sympathetic to Palestinians. Among liberal Democrats sympathy for Palestinians rose from 22% in 2016 to 35% in 2018, whereas sympathy for Israelis was 22% in 2016 and only 19% in 2018.

The authors criticize progressives and liberals for not applying their values to Israel/Palestine, despite Israel's horrendous treatment of Palestinians as thoroughly described in their book, but don't provide explanations for this inconsistency.

They do mention that progressive youth are much more consistent in applying their values to Israel/Palestine. One plausible explanation could be that young people do not view Israel through the lens of the Nazi holocaust as much as their elders do. This would be a valuable topic for a future work.

In the face of progressive silence and/or weak opposition to Israel's crimes against the Palestinians, the Republican Party has abandoned any interest in Palestinian rights and totally backs Israeli policies.

In 2016 the goal of a two-state settlement

was eliminated from the Republican Party platform. In November, 2019 Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a new U.S. policy that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are legal under international law.

In conclusion, the authors see overwhelming support for Israeli policies from conservatives on the one hand, and either silence or weak opposition to Israeli crimes from progressives on the other.

As Martin Luther King wrote in his 1963 "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," explaining the Black freedom struggle at the time, it is not so clear-cut what is worse:

"I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens' Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefer a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action;' who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejections." ■

Not a Cause for Palestine Only — continued from page 31

East Jerusalem) ably sums up the bits and pieces of the process since Oslo and the position in which Palestinians are left by the current rhetoric in world capitals.

Haddad makes clear that — as has been happening while you read this — breaking the walls of the nested boxes is fundamental to the struggle as a whole.

Jehad Abusalim (an NYU graduate student who writes often about Palestine) concludes this section with a gloriously elegant essay "Palestine in Tahrir," showing how the Arab uprisings since 2011 give the Palestinian struggle the leverage to open the middle box when another Arab spring occurs. Here are the forces whose work will be critical to the outcome.

The book's third part turns to the work of showing what a program of action looks like today for socialists now working for Palestine to be free.

First is a long interview with Omar Barghouti, conducted by editors Awad and bean. Barghouti is the best-known spokesperson for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) campaign begun by 150 Palestinian civil society organizations in 2006. BDS is analogous to the movement to boycott South Africa during Apartheid, and has been a singularly effective tool in bringing the

Palestinian campaign for human rights before the world. The best sign of its effectiveness is the zeal with which Zionist opponents are backing legislation intended to undermine it.

Second, Nada Elia (a diaspora Palestinian scholar and activist) contributes a brief manifesto "Multiple Jeopardy: Gender and Liberation in Palestine," summarizing the effects of Zionist repression on Palestinian women and explaining how Palestinian liberation is very much a feminist cause.

Third, Khury Petersen-Smith (a co-founder of Black 4 Palestine) draws the many parallels between the U.S. Black struggle and the Palestinian cause, in an article aptly titled "Cops Here, Bombs There."

What is exciting about this book is its currency, and Haymarket's commendable agility here puts many another publisher to shame. Even more exciting is the triumph of presence and scholarship pulled off by the editors and their collaborators!

I have often thought, when watching some movie documentaries, how rarely those who have the skill and ability to attend to making films have the full knowledge of the participants in the struggles documented. I hope Awad and bean will continue to give us accounts like this one, visions of historical materialism and its call to action. ■

REVIEW

Immigration: What's at Stake? By Guy Miller

Blood Red Lines:

How Nativism Fuels the Right

By Brendan O'Connor

Haymarket Press, 2021, 350 pages,
\$26.95 hardcover.

"The borders that separate one country from another are an artifact of politics and history. They were born in violence, and their maintenance demands violence"...

—Brendan O'Connor

"They chase us like rustlers, like outlaws, like thieves." —Woody Guthrie, "Deportees"

MY WHOLE LIFE I've taken pride in seeing myself as not living in a bubble. The slogan "For a World Without Borders," and solidarity with undocumented workers was about the extent of my understanding of the role of immigration in U.S. politics.

Immigration, and the hostility to it, were, to me, a function of the competition over jobs between immigrants and the native born — no doubt important, but an issue subsumed under the greater heading of the class struggle.

Two events, ten years apart, shook me out of my rote thinking. First came the string of mobilizations in the spring of 2006 in response to H.R. 4437. The infamous "Sensenbrenner Bill," H.R. 4437 would have classified all illegal immigrants, and those who aided them, as felons.

The answer came when millions took to the streets across the country. In Chicago there was the joyous explosion of May First, 2006. Organized by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and others, as many as 400,000 marched from Union Park to the Federal Plaza. At the time it was the largest demonstration in the city's history.

A sense of collective strength permeated the atmosphere. The march became a festival of life with families and mariachi bands adding color and music. H.R. 4437 went down to defeat.

The contribution of immigrant labor is what keeps America fed. This country has approximately three million Latinx farmworkers, at least half of whom are undocumented. Finally, I grasped the extent of the immigrant role in American life.

The second turning point for me was a much darker one that came in August

Guy Miller is a retired United Transportation Union member, long-time socialist and lifelong resident of Chicago.



Detroit rally for refugees: Let them in! Let them stay!

www.jimwestphoto.org

of 2016. In a campaign rally Donald Trump demonized Mexican immigrants as "drug dealers, rapists and criminals." It was not so much the explicit racism that shocked me — after all it is the kind of thing that can be heard in any barroom in the country — but rather where it came from.

The fact that the remarks came in a nationally covered campaign speech, by a major party candidate, told me that there was something more than just access to jobs involved; this was visceral red meat meant for a large, receptive audience.

Blood Red Lines (BRL) tells the story of how this deep-seated racist hatred has infested the American body politic. Author Brendan O'Connor balances his on-the-ground reporting with a scholarly and well documented narrative. *BRL* contains nearly 900 endnotes spanning 70 pages, which coupled with a useful bibliography makes the book a valuable resource.

O'Connor begins with a first-hand account of a trip to the desert near the Mexican border. His companion on this trip was Dr. Sara Vasquez, a volunteer with a humanitarian group called No More Deaths.

No More Deaths scours the desert looking to aid the living border crossers and to count the dead ones. Vultures are a helpful guide in this grim pursuit. Over the last 23 years over 7200 are among the dead in the Southwest desert. However, this is most

likely a gross underestimate, because as Dr. Vasquez observes, "...what the desert does to dead bodies, is it makes them disappear."

Behind the Hate Campaign

Many of the changes in how Americans view the world can be traced to a shadowy but well documented world of think tanks, foundations and big money.

No conspiracy here, these puppet-masters hide in plain sight. The names of two of them, John Tanton and Cordelia May, have fallen beneath the radar, but their role in demonizing immigrants has been crucial.

Tanton had his Rosebud moment at the age of 11, when his family joined the mass exodus of "white flight" from Detroit that began shortly after the "race riot" of 1943, which resulted in the death of 25 African Americans.

Trained as an ophthalmologist, Tanton soon developed an obsession with population control. At some point, Tanton recalled, "I became convinced, and I don't recall exactly how, that increasing number of people were part of the problem."

Tanton's involvement began with Planned Parenthood, but by 1970 his interests spiraled downward first to Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, and eventually ending with Tanton becoming an advocate of what he dubbed "passive eugenics."

By this point Tanton had become a full

blown Malthusian. What may have started as “too many babies” had become “too many brown and black babies.” Tanton had talent as an organizer and was determined to build a network of anti-immigration think tanks and foundations.

