Haitians Brutalized and Deported ◆ Assault on Rashida Tlaib

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AGAINST THE CURRENT

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL

THE CRISIS, THE MOVEMENT
Dianne Feeley on Reproductive Justice

Blocking an Ecocidal Pipeline
◆ AN INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA KEMBLE

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A Letter from the Editors:

The Rising Price of Insanity

THERE WAS NEVER anything like it: In the midst of a mounting public health disaster, a phalanx of state governors deliberately and maliciously sabotaging the elementary measures required to protect the population. Driven by a toxic mix of greed, political opportunism and pure ideology, "opening the economy" in states from Florida and Texas to South Dakota outweighs the terrifying realities of overwhelmed hospital Intensive Care Units as well as burnout-and-COVID-depleted medical staffs. Insanity!

Before the delta variant of the coronavirus took over, achieving the elusive population "herd immunity" in the United States would have required probably 75% of the U.S. population age 12 and over to be fully vaccinated. It was clear, well before the hoped-for July 4 target date, that this requirement wouldn't be met, and that many state governments wouldn't enact or enforce vaccine mandates.

While case loads are declining in the country as a whole, hospitals in states with rightwing mandate-refusal regimes are in desperate crisis. Notoriously, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued an executive order barring county school boards from enacting mask mandates in public schools. Fortunately for him and everyone else, a court order said he couldn't enforce it — sparing the governor from direct responsibility for mass infections — but he then blocked funding for the salaries of defiant school board officials.

Similar battles are raging in states and school districts around the country, in defiance of all medical science and common sense. With the super-contagious delta, to say nothing of potential new variants, the necessary vaccination level for herd immunity is probably 90% if not higher. There is no realistic prospect of achieving that in the United States, let alone in the global population — for so many of whom no vaccines are even available — while booster shots are rolled out in the United States and other rich countries.

A year after then-president Trump was pimping hydroxychloroquine, bleach or ultraviolet light exposure as COVID treatments, people deluded by anti-vaccine drivel were injecting themselves or even drinking Ivermectin, a drug for treating parasites (particularly in farm livestock) — not viral infections. Insanity!

System Insanity

All this was before the Texas anti-abortion law was enabled to take effect by the Supreme Court. We'll discuss its specific consequences below. The larger context is that this law represents the escalation of a yawning crisis of the political system, one that mainstream media and pundits finally realize threatens the stability of the U.S. "Constitutional" order.

Among Trump's other obscenities, of course, was the mass deportation of Central American asylum seekers under "Title 42" on the pretext of preventing COVID spread. The Biden administration, in a move as criminal as it is cynical, has kept this measure in place to carry out the forced return of desperate Haitians from the U.S.-Mexican border back to the country they'd fled a decade ago.

Like Democratic presidents Clinton and "deporter-in-chief" Obama before him, Biden calculates that the way to blunt Republican attacks on immigration is to outflank them. It's a tactic that doesn't work, of course, combining moral bankruptcy with political futility as the purveyors of white nationalism continue spewing their "replacement theory" fictions without letup.

What might have once seemed like fringe phenomena, stolen-election conspiracy theories and vaccine-mandate refusal are entrenched manifestations of irrationalism running wild. They're ghastly but not terribly surprising phenomena — in today's circumstances where at least a third of the U.S. population still believes that Trump won the 2020 election.

Driven by a major political party taken over (willingly) by Trumpism and an ecosystem of far-right media platforms, the consequences are unfolding toward a massive crisis of regime legitimacy. Alarm bells are ringing along a spectrum from neoconservative ideologue Robert Kagan to liberal historian Timothy Snyder (see *Washington Post*, September 23, 2021, https://wapo.st/3A3QDo4 and *New York Times Magazine,* June 29, 2021 respectively).

Deeper systemic irrationality is embedded in capitalist production's dependence on fossil fuel. Hurricane Ida, a relatively routine Category 1 storm that intensified in just over a day over super-warmed Gulf of Mexico waters to a monster Category 4, made landfall on August 30. It slammed directly into Port Fouchon, Louisiana, a hub for refinery and transport of 15% of the United States' crude oil and five percent of its natural gas.

Thus thousands of livelihoods in southeast Louisiana, the economy of the state and a substantial part of the whole country (e.g. fuel prices) depend urgently on the most rapid recovery and resumption of the very same fossil fuel oil extraction that made Ida, and will make coming climate-change events, such massive disasters. And this even as areas of the Louisiana coast become indefensible against future storms and probably best left uninhabited.

That so-called "recovery" depends on a certain level of climate-change denial, or willful blindness to its consequences. The same is true of the drive to extend the Enbridge Line 3 and 5 pipelines in Minnesota and Wisconsin, discussed by activist Rebecca Kemble in this issue of *Against the Current.*

This system insanity is no one's "fault," least of all the workers and dislocated folks whose jobs or homes, or both, are in shambles, although developers who overbuild along vulnerable coastlines bear part of the responsibility. The real point is not who's to blame; it's that *we just can't go on this way* if human civilization is to survive this century.