Two of the many groups he founded were The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS.) Both have been major players in building anti-immigrant sentiment over the next several decades. FAIR has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The thing that Tanton lacked in bringing his projects to fruition was money, and that’s where Cordelia May came into the picture. The focus on Cordelia sharpens once we give her full name: Cordelia Scaife May. She was the sister of the arch-reactionary Richard Scaife; she and her brother were heirs to the Mellon fortune.

Tanton smelled money and was determined to get all he could. O’Connor writes: “His letters to her are filled with groveling and obsequiousness, punctuated by encouragement of the reclusive millionaire’s most outlandish fears.” Tanton played the role of Uriah Heep to perfection, and it paid off in tens of millions of dollars in contributions to his anti-immigrant cause.

In the chapter “Think Boots, Not Books,” BRL shifts to the contemporary nativist right. In her book *Bring the War Home*, University of Chicago historian Kathleen Belew traces the roots of the contemporary far-right to the 1979-81 attacks on Vietnamese immigrants who worked as successful shrimp fishers off the coast of Texas.

Led by disgruntled U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War and the Ku Klux Klan, many of the participants in this anti-immigrant vigilantism went on to become active in the militia movement of the 1980s and ’90s.

Global White Supremacy

O’Connor makes the case that much of the American far right’s thinking on immigration is tied to a world-wide network of white supremacists. A seminal text for many of them is a 1973 novel, *The Camp of the Saints* (*Le Camp des Saints*).

By 1983 *Camp of the Saints* was out of print in the United States, but a second edition was paid for by Cordelia Scaife May. Written by French author Jean Raspail, the novel depicts the white Christian West as under siege by mass immigration from dark-skinned people of the Global South. Seen as a call to arms by many on the nativist right, the book rose from the remainder bin to become a best seller in 2011.

The internet has allowed the international white supremacy movement to form an instant feedback loop. The shooting of 11 worshipers in the Tree of Life Synagogue in

Pittsburgh is referenced by another shooter in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik is seen as carrying on a struggle for “indigenous rights” by members of the National Front in France.

When the racists of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville were chanting “Jews will not replace us,” they were echoing the 2011 book *Le Grand Remplacement* by French author Renaud Camus.

In the chapter “It’s the Birthrates,” BRL tells the story of the 2018 migrant caravan. In October 2018, a caravan of mostly Central American refugees, fleeing persecution and gangs spawned in Los Angeles several decades earlier, began a 1900-mile walk through Mexico toward the U.S. border, where they hoped to find asylum.

Seizing on this as a potential issue in the midterm elections, Donald Trump tweeted without evidence, “Many gang members and some very bad people are mixed into the caravan heading to our southern border.”

Rightwing media were quick to chime in that Islamic terrorists had joined the caravan. Soon Fox Business News host Lou Dobbs speculated that George Soros (the favorite Jewish whipping boy of the far right) was financing the caravan. There you have the whole package: Racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism.

While O’Connor does not see Donald Trump as the cause of the surge of anti-immigrant violence, he does see his election as heralding a new chapter in American politics. O’Connor writes, in a paragraph deserving a long quote:

“The election of Donald Trump (along with Brexit)...posed a shock to the Anglo-American media. Not only had mainstream pundits and analysts failed to predict these events, but they had appeared utterly incapable of imagining that either was even possible. Bourgeois politicians and their media, still warm from the glow of the Obama administration, did not recognize the global rise of the far right in the aftermath of the Great Recession for what it was, the product of a deep crisis of legitimacy and evidence of a fundamental shift in the stakes of political

struggle.”

Far Right Out in the Open

The January 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol has brought the far-right to the attention of the American media. No longer able to use the “lone wolf” dodge, they have been forced to cover it in some detail.

The Proud Boys may be the most public relations savvy of all the contenders for hegemony in the far-right menagerie. It was no slip of the tongue when Trump told them to “stand back and stand by” late in his 2020 election campaign.

The Proud Boys seek to veil themselves with an air of legitimacy. They are eager to single out their occasional Black member, and careful to substitute “West” or “Western” for “white.” Using this strategy they were able to gain a speakers’ spot for their leader Gavin McInnis at the prestigious Metropolitan Republican Club in upper Manhattan (this happened in October, 2018).

After reporting on this entrance into the mainstream, O’Connor cautions his readers not to view the Proud Boys as a “gateway drug,” but rather to see them as the violence-prone, racist, antisemitic, misogynist thugs they really are.

For the most part O’Connor is careful in his use of the word fascist, a designation often misapplied by those on the left. However, I found his coinage “border fascist” a distraction. To his credit O’Connor makes a number of germane references to Clara Zetkin’s 1923 speech, included in the collection *Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and How to Win* (Mike Taber and John Riddell, eds., Haymarket Books, 2017), a book I view as essential reading for understanding fascism.

I no longer live in a bubble that underestimates the centrality of the struggle for immigrant rights. I better understand the deep-seated hostility toward these fellow workers, fleeing violence and poverty that is all too often caused by U.S. foreign policy.

Blood Red Lines has moved me to a fuller appreciation of the fight ahead of us. This fight will only be over when we live in a World Without Borders. ■

On the Left and Labor’s Upsurge: A Few Readings

THE HISTORY AND legacy of the U.S. left in labor’s 1930s upsurge, and its lessons for today, are subjects of huge bodies of research and debate. The following contributions, from varying perspectives, are among those appearing in *Against the Current* over many years, and can be found in the back issues at our website <https://againstthecurrent.org>. An extensive interview with Michael Goldfield, author of the recently published *The Southern Key. Class, Race and Radicalism in the 1930s and 1940s*, was conducted by Cory R. Melcher in ATC 211. The book is reviewed by Alex Lichtenstein in ATC 210.

Goldfield’s earlier work *The Color of Politics* was reviewed by Mel Rothenberg in ATC 75, and discussed by Rothenberg and Goldfield in ATC 78.

Nelson Lichtenstein’s biography of Walter Reuther, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, was reviewed by Jane Slaughter in ATC 64 and by Michael Goldfield in ATC 67, with a response by Lichtenstein in ATC 69.

The Flint sitdown strike was discussed in articles by Sol Dollinger and Nelson Lichtenstein in ATC 62; Sollinger’s tribute to “The Unrelenting Genora Dollinger” appeared in ATC 60. Charlie Post wrote on the legacy of the 1930s “Popular Front” in ATC 63. ■

REVIEW

Exploring PTSD Politics

By Norm Diamond

Psychiatry, Politics and PTSD:

Breaking Down

By Janice Haaken

Routledge Press, 2021, 196 pages, \$49 hardcover.

"Try as you might, want it ever so much, things are out of your control, even when they are in your mind, or especially because they are in your mind. The mind is a funny animal. If it were just conscious thought; or if conscious thought was something we could control; or if unconscious thoughts were conscious; or if moods were amenable to our desires... then maybe things could work. Things like ... the project of sanity itself. Just make it happen!"