Far Right Running Riot

The Ida catastrophe happened to be sandwiched between two manifestations of growing political insanity, in the wake of the 2020 election and the January 6 Capitol riot, driving the United States toward a potential existential

continued on the inside back cover

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Front Cover: October 2nd Detroit demonstration against the Texas anti-abortion law. https://jimwestphoto.com
Above: Giige, an Indigenous and queer collective from Teejop, Wisconsin speaking against Line 3. Rebecca Kemble
Back Cover: Map for Line 3 protests. William J. Krupinski

AGAINST THE CURRENT is published in order to promote dialogue among the activists, organizers and serious scholars of the left. We promote the vision of socialism from below, of a revolutionary, working-class, multinational and multiracial, feminist and antibureaucratic socialist movement. *ATC* is sponsored by Solidarity, a socialist organization founded in 1986, together with a group of advisory editors who believe that this magazine can contribute to building an effective U.S. socialist left.

Save — and Extend — Our Rights!

Reproductive Justice on the Line

By Dianne Feeley

TENS OF THOUSANDS rallied, marched, and chanted for reproductive justice in 650 U.S. cities on October 2. Ranging in size from a hundred to 10,000-20,000, the actions came in response to the Texas anti-abortion law that went into effect September 1. The predominance of hand-made signs expressed defiance and determination: "My arm's tired from holding this sign since the 60s"; "TEXAS: where a virus has reproductive rights and a woman doesn't"; and "One day I just hope to have the same rights as a gun." The overarching message was that *we will not return to the era when abortion was illegal.*

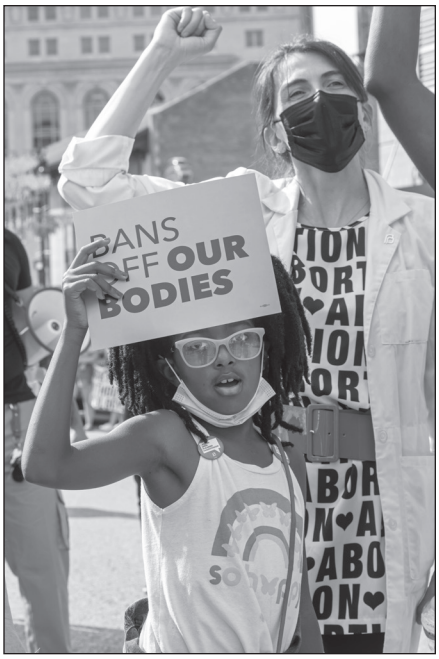
The Texas anti-abortion law bans abortions beyond the sixth week of pregnancy. Anyone aiding or abetting an abortion beyond that period could be sued: a doctor, a clerical worker at the clinic or a person who provided money, transportation or even childcare. Written to prevent legal challenge, it bypasses enforcement by the state and deputizes bounty hunters, rewarding them with $10,000 payoffs.

When the Texas clinics appealed to the U.S. District Court, the case was inexplicably postponed and sent to the U.S. Supreme Court. As the September date approached and the Court was still on summer recess, a truncated process resulted in a 5-4 ruling with the majority smugly justifying its position given the "complex and novel antecedent procedural questions."

Justice Sonia Sotomayor called the emergency ruling "stunning," given that the law is so clearly unconstitutional.

Known as Texas Senate Bill 8 (SB8), the law was designed to shut down the state's two dozen remaining clinics. An earlier Texas law, overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016, required doctors who performed abortions to have admitting privileges at hospitals within a 30-mile radius and mandated that abortion facilities must meet costly and unnecessary specifications for their buildings.

The majority opinion in *Whole Women's Health vs. Hellerstedt* struck down these requirements, noting that "Each [provision] places a substantial obstacle in the path of women seeking a previability abortion, each constitutes an undue burden on abortion access, and each violates the federal Constitution."



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The 2013 law was a test to see how many clinics would be forced to close through onerous regulations. Once closed, it's difficult for clinics to find the resources and to reopen. Despite a favorable ruling, 40 clinics were whittled down to a mere two dozen. SB8 goes further by intimidating anyone willing to help end their pregnancy.

When SB8 went into effect last September, Texas clinics complied with the new law. Those beyond their six weeks were referred to out-of-state clinics.

Of course, that route involves more complex arrangements and higher costs for those already under the considerable stress of terminating a pregnancy. The appointments at the nearest clinic in Oklahoma skyrocketed, leading to additional wait times.

The Response

In response to SB8, a coalition of over 100 organizations under the banner of the Women's March called a demonstration for reproductive justice on October 2 in Washington DC. Local initiatives, often organized by young women on social media, sprang up and linked to the Women's March map. While the level of organization differed around the country, determination filled the air.

Five days after the successful actions, U.S. District Court Judge Robert Pitman issued an emergency injunction against SB8 at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice. In his 113-page ruling he stated, "From the moment S.B. 8 went into effect, women have been unlawfully prevented from exercising control over their lives in ways that are protected by the Constitution."

The following day, six of the 24 clinics began to schedule patients although staff were frightened to resume services. They realize that if the law is ultimately upheld, SB8 allows bounty hunters to retroactively sue all who aided and abetted.

True to form, the Texas attorney general immediately appealed the case to the very conservative Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which quickly overturned Pitman's injunction. Other state legislatures, most notably Florida, have threatened to pass their version of SB8 over the next few months. Since three of Trump's appointees have been added to the U.S. Supreme Court, right-wing legislators have felt emboldened to move ahead and challenge *Roe v. Wade* on several fronts.

In 2018 Kentucky outlawed a surgical procedure used for second-trimester abortion. A federal court has ruled that law unconstitutional, issued a permanent injunction and denied an appeal.