"But no. You're swimming in a river. You can get carried out to sea on riptides not of your making, or at least not under your control. You can find yourself swimming against a current much stronger than you. You can drown." —Kim Stanley Robinson¹

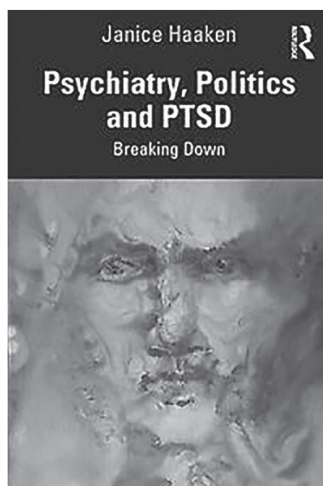
THREE DAYS AFTER the recent presidential election, a friend who had spent hours each day for months calling potential voters, wrote me that she was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

She was referring not only to the energy she had expended but to the disappointing results (in North Carolina), to the poor information she'd been furnished about the people she'd be phoning, and to the general incompetency of the organization that sponsored her calling.

But was this really PTSD? In the relatively short history of the concept, its meaning has morphed and gone in two different directions: a narrowing technical diagnosis and an ever-broadening use in common parlance.

Janice Haaken is a clinical psychologist, filmmaker, and author of two prior iconoclastic books in the realm of psychoanalytically-influenced feminist theory.² Her new book explores the introduction of PTSD the concept, the political movement that gave rise to it, its potential as political critique and its subsequent taming.

As between the two kinds of usage, popular and more technical, Haaken's focus is more on the professional. In both its recondite language and its orientation, this is a book for and primarily about psychiatric



of care and recompense, and the specific diagnosis of PTSD as a way of managing constraints on therapists' powers and choices.

That orientation aside, the book's implications for political activism are great. It is also, in the brilliant words of Haaken's radio interlocutor, "an insightful meditation on how we understand and deal with human suffering in the context of late stage capitalism."³ (Full disclosure: the interviewer was my wife.) Further, as nearly all of Haaken's writing, it is a book about storytelling.

The Triggering "Event"

"PTSD, the great affect of our time."

—Kim Stanley Robinson

Something happens. Let's call that an "event," and grant for the moment that it might be stressful. An individual or individuals undergo that event, their experience influenced by what they bring to the event from their past. Depending on their response and their access to resources, a clinician may come to be involved.

Historical and cultural factors shape how both the individuals and clinician perceive and mentally process the event. Social forces shape the diagnostic categories available and constrain their application. Political influences may enter.

Underlying the event's interpretation and the clinical response are particular conceptualizations of normality and of the mind, conceptualizations that themselves vary from time to time, culture to culture.

The archetype "events" on which Haaken focuses are traumas of military action and sexual assault, singular events resulting in individualized suffering. *But what of the trauma*

practitioners. It examines economic and cultural shifts within the profession, the tensions in relation to patients when psychiatrists are called on to make judgments about who is deserving

of a life lived in poverty, of exposure to police repression and brutality, of spousal abuse, of the many and pervasive forms of racism?

The initial impulse behind the PTSD diagnosis also recognized sustained and/or collective suffering. Haaken's starting point is the contrast between that expansive understanding of trauma and the narrower range of what the diagnosis has become.

PTSD as a mental health diagnosis was a product of the radical politics we associate with the 1960s. That broader movement, with its antiwar, civil rights and feminist strands, also had an anti-psychiatry component.

Working within as well as outside the profession, this part of the movement indicted existing psychiatric practice for not recognizing the societal factors behind people's suffering. It rejected the prevailing diagnostic premises that only people who were already damaged would be susceptible to persisting traumatic response.

This critique valued the "madness" of the marginalized as offering insights into the nature of the larger society, and condemned the profession for over-pathologizing divergent mental states and over-medicating.

The PTSD diagnosis was, in short, progressive, yet also built on a contradiction: a revolt against psychiatric hegemony that simultaneously looked to the profession for legitimacy.

When PTSD was eventually adopted into the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), the bible of the psychiatric profession, it was the first recognized diagnosis to acknowledge a cause of mental suffering for which the broader society carried responsibility.

One factor in its official adoption was the crisis in the profession resulting from neoliberal capitalist cutbacks and the undermining of earlier mental health programs. But official acceptance brought constraints.

This is where Haaken's account offers broader lessons on the cooptability of reforms, and is poignant in its recognition of what might have been. Now part of the medical establishment's apparatus, the focus has shifted from collective suffering to managing individual symptoms. Social problems have again been narrowed to clinical issues.

Whereas PTSD advocacy still enables raising a limited set of grievances, primarily military and sexual, they are channeled into singular events, one-time traumas, with a

Norm Diamond is co-author, with Bill Bigelow, of The Power In Our Hands: A Curriculum On the History of Work and Workers in the United States.

premium on dramatic telling to earn access to resources. The U.S. military now simply incorporates treatment for PTSD into its budget as an expected and calculable cost.

The Problem of Context

"Everyone alive knew that not enough was being done, and everyone kept doing too little. Repression of course followed, it was all too Freudian, but Freud's model for the mind was the steam engine, meaning containment, pressure, and release. Repression thus built up internal pressure, then the return of the repressed was a release of that pressure. It could be vented or it could simply blow up the engine."

"A hiss or a bang? The whistle of vented pressure doing useful work, as in some functioning engine? Or boom? No one could say, and so they staggered on day to day, and the pressure kept building."

—Kim Stanley Robinson

Psychiatry, Politics and PTSD is richer than I can indicate in a short review, offering insights into the nature of memory, among other PTSD-related topics. The book also has thoughtful cautions relating to political practice, for instance to human rights campaigns that base their practice on dramatic stories of victimization.

But I do want to express some reservations, both about what the author says and what she assumes and omits.

Haaken claims to have set the origin of the diagnosis and the struggle over its legitimacy in its social context. This is a large claim that comes with high expectations.

Social context, people's experience of their surroundings and interactions is indeed crucial in understanding when concepts appear and especially when they gain acceptance. As part of an explanation it operates at many levels, most importantly on the premises that underpin concepts, on the models available for formulating our specific thoughts.⁴

Understanding any and everything in its social context is important politically. Done well, it suggests that whatever is being explained could have been different had the society out of which it came been organized differently. It is, inherently if implicitly, a challenge to the status quo.

To offer an explanation at that level, Haaken would have had to show how people's social experience changed in the era she writes about and how those changes drove a search for new ways of making sense of the world, new premises that resulted in a changed understanding of the mind.

An analysis at this level would have gone a long way toward an explanation rather than what the book offers, primarily a retelling of what happened. Instead, what she emphasizes is the fact of a political movement, surely a contributing factor but far

from sufficient as an explanation.

Was there a reconceptualization of "mind" coming out of the 1960s, and did this shape the formulation and acceptance of PTSD as a diagnosis? Haaken begins to address this, mentioning historically changed conceptions of psychic normality, but stops short.

The book also contains a number of mistakes and surprising omissions, some of them significant. Freud did not study with Charcot in the 1870s (94) but rather a decade later. Had he been at the Salpêtrière at the time Haaken puts him, he would have encountered a very different class of patients than he in fact did, with potentially different implications for his later theorizing. Salpêtrière patients in the 1870s were those suffering from the after effects of the 1871 massacre of the Communards.

And the U.S. economic crisis during which World War I veterans marched on Washington demanding promised benefits was in the 1930s, 1932 for the march, not a decade earlier. (119) Troubling in this day and age, Haaken refers multiple times to veterans' benefits, now and in the past, without acknowledging the racial disparity in accessing those benefits.

There is a further omission that I find puzzling because it is so obvious: the clinically acknowledged PTSD resulting from torture.⁵

Wars and Trauma

"Post-traumatic stress disorder, yes, but this phrase always hid more than it revealed."