The state's secretary of health accepted the decision, yet the state's attorney general demands to continue the litigation. The Court's decision to hear oral arguments on what is a procedural motion indicates the majority's interest in laws that outlaw abortion before there's any possibility of viability outside the body of the pregnant person.

A Mississippi law that outlaws abortion at 15 weeks is on the Court's docket. The hearing is scheduled for December 1 with a decision expected next spring.

Right-Wing Attacks

For 50 years the right wing has attempted to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. They have won partial victories by passing a number of supposedly necessary requirements which result in infantilizing women.

Over the years anti-abortion fanatics have picketed and terrorized clinics, killed

Dianne Feeley has been an activist in the struggle for reproductive justice since the 1960s.

doctors who perform abortions, lied about the safety of abortion, and passed laws that set requirements unrelated to the safety of the pregnancy. These include parental consent for teenagers, requiring a waiting period between a first visit and the procedure, distributing unscientific "facts" to patients as well as mandating ultrasounds that are unnecessary early in a pregnancy. They also police sex education classes, and set up phony women's health clinics to attract and then intimidate those seeking abortion.

The most important right-wing attack on abortion came in 1979 with the passage of the Hyde Amendment, which denies the poor Medicaid funding for most abortions. (During the seven years before the amendment was implemented, 300,000 were able to obtain abortion under Medicaid.) This is an amendment tied to the yearly budget and has been renewed by both Democrats and Republicans over the years.

Although President Biden eliminated the amendment with the $3.5 trillion reconciliation bill that would expand Medicaid, Senator Joseph Manchin (WV-D) announced at the end of September that he will not vote for that bill unless the Hyde Amendment is included. The attack on the poor, which disproportionally affects people of color, continues.

Despite the aggressiveness of the right-wing base in evangelical and Catholic churches, a nearly 60% majority public opinion opposes banning abortion. Yet the right wing wants to eliminate abortion and declare "fetal rights" beginning at the moment of conception. it has been successful in restricting abortion because we live in a society that judges women and poor people. For example, the right wing paints those who don't have the resources to pay for the abortion procedure as sexually irresponsible. Those who seek abortion in the second or third trimester are particularly vilified.

Giselle Gerolami

Is our response strong enough?

The reality is that those wanting to end a pregnancy want to do so as quickly as they can. That's why 89% of all abortions occur within the first twelve weeks. Yet this requires knowing where to access such services and having the money, time, and resources to get to a clinic. Those unable to do so were blocked by either a medical, financial or personal reason.

Reproductive procedures for women are judged differently than all other medical procedures. Why accept that the state should have a say about who will have, or when to have, or not to have, children?

Giselle Gerolami

Abortion (before "quickening") and birth control were outlawed in the United States only in the 19th century and birth control became an issue with the rise of feminism in the early 20th century. But the challenge stalled out under the repression unleashed as the United States entered World War I. Without a feminist movement to shape it, birth control re-emerged in the 1930s. By the 1960s the right to abortion was key to the new movement. We initiated petitions and class-action lawsuits, testified at legislative hearings, and even picketed medical conventions, urging doctors and nurses to join us in demanding a repeal of these laws.

A Brief History of the Fight

By the 1960s it was estimated that at least a million U.S. women each year were undergoing illegal abortions, often under unsafe conditions. We organized speakouts where women testified about our experiences. In April 1971 the manifesto signed by 343 French actresses and cultural workers was published, declaring they had had abortions and demanding the law's repeal. It shocked the world by revealing the reality for even many "successful" women.

This occurred within a burgeoning and international movement. Two years before, a group of undergraduates at McGill University in Montreal published the first edition of a scientifically informative *Birth Control Handbook*. It described and diagrammed women's anatomy and the reproductive cycle.

The first edition of *Our Bodies, Our Selves,* published in 1971, raised a wide range of women's health issues. While there had long been a phone number one could give to a friend "in trouble," in Chicago the Jane Collective organized an underground clinic and carried out 11,000 safe and inexpensive abortions between 1969-73.

Feminist health centers flourished during this period, as women flocked to learn about our bodies. On the West Coast Carol Downer was arrested for teaching women to use yogurt to treat vaginal infections; the yogurt in the clinic's refrigerator was confiscated as evidence.

After abortion became legal these clinics added abortion to their list of services. Since hospitals were never very interested in offering abortions, these feminist clinics, along with Planned Parenthood, became the infrastructure for abortion services.

By the end of the 1960s states such as Colorado and California had reformed their

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laws to allow for "therapeutic" abortions. Women who had "serious" health or mental health problems could obtain them when certified by a hospital committee. Mostly available to wealthier women, it was a humiliating process that was accessible to a relative few.

Also during this time, middle-class women who wanted to be sterilized had to jump through hoops in order to qualify while poor women, usually African Americans and Latinas —but also women considered mentally or physically deficient — were forcibly sterilized. Mexican American women, who had been sterilized without their knowledge during their delivery, learned of the procedure when they inquired about birth control. Nearly one-third of Puerto Rican women were sterilized.

The more radical element of the feminist movement saw how race and class were used to implement decisions about women's bodies. We realized that the best way of advancing women's rights was to defend the most vulnerable. We linked the demand to repeal abortion laws with one that exposed and opposed forced sterilization.

By the 1970s it was clear that the demand raised by the women's movement was not to reform abortion laws, but to repeal them. Class-action suits were winding their way through several state courts.