—Kim Stanley Robinson

Some of the book's limits may stem from a seeming advantage: the unique access the author obtained to the U.S. military. In making her movie *Mind Zone: Therapists Behind the Front Lines*, Haaken and her crew were permitted to film on military bases in the United States and even in Afghanistan.

Embedded, she must have struggled to maintain critical distance from the perspective of her hosts. The book was an opportunity to transcend her "fly on the wall" approach to filmmaking, but is not always successful in that regard.

A prime example is in her treatment of war. She is insightful in the ways that wars have been laboratories for Western psychology, and subtle in her appreciation of the tensions for military psychiatrists between the priorities of treating soldiers' suffering and restoring them to action.

But other than one brief mention specific to how U.S. military engagements have changed since Vietnam (61) she tends to treat "war" as if it were the same now in all contexts, bringing the same meaning and mental health consequences.

I would suggest, to the contrary, that military action fought in defense of one's

country, village or family does not have the same mental health consequences as imperial invasion. Nor does war waged as part of a revolutionary uprising.

The Mayan guerrillas I knew well in Guatemala did not and have not seemed to suffer from PTSD. They too were wounded, startled by surprise attacks, saw comrades and relatives killed in firefights. I would not romanticize their response. But they were part of a cause and a community and a culture that both prepared and supported them in ways that U.S. soldiers do not have.

Haaken knows that Western diagnoses don't necessarily travel well. (144) And she knows that different cultures deal differently with human suffering. Indeed a large component of every culture is an explanation and response to suffering's inevitability. But, as is the case with "war," she tends to write as if her subject and conclusions had universal scope.

In that respect, the reach of *Psychiatry, Politics and PTSD* is beyond its grasp. In the large area of what it does grasp, however, the book is thought-provoking, an insightful meditation indeed. ■

Notes

1. All the epigraphs are from Kim Stanley Robinson's important new novel, *The Ministry for the Future*, in which PTSD is a motif, as is going against the current.
2. *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back*, Rutgers University Press, 1998; *Hard Knocks: Domestic Violence and the Psychology of Storytelling*, Routledge, 2010.
3. The interview may be heard at <https://kboo.fm/media/83380-breaking-down>
4. I've written extensively elsewhere about the social roots of conceptualization in science. See, for instance, Norm Diamond, "The Politics of Scientific Conceptualization," in Levidow and Young, *Science, Technology and the Labour Process*, CSE Books, England, 1981. Also Norm Diamond, "Generating Rebellions in Science," *Theory and Society*, Amsterdam, winter, 1976.
5. For an excellent treatment, politically astute, cf Nancy Caro Hollander, *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas*, Routledge, 2010.

Do Police Belong in Pride?

AN ARGUMENT HAS become widespread in recent years over the presence of uniformed police officers in Pride parades and celebrations. Increasingly, the LGBTQ community and queer organizers have answered with a resounding "NO."

Donna Cartwright, a labor and trans activist, explains why in a piece posted on our website: <https://againstthecurrent.org/are-cops-our-allies-no/>. She notes:

"What we should first keep in mind, indeed, are the power relationships, and the social function of the police — to protect the comfortable and afflict the afflicted. The more marginalized people are, the more they are targets for police harassment and abuse."

As it's been said, consciousness is knowing which side you're on — and who's there with you. ■

REVIEW

A Life of Struggle: Grace Carlson

By Dianne Feeley

The Fierce Life of Grace Holmes Carlson

Catholic, Socialist, Feminist

By Donna T. Haverty-Stacke

New York: New York University Press, 2021, 312 pages, \$50 hardcover.

A BIOGRAPHY THAT uncovers new information is a welcome read. For the thousands of people who cycled through the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) or the Young Socialist Alliance over the last 70 years, we learned of Grace Carlson and the role she played from James P Cannon.

His article "How We Won Grace Carlson and How We Lost Her" (July 7, 1952 *Militant*) explained that she resigned under the pressure of the Cold War. Given the political moment, that made sense. In fact, Carlson was the only woman convicted under the first Smith Act trial, which sentenced her to 18 months in federal prison in 1944.

Cannon described his friend and comrade as "a defeated and broken woman" who returned to the Catholic Church. But unlike Louis Budenz's break from the Communist Party and return to the Catholic Church, she never repudiated her years in the party or provided names to the FBI.

The Fierce Life of Grace Holmes Carlson tells the story of a woman committed to working-class and civil rights struggles both before and after her years as a leader in the SWP. Drawn to progressive political positions as a high school and college student, Carlson became an activist after she developed her professional expertise as an educator. Educated in Catholic schools by the same order of nuns that taught me in elementary school — the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (35) — she was nurtured by a community where her father was a railroad worker, one uncle was a socialist, a supportive mother, and Irish nuns who opposed World War I.

After earning her Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in 1933, she became a lecturer there. Along with her younger sister Dorothy, she joined the university's Social Problems Club and participated in campus antiwar strikes against ROTC. This in turn



led her to supporting the Farmer-Labor Party, marching in an unemployed demonstration at the capitol and attending Sunday forums at the Trotskyist headquarters with her fiancé Gilbert Carlson.

As members of the Social Problems Club, she and Dorothy collected

funds for the 1934 Teamsters strikes. At Sunday forums they met both rank-and-file strikers as well as strike leaders. Several were Trotskyist militants who explained their organizing strategy.

Admiring their commitment to social justice, she joined the organization within two years and sought to study the Marxist works that informed them. Although the author does not detail the strategies that Carlson admired from the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters (Local 554) strikes nor explain the "leapfrog" methods pivotal in organizing Teamsters regionally, clearly Carlson was drawn to organizers who transformed an "open-shop" city into one where the Teamsters local became a powerful institution.

Shortly after Grace and Gilbert's marriage in 1934, Carlson was asked by Dr. John Rockwell, State Commissioner of Education (and her former thesis advisor), to work in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, developing programs to retrain disabled people. As she carried out her research, she noted the numerous obstacles society put in their way. These ranged from inadequate aftercare and rehabilitation to employer prejudice.

Outside of work, she spoke to unions as social change organizations that needed to fight for better working conditions. At the St. Paul's Trade and Labor Assembly's unemployment conference in March 1940, she called for attendees to recognize the "relationship between poverty and ill health" and called for "a program of socialized medicine and hospitalization." (69)

After August 1939, when Stalin and Hitler signed their non-aggression pact, the United States entered a period historians label as the "little red scare." Grace Carlson, and

even her boss, came under scrutiny. She resigned from her job while he was later dismissed.

She and her lawyer husband participated in socialist meetings and in the Non-Partisan Labor Defense (NPLD) that the SWP established to defend workers arrested for striking or other political acts, and he represented them in some of the court cases. As she deepened her involvement in the party, their relationship became strained and they separated. Upon leaving her job she became the St. Paul party organizer.

Party Organizer and Political Prisoner

Over the next dozen years Grace Carlson developed into an efficient organizer, public speaker and socialist candidate for various public offices. In her first run as a candidate for U.S. Senate in 1940, she advocated economic and social equality for women and Blacks, along with the SWP's program to defeat fascism by building an army based on the unions. As a far-left campaign, it was mainly a forum to reach a larger audience.

By June 1941 federal marshals arrested 29 SWP members, including Grace and her sister Dorothy. They were subsequently indicted under the recently passed Smith Act for advocating insubordination within the armed forces and violent overthrow of the government. Several were leaders of the Teamster local that had transformed Minneapolis into a union town. The government's case was based on the testimony of FBI agents who had infiltrated the local and the party.

The SWP defended its Marxist ideas. Carlson testified that as workers rose to demand an end to exploitation, violence would come from a capitalist minority.

She explained that this assumption was not calling on workers to violently overthrow a capitalist government. In fact, it was the Smith Act that was unconstitutional because it criminalized speech.

In the end the jury convicted 18 members, who were sentenced the day after Pearl Harbor. Eleven were sentenced to 18 months, others to one year. The judge dismissed the charges against 10, including Dorothy.

During the two years of the SWP's appeal process, the party organized the Civil Rights Defense Committee (CRDC) to publicize their case, held mass meetings and raised funds for legal expenses. They attracted the support of civil libertarians including the

Dianne Feeley is an editor of ATC and a retired autoworker active in Detroit Eviction Defense. In 1960, as a college student she was drawn to the Catholic Worker and their unique brand of social activism.

ACLU and several unions. However those unions under the leadership of Communist Party blocked the convicted Trotskyists from seeking their support and in fact denounced them.

Using all avenues to reach the working class, the party ran Grace for mayor of St. Paul. In the end the federal court of appeals ruled against them and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case. The party organized farewell meetings and in Minneapolis the 18 marched to the courthouse and surrendered on December 31, 1943.

As the only woman convicted, Grace Carson was sent to Alderson federal prison, in West Virginia. The party and the CRDC did what they could to provide the political prisoners with resources.

Carlson's experience deepened her understanding of how the carceral state targets poor working-class women. She also saw how the imprisoned white women looked down on Black women prisoners.

As soon as she completed her parole, she launched a "Women in Prison" speaking tour to 22 SWP branches around the country. She spoke of how women were "doubly oppressed victims of capitalist society," denied the right to make a decent living and thereby "forced to make a living by so-called illegal means" and then thrown into prison.

She argued that most of the young women she knew in prison were "victims of a criminal social system." (108-9) She also wrote a column for the party's paper on working-women's issues.

Over the next seven years Carlson was a party spokeswoman and candidate for office. As an elected member of the SWP's national committee, she functioned as a branch organizer in several cities although she always returned to her St. Paul-Minneapolis base. Throughout those years she was particularly close to her sister and her sister's growing family.

Given the letters she and Ray Dunne wrote while they were in prison, their working relationship had developed into a sexual one. However this was discreetly handled given Dunne's marriage.

A "Christian Against Capitalism"

Why did Grace Carlson abruptly decide to leave the SWP in 1952, after she had already agreed to run a second time as their vice-presidential candidate? Haverty-Stacke reluctantly accepts Carlson's explanation that her father's death caused her to re-examine the meaning of her life and conclude God was missing. However, that abrupt decision might also have been combined with Dunne's unwillingness to leave his family.

Whatever her motive or mixture of motives, she returned to the Catholic Church at the height of the witchhunt. Given her prison record and stripped of her voting rights,

she was only able to find a permanent job as a secretary at St. Mary's Hospital, which was operated by the St. Joseph nuns. Of course this dilemma of feeling forced to choose between religion and a Marxist organization seems strange to us so many years later.

Grace and her estranged husband repaired their relationship and resumed their marriage. Separately and together, they continued their social action work within the institutions of the Catholic Church. In fact, while SWP leader James P. Cannon told Grace that he saw the church as the "most reactionary and obscurantist force in the entire world," (159) her mentoring of young Catholic women illustrates how she continued to use the socialist-feminist perspective she had developed as a party member.

Within a decade Carlson was key in establishing the plan for St. Mary's Junior College as a single-purpose junior college for nursing education. It was to be a vocational school for "the disadvantaged," educating students to be lifelong learners prepared to serve the community.

She saw people with few resources were often defeated by small setbacks that made their goal seem hopeless. When she retired from the college in 1979, Carlson set up an emergency non-interest loan fund to remove obstacles that function to impede students: "to pay a babysitter, fix a car, tide over the grocery budget, or remedy some other financial crisis." (210)

Along with rebuilding her professional life, Grace Carlson found opportunities as a columnist, speaker and activist. She defined herself as a "Christian against capitalism," opposed the war in Vietnam and supported the anti-nuclear movement.

Haverty-Stacke points out that Grace was not drawn to the symbolic actions of

the Berrigan brothers or to the Catholic Worker and the ideas of Dorothy Day — who inspired me. In fact, she characterized the Catholic Worker as "a little sappy." (193-195)

Instead she was drawn to the Slant group of Cambridge University undergraduates (including Terry Eagleton) and started a branch at St. Mary's College. What appealed to her was their working-class composition and their promoting "the social goals of the Gospel," which implied the need for revolution. (195)

Grace Homes Carlson, born into a working-class family in 1906, died in 1992. Appropriately, her sister was by her side. Carlson's work with the disabled and her own incarceration in a women's prison pushed her toward a Marxism that envisioned a democratic revolution where working people swept aside the obstacles of poverty and inequality.

Donna T. Haverty-Stacke's biography has brought into focus the life of one of the figures forged during the hotbed of Minneapolis radicalism of the 1930s. It is best read along with the *Teamster* series written by Farrell Dobbs that paints the struggle of the Trotskyists in Minneapolis to build and extend consciousness among the broad working class. Also of interest is James P. Cannon's *Socialism on Trial*, which reprints his testimony.

Previously the author covered the first Smith Act trial in *Trotskyists on Trial: Speech and Political Persecution since the Age of FDR*. In *The Fierce Life of Grace Holmes Carlson*, she explains the mystery of what happened after the SWP "lost" Carlson. Like Carlson, many of us who were "lost" to the SWP in both its best and worst days, were nonetheless enriched in our discovery of Marxism. ■

THE PARIS COMMUNE

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is a collection of essays on the 150th anniversary of the heroic uprising of the workers of Paris and its legacy for our world. Contributors include Daniel Bensaid, Olivier Besancenot, Sandra Bloodworth, Judy Cox, Penelope Duggan, Mathilde Larrère,



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REVIEW

Living in the Movement

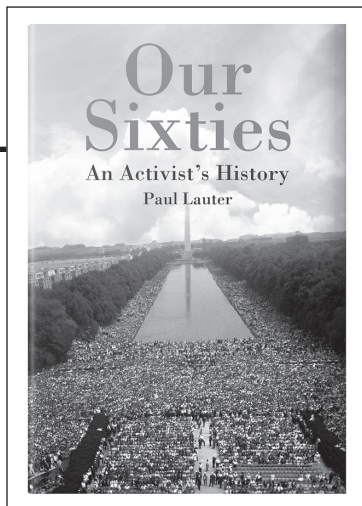
By Martin Oppenheimer

Our Sixties:

An Activist's History

By Paul Lauter

University of Rochester Press, 2020,
226 pages, \$29.95 hardback.



WHEN THIS STORY begins in 1957, Paul Lauter had never heard of Conscientious Objectors. With a Ph.D. from Yale in literature, he had little awareness of Black writing, or Black history. Seven years later he was teaching both subjects in a Freedom School in Mississippi and was Director of Peace Studies at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which is where we met (I was Assistant Director).

Now retired, a distinguished professor emeritus of literature at Trinity College — and best known perhaps as co-founder with Florence Howe of The Feminist Press in 1970 — Lauter looks back to those years as a period of “growing up” politically and personally.