Realizing that the New York state law was about to be struck down, the state legislators crafted an extremely progressive law: it had no residency requirement and allowed abortion through the 12th week of pregnancy. Legal abortion had become a reality! At the end of the first year, statistics revealed how safe abortions were. In essence, the New York law became the test case that would lead to the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

It's true that Ruth Bader Ginsburg criticized the decision because it rests on the Supreme Court's interpretation of privacy as a Constitutional right — a shaky edifice — rather than on the 14th Amendment's due process and equal protection clauses.

Ginsburg also questioned the trimester framework established by the 1973 decision. By dividing a pregnancy into three stages, the ruling gave the state more say as the pregnancy progressed.

Before the fetus could survive outside the woman, that is, during the first two trimesters, legislation should concern only her health and safety. Only with fetal viability does the state have an interest. Yet late abortions are usually necessary when the woman's life is in danger, or the fetus is malformed and unlikely to survive.

Nonetheless, we have a federal law against third trimester abortions. Here again the assumption is that politicians are better able to make an informed judgment than the pregnant individual. While defending the right to abortion outlined in *Roe v. Wade*, it's now time to call for its extension.

Currently about 870,000 abortions are performed each year, with 30% carried out through a medical, not surgical, procedure (i.e. by pills — mifepristone and misoprostol). Given the growing percentage of medical abortion since the FDA approve these drugs in 2000, right-wing legislators have effectively prohibited telemedicine for abortion by mandating that the physician must be in the same room as the patient..

One in four women will have an abortion before the age of 45. That was the reality before abortion was legal, and while the number of abortions has decreased with greater access to birth control, it remains so.

Nearly half of those seeking abortion are poor (living below the federal poverty level) and another 26% low income. Almost 60% already have at least one child. People of color have approximately 60% of all the abortions while whites represent nearly 40%.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, by 2019 nearly 40 million women of reproductive age live in states considered hostile to abortion rights. The National Advocates for Pregnant Women note that in this hostile environment women are being increasingly arrested and sometimes convicted for miscarriages. They have been arrested for falling down stairs, drinking alcohol, giving birth at home, being in a "dangerous" location, having HIV, experiencing a drug dependency problem, or attempting suicide.

Beyond Texas

SB8 is an attempt to circumvent a derivative constitutional right through vigilante action that will render it meaningless. In essence, the Texas legislature is mirroring the approach of the former slaveholders after the Civil War.

Passage of the post-Civil War 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments abolished slavery as a legal institution and guaranteed the rights of citizenship to those who had been dehumanized. Yet within a dozen years a relentless counterattack resulted in "redeeming" the white elites, smashing what multi-racial democracy had been built and reducing the rights of former slaves through vigilante murder and intimidation.

With this tragedy in mind, we can look at social movements that have forced public officials to take positions they'd rather not. Today's crisis opens up an opportunity to assert the right to a full program of reproductive justice. We should end the onerous restrictions on abortion, offer sex education based on science not superstition, provide universal and free contraception, along with an accessible public health system and creating a healthy environment in which to raise children.

And given the right-wing's generalized attack, it seems obvious to ally with other social justice movements that face the same bullying enemies, from Black Lives Matter and Indigenous rights to environmental justice, rational gun control and voting rights. ■

Interview with Deborah LaBelle:

Teenagers Are Children, Not "Bad Seed"

AT THE START of last year, 1465 people incarcerated in U.S. prisons were serving sentences they had received when they were children—some as young as 14. The combination of public pressure and civil rights lawsuits resulted in U.S. Supreme Court rulings curtailing these sentences. Today 25 states and the District of Columbia have banned life sentences for youth.

Data indicates that of those youth sentenced to life without parole, more than three quarters witnessed violence on a regular basis in their homes. Nearly half were physically abused, with that figure rising to 77% of girls sexually abused. While racial data are incomplete, it appears that about 62% of the youth imprisoned under a life sentence are African American.

Dianne Feeley interviewed Deborah LaBelle, a civil rights attorney, professor and writer. She has been lead counsel in more than a dozen class action cases that challenged policies for incarcerated people, particularly youth. Formerly she directed the Juvenile Life Without Parole Initiative for the ACLU of Michigan and coordinated Michigan's Juvenile Mitigation Access Committee.

LaBelle is the author of chapters "Women, the Law and the Justice System: Neglect, Violence, and Resistance" in the volume Women at the Margins: Neglect, Punishment and Resistance *(Routledge, 2002) and "Ensuring Rights for All: Realizing Human Rights for Prisoners" in* Bringing Human Rights Home *(Praeger Press, 2008). She was the consultant to the documentary, "Natural Life" (2014), that highlighted the inequities in the U.S. juvenile justice system by looking at five cases.*

LaBelle has not been able to review the text of this interview.

Dianne Feeley: *Could you speak about the significance of the U.S. Supreme court decisions that addressed life without parole sentences for youth convicted of homicide?*

Deborah LaBelle: Do you mean the *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) and *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016) decisions? If so, let me fill in the background to those decisions.

Before 2010 a group of us including Bernadine Dohrn, who's been working on children's rights a long time, Kim Crenshaw and Alison Parker from Human Rights Watch and Ben Jealous from Amnesty International got together at Open Society Foundation (OSF), the Soros offices where I was a Senior Soros Fellow.

I had just been interviewing Michigan prisoners at youth and adult prisons. While I knew Michigan didn't have the death penalty, I had no idea about the number of youth who had been sentenced to life without parole — or about what that really meant. When I compiled my survey I found out there were hundreds in this situation and worked with the ACLU to put together a report, "Second Chances."

After that, I started getting data from other states. When we met at OSF, we agreed to coauthor a monitoring report. We called it "The Rest of Their Lives" because when we pulled together focus groups, we discovered that when people heard "life without parole" they really thought, "Oh, that means people will have to serve seven years before applying for parole." The majority had no idea that children as young as 14 were being incarcerated until their death.

Massive Disparities

Our monitoring looked at what was happening around the world. It was clear that the United States, along with Israel in its treatment of Palestinian youth, were exceptions in how children were sentenced. While the United States was out of step, we were worried that Australia and Britain were looking to the United States to possibly adopt such punitive sentences.

Because of the huge racial disparities in sentencing, we developed a plan to go to the U.S. Human Rights Commission as well as to the United Nations, where we would address the Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination as well as the Committee Against Torture. We would ask for observations from all the major human rights bodies at the United Nations, chastising the United States for violating of a number of treaties.

We would petition the Office of American States, again stating that such sentences were a violation of the treaties the United States had signed and ratified.

We agreed to try a litigation approach that began with the harshest sentence handed out for homicides: life without parole. Although we wanted to pull children out of the punitive prison system altogether, we wanted a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that would recognize kids arrested were children, that we had failed them as a society and now we were punishing them to cover up our own failures. To recognize that the child is a child would start the ball rolling toward examining youth incarceration for lesser offenses.

I was in trial at the time the *Miller* case was argued in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. I remember Bernadine calling me from the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. She said she knew we'd won because every single justice, except for Scalia and Thomas — who said nothing — used the word children, not convict, offender or prisoner.

Once you recognize that these are children, it's hard to say, "We're going to take a child and put them in a cage until they die."

The Court understood the brain science — that is, children have not fully developed their control impulses. Additional mitigating factors include growing up under difficult circumstances and being subject to abuse.

The Court understood that children lack experiences that enable them to make the best choices. Others are runaways who feel they have no choice.

We reported that the majority of youth who did not have their own counsel, and were assigned one, were often provided with inadequate lawyers. Some simply lacked training in handling criminal cases while others were so inadequate they were subsequently suspended or disbarred.

So if the family couldn't afford a lawyer, the kids got the worst representation. But while the Court did mention that fact in their decisions, they ignored the racial component, as courts have done for decades. While various factors were taken into consideration, the work we did to document how life without parole was a racially dis-

criminatory sentence went unmentioned.

The reality is that life sentences were disproportionately given to children of color, who were viewed as "bad seeds." The super-predator myth continues: they receive the harshest sentences, the least resources in their defense and are less likely than white youth to be placed in juvenile treatment facilities. Another factor at play is that when the victim is of a different race, the sentence is more severe.

The *Miller v. Alabama* decision was an amazing breakthrough – but it didn't abolish the sentence of life without parole, it only said it should be very, very rare. The 2016 *Montgomery v. Louisiana* case was argued in order to make the decision retroactive.

Some states, like Michigan, had said, "Okay, we won't sentence youth to life without parole in the future, but the 367 who are currently serving that sentence are 'stable.'" But Justice Kagan in effect noted, "We just said that is cruel and unusual punishment. You can't continue; each case must be re-examined."

Actually, the Supreme Court's decisions were bizarre because they retained the sentence for the very rare child who "exhibits such irretrievable depravity that rehabilitation is impossible." Absent that, there must be a meaningful opportunity to be released. What judge or psychologist can determine that a child should be thrown away? No one can determine what someone will become!

DF: *What has been the impact of those decisions?*

DL: In Michigan about 250 individuals have had hearings, with nearly 150 released. Because in Michigan the life without parole statute requires serving a minimum of 25 years before seeking parole, others who have been re-sentenced are awaiting parole.

Among those released there has been no recidivism. So despite the reality that many grew up in incredibly dysfunctional homes and have been greatly harmed, this group, who shouldn't have been imprisoned so long, is doing amazingly well.

Child Abuse

Last year we settled a case against the Michigan Department of Corrections for youth who had been placed in adult prisons. Not only is life without parole a horrific punishment, but they were then preyed upon by both adult prisoners and correctional staff. They had also been subject to solitary confinement. The state was forced to pay the second highest settlement ever, $80 million, because of egregious harm.

If you put a child in a closet for three days, you would be subject to child abuse. Here the state is putting youth in harm's way, and in cages and solitary confinement for months. No child should be put in a prison; no child should ever be prison for anything.

And if this shouldn't be happening to children involved in homicide offenses, then we need to look at all the other children, who are arrested for home invasion, for drugs, for larceny and sentenced to adult prisons. It's a destructive and senseless way to hold children "accountable" for breaking the law.

DF: *What were the deficiencies of those two decisions?*

DL: They didn't totally abolish life without parole on the basis that it is cruel and unusual punishment.

I'll use Michigan as an example: prosecutors in certain counties decided that they would re-sentence once again to life without parole. Instead of being a rare sentence, the prosecutor in one county sought life without parole in 40 out of the 43 cases.

Then there is the racial disparity: the majority of those re-sentenced to life were people of color. Geographic injustice is a large problem as well, when prosecutors and judges in certain counties refuse to follow the Supreme Court guidelines.

How arbitrary is that, when just one prosecutor or judge has this power? Fortunately, some counties are electing more progressive prosecutors.