The political part goes from his first firing for union and anti-ROTC activity as a young professor, to teaching and in this book writing about “the movement.” “While the sixties movements did not revolutionize the United States,” he says, “they produced valuable organizations and lasting changes, of which we are properly proud.” (6)

As Lauter moves back and forth in the 1960s and '70s between educational projects, civil rights and antiwar activities, he seems constantly to be asking: How is this work achieving change?

As for the personal growth part, there are his relationships with women including several marriages, and his interactions with feminism. Throughout, he is also asking what should he be doing? Full-time movement activist? Full-time educator? Academic trouble-maker?

Today he identifies as a socialist. Whatever he calls himself, he's always had the right enemies, from sexual Puritans to uptight Lit Profs to sectarian ultra-leftists to the Klan.

Martin Oppenheimer participated in numerous events and organizations described in Our Sixties. He is co-editor of Sociologists and the Movement (Temple, 1991) and has written many articles about the sixties in this and other left publications.

Commitments and Identity

There are three themes contained within this political autobiography: His commitments to the anti-war movement, to civil rights, and to anti-authoritarian teaching.

Through the first half of the book we watch as Lauter struggles with his own identity as a liber-

al, while at the same time trying to find his proper niche within the three movements.

He participated in Freedom Summer, the great voter registration campaign in Mississippi in 1964, where he taught in alternative “Freedom Schools.” He practiced a Paolo Freirian “listening” form of education, related to Rogerian “student-centered” teaching.¹

A year later he and Florence Howe (1929-2020), his partner from the late 1960s until the mid-eighties, helped staff a teacher training institute at Goucher College devoted to the same principles.

In those days it was possible to find employment as a lit professor with no hassle and by then he had landed a job at Smith College. There he helped start up a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter.

When his curriculum proposals challenging traditional teaching methods got a cold response, he decided to commit himself to movement work. By chance a job as Peace Education Secretary in The American Friends Service Committee's Chicago office opened up and he jumped at it, especially because it gave him time to work in the SDS national office.

Resistance to the war was center-stage for both AFSC and SDS by the Fall of 1965. Lauter busied himself with draft counseling while at the same time trying to figure out how to foster broader resistance to the war.

He increasingly found his identity as a liberal and advocate for nonviolence challenged by the fact that the U.S. government under Lyndon Johnson remained unmoved by massive demonstrations. He soon came to wonder why speakers talked of the betrayal

of liberal values when the American war was really about imperialism.

But about a year after his move to Chicago, Lauter suddenly found himself out of a job. It had dawned on the AFSC bureaucracy that he was living in sin with Howe, which in those days did not sit well with a Midwest Quaker organization.

Problems of Innovative Education

Soon Lauter and Howe were drawn into a project intended to turn an existing Washington, DC segregated Black and poorly-funded elementary school, the Morgan School, into an integrated school with increased resources and “...a new and imaginative curriculum.” (117)

Antioch-Putney's Grad School of Education would provide interns. The school was to be controlled by a bi-racial Community Council, all under DC's Superintendent of Schools. Today this would be called a Charter school.

When the Project Director failed to show up, Lauter found himself de-facto principal although he was not certified and had not been near an elementary school for almost 25 years. He soon learned that the words New, Resources, Imaginative and Community (within an existing school system) would not work. Chapter Seven, “Visions of Freedom School in DC,” is a text on what can go wrong. For educators this story is alone worth the price of the book.

Briefly, there were conflicts that within a year led to Antioch's pulling back and the firing of Howe on the accusation of nepotism(!) Lauter's firing soon followed.

Beyond a lack of an integrated curriculum and adequate training for white interns unaccustomed to teaching low-income Black students, there were conflicts about basic goals. The regular Black teachers were not on board with experimentation. They (as well as many Black parents) thought the kids needed discipline.

This ran into conflict with the white parents who were seeking an innovative setting but also worried about the emphasis on Black pride, something that had not been a problem in Mississippi's Freedom Schools.

Moreover, “At the Morgan Community School, community ‘control’ did not translate into community service,” so parents had little motivation for involvement in the school, plus they were “busy trying to make a living.” (123)

Resist and NUC

In October 1967 a "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority," signed by such well-known anti-war figures as Noam Chomsky, Paul Goodman and Dr. Benjamin Spock, was published. It's reprinted in the book as Appendix A. (227ff)

A mass draft-card turn-in at the Justice Department on October 20 was the starter event for Resist, the organization that came out of the "Call." Lauter became National Director. On the 21st the Resist crew joined the March on the Pentagon, famously described in Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* (1969). Then the "Boston Five" were indicted on charges of "conspiring to counsel young men to violate the draft laws." (141)²

Resist soon changed its mission from support to the Five and other draft resisters to a hub for funding many social change projects, a kind of United Fund of the Left. It continues its work today.

Direct action in the form of physical attacks on draft board files now made headlines. Lauter and Howe joined the Baltimore Defense Committee, which supported actions around the trial of the "Catonsville Nine."

Lauter does not provide details, but in summary the Nine, who burned draft records on May 17, 1968, included two fairly well-known Catholic priests, the Berrigan brothers Philip and Daniel. Philip was already facing trial as part of the "Baltimore Four" for burning draft records at the City Customs House the prior October.

After another year with Resist, Lauter returned to teaching in the Fall of 1969, at the predominantly white working-class University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). There he helped initiate the New University Conference (NUC), a nationwide coordinating group for radical caucuses in different academic fields, a kind of SDS alum association.

These caucuses were soon widespread in such varying fields as economics, sociology, political science, geology, etc. In almost every case they created their own journals as alternatives to "establishment" journals. Many still exist, among the only living institutions stemming from the New Left.

NUC chapters were intended to coordinate radicals from different fields within a college or university in attempts to "transform universities and the intellectual work done within them." (158) Unfortunately, internal disputes resulted in NUC dissolving itself in 1972, and shipping its archives to the University of Wisconsin. This left campus chapters without national coordination or support, and many collapsed.

In addition to NUC work, Lauter also tried getting his UMBC classes to engage in working collectively, earning collective grades. When the more radical students

demonstrated against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in April, 1970, Lauter was on the scene helping with strategy and picketing. At the close of his second year he was fired.

Soldier Organizing, The Feminist Press

Miraculously, again "opportunity emerged from adversity." (169) Lauter soon found himself at the "reins" of the United States Servicemen's Fund. This innocuous-sounding organization was in fact an antiwar group that supported GI coffeehouses, GI underground newspapers, helped GIs who refused deployment to Vietnam, and mounted anti-war entertainments leading up to the famous "FTA" shows.

These were anti-war alternatives to Bob Hope's overseas shows for the United Service Organizations (USO). Lauter does not describe the shows, but they consisted of skits and music, often starring Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland. (There were some coffeehouses unrelated to the show also named FTA.)³ Almost needless to say, FTA means Fuck the Army although there are milder interpretations.⁴

Lauter intersperses his own story with considerable detail about the internal conflicts of organizations like NUC and the USSF, and the broader strategic disputes within the anti-war movement. He describes "...disagreements about how we got in led to harsh differences about how to get out." (180) Run antiwar candidates? Marches? Sabotage military-related facilities including draft boards? Advocate negotiation, or "Out Now?"

This led to more acrimony and splits than we'd like to remember. Still the killing went on and on in Southeast Asia, to Lauter's dismay and frustration. From his cockpit spot with USSF he became aware of how U.S. troops were becoming "an increasingly unreliable force." (177)

At the same time there was a war at home: the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention police riot, murders of Black Panthers, Kent State, Jackson State, the Weather Underground, chants of "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is gonna win" (even at scholarly conferences).