Michigan's Constitution talks about "cruel *or* unusual punishment," which means legally only one but not both elements must be proven. When a punishment becomes "unusual," it is subject to problematic implementation. It's not a standard punishment, but only happens here or there — it's almost archaic.

For the evolving sense of decency, which is what the Eighth Amendment talks about, we need to move away from these sentences entirely. But re-sentencing is subject to arbitrary implementation by judges who simply don't believe in following the *Miller* and *Montgomery* decisions. Of course it also leads to continuing the troubling racial disparities in sentencing.

The majority of states have now abolished life without parole as a potential sentence for children under 18. This happens mainly through legislation or state court decisions. Certainly we will keep litigating until people recognize that every person convicted of this sentence as a child deserves an opportunity to present their case: they are no longer a danger and should come home.

I think the sentence itself should have been abolished. Children's cases should be handled in a child's court.

Instead there is an arbitrary and unfair system. Why 25 years before you have an opportunity for parole? It's not like anybody studied things and said, "After 25 years of prison programs you are rehabilitated." It's pulled out of the air. It has no rational basis. Is 25 years harsh enough so that we feel good about vengeance?

The majority of adults who commit homicides are charged with first-degree murder. The vast majority, I think it's 96%, take a plea, generally to second-degree murder. If convicted of second-degree murder or given a life sentence, the adult has an opportunity to go before the parole board after 15 years. That means adults who commit the same offenses as children have an opportunity to appeal for parole 10 years earlier.

Need for Transparency

DF: *U.S. society has become more aware of how unaccountable police departments are. What about the rest of the legal system, the prosecutor's office and the courts?*

DL: There needs to be transparency for all prosecutors and judges. We don't know what goes on. Prosecutors have broad discretion in bringing or dismissing charges, suggesting sentencing guidelines, offering a plea or dismissing charges. Judges also have discretion in accepting the prosecutor's charges and sentencing guidelines.

We need transparency not just to find the people who are innocent,* but those who have gotten excessive sentences whether because of misconduct on the part of police, prosecutors or were given a racially-tinged sentence.

Citizens for Racial Equality (CREW) in Washtenaw County did an amazing report on racial bias in the county's legal system. Their August 2020 report, "Race to Justice," studied the prosecutors' office and county court. The report identified a retired prosecutor who routinely added felony firearm charges, a mandatory two-year sentence, on top of the original charge for the youth of color who were arrested.

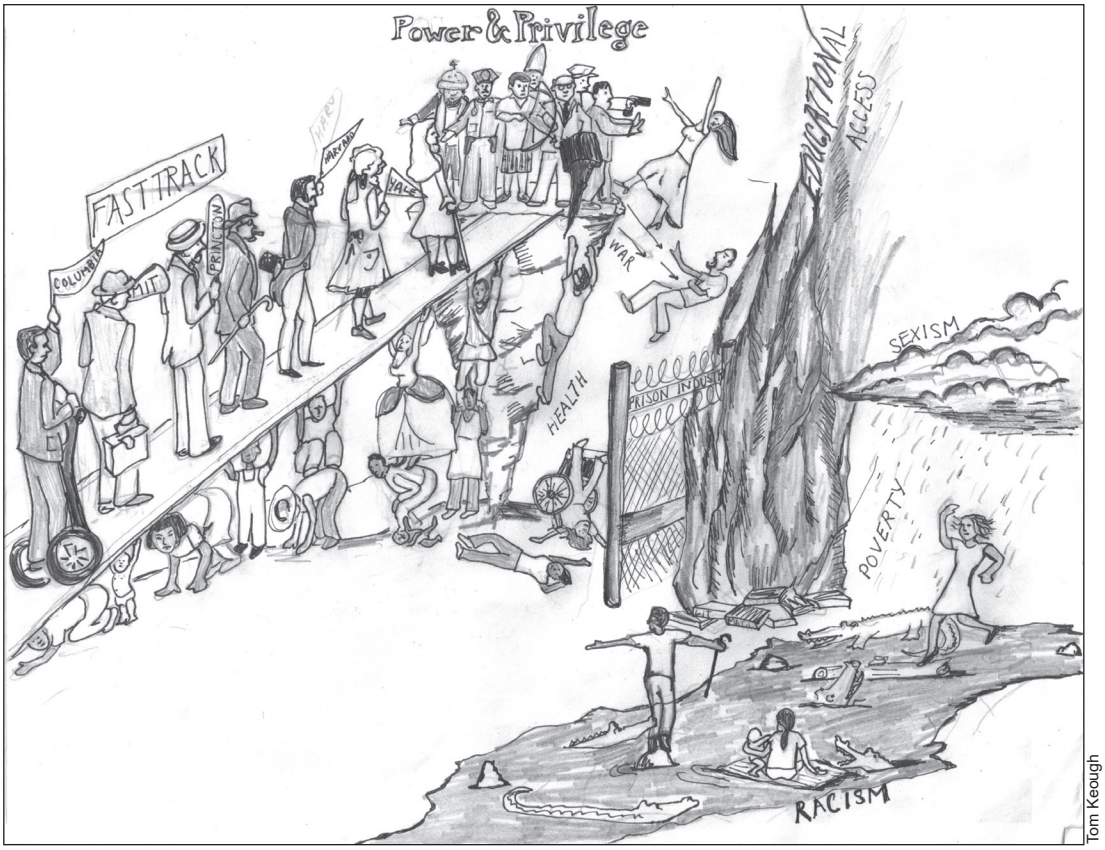
It also found a judge who sentenced African Americans to longer prison terms for the same crimes whites were convicted of committing. Look at what the prosecutor is doing and then follow through with the judges and the sentencing.