The fragmentation of the antiwar movement, sectarian competitions especially within the student left, the collapse of SDS in 1969, and the USSF's decline led Lauter to a period of battle fatigue. He left the USSF, or perhaps vice-versa, sometime in late 1970. We are left guessing about the circumstances.

Soon Lauter, still together with Florence Howe, was developing the Feminist Press, established in that Fall.

His deep love of literature is apparent throughout the book as he joins the fight to extend and even overturn "the canon."⁵ The Press's objective was to shine a light on "lost

or forgotten" literature by such women writers as Rebecca Harding Davis (*Life in the Iron Mills*, 1861) and Josephine Herbst with her "proletarian" novels and reportage from the 1930s.

One of the first books re-published by the Press was Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* (1973, orig. 1929), a slightly fictionalized autobiography. Smedley had lived in China for many years and was very close to major Soviet and Chinese Communist figures. She died in 1950.

In 1974 Lauter was part of a delegation to the People's Republic of China, where he gave the Press edition and archival materials concerning Smedley to Chinese officials. Lauter clearly had a soft spot for Smedley and "Red China." The delegation was given the appropriate tours, which "registered positively with us." (164)

At that time Mao's "Cultural Revolution" was winding down, but somehow he would not learn until later about "the violence and stupidity" of that period, nor apparently of the famine during the "Great Leap Forward" of 1958-62.

In 1972 Lauter joined Howe on the faculty of the State University of New York (SUNY) Old Westbury. This was one of a number of experimental colleges founded around that time to "open access for an unusually diverse student body" or to put it bluntly, to "deal" with student Blacks and reds by hiring hip professors and cool administrators.

Could Old Westbury become a "movement outpost?" Could Lauter assist in "establishing a curriculum informed by freedom school values?" (199)

He was not sure but threw himself into it, even getting active in the SUNY's American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-affiliated United University Professors. People were needed to implement the contract, so Lauter became grievance officer. Ultimately he moved up to UUP vice-president.

In an ironic turn of events, some Feminist Press workers wanted to unionize and asked his support. Howe was opposed to the unionization effort. Lauter does not tell us the outcome. When he ran for statewide UUP president he lost by two votes, perhaps due to his position in the Press's management. He then dropped his union activities to turn his attention to the academic side of Old Westbury.

Constructing American Studies

Lauter's slot was in American Studies, a new program with women's studies, labor studies, U.S. history and literature "tracks." His colleagues were stars of left academia. On top of working with the Press, he and Howe were now "pushed" into chairing the program.

Still, he wondered whether it all mattered. "Perhaps I should be spending more

time in the street and on the picket line than in the library.” Well, he answers, no. It seems that “what you read about, who and what you see on screens...helps shape what you find important or even visible.” (207)

There is a “conjunction” between events and literature; writers have been reshaping consciousness for ages. He cites James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Claude McKay and of course *Life in the Iron Mills*. This kind of canon-challenging material needed anthologizing, and so Lauter embarked on what would become *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (five volumes, the first appearing in 1989).

By that date he had left Old Westbury and moved to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut where among other projects he created a course on the sixties and began work on *Our Sixties*.

Lauter provides useful background and intimate details about many events and organizations. Movement veterans with an inter-

est in the educational wars of the sixties and seventies will find Lauter’s book especially interesting. He has much to teach younger activists concerning movement dynamics.

His narrative, however, is often hard to follow due to his peripatetic personal and organizational life. There are many digressions, which add to the difficulty. Inserting more dates would have helped. He leaves the conclusion of a number of events (such as his departure from the Feminist Press) dangling or short of detail.

There are simple errors: It is “Marty” Ehrlich on page 160 (but Howard, correctly, in a footnote), and sin of sins, the incorrect spelling of Max Shachtman. The book would have profited with more careful editing (at a University Press no less).

Concluding his personal and political retrospective, Lauter says that despite defeats, disappointments and the persistence of oppression and despotism, “I remain optimistic...I have seen the movement’s

own discord, our aspirations diminished, our hopes forgone. But I have also seen people rising up, again and again, like sunflowers in a great field.” (226) ■

Notes

1. Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (1956), ch. 15, where it is described by a student participant.
2. They were: Michael Ferber, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Mitchell Goodman, and Marcus Raskin. All but Raskin were found guilty, though in the end none served time.
3. Martin Oppenheimer (ed.) *The American Military*, (Transaction, 1971) 99. GI organizing is covered in this book.
4. The first show was near Ft. Bragg, NC and then played in the vicinity of numerous U.S. military bases. It then went on a one-month tour of bases in Hawaii, the Philippines, Okinawa and Japan, protesting U.S. bases along the Pacific Rim. The show ended after this run. The documentary *FTA* was withdrawn from theaters very quickly, possibly due to a dispute with Fonda. Lauter does not elaborate. Segments appear in another doc, *Sir! No Sir! FTA* is available on DVD now.
5. Sometimes referred to as the Western Canon or “high culture” (white and European/U.S.A.) from the Greeks onward. It is a highly contested field to say the least. A view of the debate can be found in Rachel Poser, “The Iconoclast,” *The New York Times Magazine* Feb. 7, 2021.

Detroit: Comeback & Austerity — continued from page 11

Amidst the uprisings following the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others last spring, organizers also began working through the City Charter Revision Commission as a vehicle for seeking policy change in support of Black lives. The Detroiters’ Bill of Rights coalition emerged last spring to bypass a Mayor, City Council and Board of Police Commissioners that have carried forth a corporate agenda in the years since emergency management.

The Bill of Rights builds upon the visions put forth in the Detroit People’s Platform and People’s Plan for Restructuring. Among the positive rights organizers are fighting to enshrine are affordable and safe housing, job opportunities, reliable public transit, recreation, a healthy environment, safe and affordable water, and safety from oppressive policing.

“We are dedicated to creating systems that dismantle anti-Blackness, center Black Detroiters, and create equitable access to and distribution of resources for the most vulnerable people in Detroit,” coalition member Tawana Petty explained.¹²

The proposed City Charter includes many of the revisions the coalition has called for. “We are at a rare moment in this nation’s history when the voice of the people is being amplified and real change is achievable,” City Council member Mary Sheffield.

As such, the Charter Commission’s work has drawn heavy fire from Mayor Duggan and others interested in preserving the neoliberal status quo in the city. In addition to Duggan’s fear-mongering that the Charter would trigger a return to emergency management and threaten pensions, his corporation counsel has sought to undermine the

legality of the Commission’s work. Residents with connections to the city’s political establishment have also filed lawsuits seeking to keep the Charter off the ballot. The matter is currently in the hands of the State Supreme Court, which halted a Wayne County Circuit Judge lower court’s decision to remove it from the ballot.¹³

If the Charter makes it to the ballot in spite of voter suppression, it will take mass grassroots organizing under a big-tent coalition to counteract the well-financed propaganda and pass “The People’s Charter.” If that effort succeeds, then the work will begin to make those rights a reality in the nation’s largest majority-Black city.

Organizing Our Future

The struggle against emergency management and the current movement against state violence both demonstrate the need for expanding our organizational capacities to resist the immense forces mobilized against us. We must draw from traditions of struggle to develop strong networks capable of coordinating direct action protests, mutual aid and survival programs, cultural productions, political education, policy advocacy, legal challenges/defense, media and narrative campaigns, and intergenerational dialogue.