CREW's report advised monitoring these legal institutions and launching an oral history project so that people can talk about what they went through with the larger community. Without this transparency we don't know what to fix. But once we see how prosecutors charge people differently based on race, we can change it.

Today prosecutors can charge people with anything. Then they go before a judge and we don't know the basis of their sentencing. They don't publish their opinions very often. And once judges are elected, as incumbents they are easily reelected.

Most countries do not have the level of incarceration the United States has. In Michigan the Department of Corrections

*As of October 2021 the Michigan Innocence Project has presented evidence that led to the release of 29 people from prison.



Tom Keough

currently has a yearly budget of more than two billion. We have no idea what they are doing. What programs do they have and how successful are they?

If a corporation had to pay out $80 million because of a complete failure to protect children under their care, we would not consider the enterprise successful. A few years earlier they had to pay out a million dollars because their staff was assaulting women. Yet every year the Department of Corrections gets an increase in their budget. Their budget is larger than our state's education budget.

DF: *You spoke about the $80 million settlement you won for people who had been abused as teenagers placed in adult prisons. What was the state forced to do as a result of this victory?*

DL: When we started the suit, there were over 200 children at any one time in Michigan adult prisons. We forced the Department of Corrections to end the practice — no children under 18 in adult prisons. Currently there are six but by the end of the year there will be none.

We developed a different way of reporting abuse and eliminated solitary confinement for youth. We're still overseeing the implementing of programs including making counseling available and setting up trauma centers. There are a lot of people in prison who are suffering from PTSD, and that includes youth.

Youth are to be processed and kept completely separate, only overseen by staff trained as youth counselors. We are also pressing for defining the transition from childhood to adulthood at 21, not 18, and having those between 21 and 26 in a separate group as well.

In some European countries, the person running the facility is held accountable for the recidivism rate. Instead of blaming the person being released and unable to find their legs, society should be asking questions. How did the program that supposedly prepared them fail? Was there a history of prison abuse or neglect?

The director and the department should be held accountable. Succeeding doesn't just mean preventing an escape, it means helping people to be good citizens.

For years the state of Michigan was releasing people without so much as an ID. It's very easy to get people an ID and their social security number before they're released. Yet it took us years to get the department to act on our simple demand.

Seriously, what do you think will happen when you release people with felony records, no ID, no funds, et cetera, et cetera?

Kids coming out of prison are subject to stringent reporting. They have a lot of rules that make it almost impossible to do. They have to go once a week and take a drug test whether or not they have a history of using drugs. They have to get to places where the bus doesn't go to take that drug test.

They don't have cars and they don't have money, so they are often forced to beg for rides. I've sent Uber to pick them up so they can get there. If they don't, they can end up back in prison. Reporting is often random so sometimes they have to leave work to get there on time. Nothing is made easy.

Kids now 21, whose offenses have nothing to do with alcohol, are prohibited from working in any place that serves alcohol. They can't even work in a Friday's restaurant. The limitations are so severe and so thoughtless.

Probation is not a system that recognizes the difficulties people might have. It's insanity to have arbitrary rules.

DF: *Isn't that because we have a throwaway culture? Prison is just one more mechanism for throwing people away.*

DL: Let's not forget we also have the prison industrial complex. We have a lot of people who are invested in having a robust level of incarceration.

When you look at the low level of youth recidivism in the Scandinavian countries, it seems to boil down to their understanding that children are children, and should be treated under international standards, consistent with their status as children.

They want youth to succeed in life. That is a real difference — we just don't hear that here. Here youth are to "behave," meaning they should accept their punishment. That's not a good understanding of what it takes to succeed. And there are a lot of things that make it almost impossible.

We must ask every politician running for office: "What are you doing to build accountability across the legal system? What are you going to do to reduce the inequality and trauma the legal system represents? How can we insure a seamless transition from punishment to reintegration?" ■

ALAN WALD'S REVIEW essay "Protesting the Protest Novel: Richard Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground*" is posted at https://againstthecurrent.org/. It's available now in advance of our January-February 2022 issue, where it will appear in print with our annual Black History and Struggle feature. Also on the website is Sudip Bhattacharya's piece "Twenty Years of the War on Terror," Cliff Conner on the outrageous sentencing of Steven Donziger, and more. Check it out!

The "Shell River Seven" Mary Klein, Winona LaDuke, Barbara With, Trish Weber, Kelly Maracle, Cheryl Barnds and Flo Razowsky practice 1855 treaty rights on the Line 3 escarpment at the Shell River. They were arrested on July 20, 2021 and face criminal trespassing charges in Wadena County. LaDuke's attorney has made a motion for change of venue to White Earth Tribal Court. Photo by Citizen X

Blocking an Ecocidal Pipeline an interview with Rebecca Kemble

REBECCA KEMBLE IS a community activist and former member of the Madison, Wisconsin Common Council. This past summer she attended the blockade by Anishinaabe land protectors and allies against the construction of the new Enbridge Line 3 that cuts through their territory and threatens their treaty rights. Since then Enbridge has announced they have completed construction and are transporting tar sands oil. Meanwhile Indigenous protesters are still facing charges, and it was revealed that Enbridge has paid police $2.4 million for security. However, the protesters do not intend to end their opposition. Dianne Feeley interviewed her for ATC.