Grassroots organizing must be grounded in the material conditions of poor and working-class people and the recognition that people closest to the problem are closest to the solutions. In the process, organizers must also support the political development of “indigenous leaders” and the creation of transitional demands from meeting immediate needs to achieving systemic change.

These are among the lessons passed

down to this generation. From the Algiers Motel to emergency management to George Floyd, it is our challenge to learn from Black freedom struggles that have shaped our current political terrain. We must apply that knowledge to developing concrete strategies for collective liberation.

“You are our hope, you are our promise,” Monica Lewis-Patrick professed, “If I don’t ever breathe another breath, everything that we’ve done, has been for this moment.” ■

Notes

1. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), 20.
2. Wallace Turbeville, “Lessons From the Detroit Bankruptcy,” *Demos*, July 16, 2014.
3. Anthony Minghine, “The Great Revenue Sharing Heist,” Michigan Municipal League, February 2014.
4. General Baker and Marian Kramer, “Highland Park, Michigan: A corporate wasteland Community stands up for its rights,” *People’s Tribune*, February 2006.
5. Shawna J. Lee, et al., “Racial inequality and the implementation of emergency management laws in economically distressed urban areas,” *Children and Youth Services Review* 70 (2016): 1-7.
6. Leanne Kang, *Dismantled: The Breakup of an Urban School System Detroit, 1980-2016* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2020).
7. Scott Kurashige, *The Fifty-Year Rebellion: How the U.S. Political Crisis Began in Detroit* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). (As of May 2021, Craig has resigned as police chief and is considering running for political office as a Republican — ed.)
8. David Sole, “Theft of Detroit retirees’ pensions gets one step closer,” *Workers World*, July 28, 2014.
9. Linda Campbell, et al., *A People’s Atlas of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).
10. Zenobia Jeffries, “Beyond bankruptcy,” *Michigan Citizen*, November 30, 2014.
11. “Q&A with Kevyn Orr,” C-SPAN, July 29, 2015, <https://www.c-span.org/video/transcript/?id=48913>
12. Tawana Petty, “Detroit: On a Journey to Be Seen,” *Data For Black Lives Blog*, March 5, 2021, <https://blog.d4bl.org/detroit-on-a-journey-to-be-seen-2/>
13. Shea Howell, “Beyond Reform: The Detroiters’ Bill of Rights,” *Riverwise*, Winter 2021, <https://riverwisedetroit.org/article/beyond-reform-the-detroiters-bill-of-rights/>

the depth of our society's crisis, and the backwardness of its politics. Consider the amazing reality that both Joe Manchin and Senator Shelley Moore Capito, the Republican "negotiator" put in charge of sabotaging Biden's proposal, are from West Virginia — a state that needs human as well as "traditional" infrastructure repair probably more than any other.

Here's what Biden proposed, as summarized by CNN politics (March 31, 2021) from White House figures:

- *Transportation* — \$621 billion, including \$174 billion investment in the electric vehicle market.
- *Home care services and workforce* — \$400 billion, including improving wages for home health workers (anathema to Republicans, of course).
- *Manufacturing* — \$300 billion, including domestic semiconductor and medical manufacturing as well as "focus on clean energy, rural communities, and programs that give small businesses access to credit."
- *Housing* — \$213 billion toward retrofitting, renovating or building two million-plus homes and housing units to improve energy efficiency. (Clearly much more is needed to make this a transformative program.)
- *Research and development* — \$180 billion "to advance U.S. leadership in critical technologies" as well as climate science. (It's not clear how this intersects with the Senate's hastily passed \$250 billion R&D bill.)
- *Water* — \$111 billion including replacement of lead pipes and service lines.
- *Schools* — \$100 billion to build new and upgrade existing public school buildings. (An additional \$37 billion are requested for infrastructure needs of community colleges and child care facilities.)
- *Digital infrastructure* — \$100 billion for universal high-speed broadband access.
- *Workforce development* — \$100 billion for dislocated workers and underserved populations.
- *Veterans' hospitals and federal buildings modernization* — \$18 and \$10 billion respectively.

To most of which we can apparently bid R.I.P. As we go to press, a "bipartisan" group of 10 Senators is floating a proposal just over half the size of the original Biden/Democrats' bill. The outcome is an open question.

Socialist Infrastructure for Real

Taken individually and as a package, the Biden/Democratic measures respond to the crisis of infrastructure decay in capitalist America. They would be helpful to tens if not hundreds of millions of people whose lives are blighted by the existing mess. The argument that they're needed "in order to globally compete" is partly a patriotic selling pitch, but also an objective reality facing U.S. capital.

The immediate blockage is the extreme dysfunction of a political system that's become a paralyzed hostage to the far right. Still, the very real differences between the Biden and Republican infrastructure policies are dwarfed by the gap between either of them and what a *socialist* program would look like — not just in scale but above all in priorities and objectives.

No question, trillions of dollars need to be invested — but for what, and controlled by whom? A socialist program

would entail not only spending but enormous inroads on capital, beginning with *nationalization* of the sectors of the economy most critically in need of renovation and transformation to a sustainable future, notably energy and transportation. Preferably those nationalized industries would be reorganized under workers' control; in any case, the most fundamental change would be *full public discussion and democratic decision-making* about priorities.

Consider for example a range of hugely complex issues around tackling the environmental crisis. Does our society's future lie in mass conversion to individually-owned electric automobiles, or should the emphasis be a whole new infrastructure centered on public transportation? And should the decision be based on where the profit is, or what people and the planet need?

Does the energy solution mean industrial-scale wind turbines and solar panels, or localized alternatives and significant reductions in energy consumption? What's the pathway to sustainable agriculture replacing corporate monopoly agribusiness? What can replace gigantic factory farms that destroy land, water and Indigenous farming communities globally — and how to get there?

For some discussion of these challenges, see for example two posts on the Solidarity website (<https://solidarity-us.org>), "Biden's Climate Pledge is a Promise He Cannot Keep" by Howie Hawkins (May 4, 2021) and "What Would a Deep Green New Deal Look Like?" by Don Fitz (May 5, 2021).

We don't claim to have quick answers. The essential point is that fundamental problems that affect everyone's lives need to be decided by society *democratically and collectively* on the basis of science-based knowledge of the options and their consequences, rather than by the necessity to preserve and expand corporate profit.

Another set of priorities revolves around the scope of what's called "human infrastructure." For socialists, the resources required to develop universal health care, public education that works for everyone, universal child care, guaranteed child nutrition and cleaning up our fouled waterways and toxic dumps — to name just a few priorities — are immense. They demand, for openers, *cuts in military spending* beyond what either of our capitalist parties are able to even contemplate.

On top of the quantitative scale of the task is the social necessity to put the most resources into the very places, the communities of oppressed people and in rural areas, which were never properly served by capitalist development and are now especially ravaged by recent decades of neoliberal policy.

The Biden program responds in part to the reality that neglect of physical, social and human "infrastructure" (pretty much everything except the military) has reached the point of weakening U.S. capital's ability to compete in the world, notably against a rising China. As we've noted, for the Democrats it also means that if they can't deliver serious relief for their constituencies, they might as well fold up. That confluence of circumstances opens up possibilities.

In short, the answer to our question "Infrastructure. Who Needs It?" Capital needs it. Workers and families need it. Black, brown, Indigenous and rural communities need it. *We all need it.* But what kind we get, and who benefits, will be decided not automatically but through political struggle and social mobilization. ■

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