Dianne Feeley: *Tell us about the struggle against Enbridge's plan to replace the old Line 3 in Northern Minnesota in what seems to be a remote area.*

Rebecca Kemble: Line 3 goes right through the center of Anishinaabe territory. To them, it's the center of the world.

Enbridge, a Canadian multinational tar sands company, is using Northern Minnesota, Northern Wisconsin, and Northern Michigan as a sacrifice zone to pipe their tar sands from Northern Alberta through Anishinaabe territory, then back to Canada and out to the east coast for export.

None of that oil goes to U.S. markets, so presidents Biden, Obama and Trump's arguments about energy independence are off when it comes to Enbridge. It's just a giant disaster waiting to happen.

And disasters happen all the time. Every 20 days there is a pipeline spill. And as a Michigander, Dianne, you know very well, about the 2010 Enbridge Line 6B tar sands pipeline spill on the Kalamazoo River.

Tar sands are thick because they contain bitumen, so the oil just sinks to the bottom of waterways and kills everything. Enbridge spent over $1.3 billion in the cleanup, but unless they drain the river it can't be completely remediated.

Enbridge started construction last winter on Line 3 and they are going at warp speed to finish. The capacity of the line is 844,000 barrels per day; they want to have oil flowing by this November.

There was no comprehensive environmental impact statement from either the feds or the state, yet there are 22 river crossings and over 200 water crossings.

Just in drilling under the rivers there were 28 spills of drilling fluid whose contents are proprietary, so we don't really know what's in it.

Line 3 opponents have used several different tools to stop Line 3: demanding environmental impact reports, bringing legal challenges, protesting and direct action as well as pressuring Enbridge's funding sources.

Enbridge has dozens and dozens of crews working every day and night throughout the week to get this thing done. They claim to have employed 4000 people in what is the

largest construction project in Minnesota.

They want to beat the lawsuits that are piling up and prevent Jaime Pinkham, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, from ordering an environmental impact statement as the Army Corps of Engineers did earlier this year for Line 5.

We want to build enough pressure to slow things down. If there's no oil in those pipes, it's not a done deal.

There are legal challenges, particularly from the Red Lake Nation, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Another important legal front was initiated by the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, asserting that under their 1855 treaty rights Minnesota has the legal obligation to protect *Manoomin* (wild rice) and fresh water resources.

Based on this treaty they initiated a suit in tribal court against the Minnesota DNR for improperly permitting Line 3. The Minnesota DNR challenged the jurisdiction in federal court, but on September 3 Judge Wilhelmina Wright denied their motion for a preliminary injunction and dismissed the case "for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction."

This precedent-setting case has the potential to put Indigenous Nations on a stronger footing as they seek to defend their sovereignty, land and water rights.

There have been several creative direct actions and protests including activists locking themselves inside sections of pipe, tree sits, blockading excavators and other methods that shut down construction.

Since constructing this pipeline requires massive financing, pressuring banks and financial institutions is critical. People have worked hard to pressure banks not to refinance the company's maturing loan, a $3 billion revolving credit facility that came due at the end of March.

Three more credit facilities worth more than $7 billion came due in July but apparently those loans were all renewed. More than 20 banks were involved, including, Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, JP Morgan and Wells Fargo.

There is a diabolical aspect to all this hurry, because what they are doing is hastening climate catastrophe. Line 3 will produce the equivalent emissions of 50 coal-generated power plants. It's insane, totally insane.

It's all just for profit — we have the capacity to invest in clean energy, but not have the political will to do it.

Shut Them Down for Survival

The Keystone XL pipeline got nixed by the Biden administration. Biden was so proud of himself for doing that, but he's not doing anything about Line 3. The KXL was going to go to New Orleans; Line 3 is going to the east coast of Canada but it's the same tar sands.

And this is in a time when we need to be thinking very, very seriously about halting production, mining and transporting of all fossil fuel and quickly transitioning to renewable energy. So that's why people have been really struggling against the construction of Line 3.

Line 3 ends in Superior, Wisconsin, where different pipelines begin. Line 61 goes the length of Wisconsin down to Illinois and from there to New Orleans. Line 5 and 6B start in Superior too.

But there are also "twin" pipelines because for every one that carries oil, ones in the opposite direction carry dilutant up to Alberta. Tar sands oil is so thick it can't be moved through pipelines unless dilutants are added. So there must be a pipeline to pipe all that crap up in order to process the tar sands and then transport the oil down.

I don't know if anyone's done the calculation on the amount of energy and money it takes to get tar sands out of the ground and moving. I'd be willing to bet it's a lot more than the price they get for the oil itself. The only way this operation works is through massive government subsidies from both the United States and Canada.

So we're using our tax money to subsidize multinational corporations to carry out extraction that damages the planet. All this so they can make a profit! It's really about profit because we don't need tar sand oil. Nobody needs tar sands — it should stay in the ground.

DF: *I notice that activists pair opposition to Enbridge's Line 5 with stopping Line 3 as well.*

RK: While Enbridge's Line 3 was first built in the 1960s and is corroding so much that it's not been able to operate at full capacity, Line 5 was constructed even earlier, in 1953. The pipeline is outdated, it's leaking, and land is eroding around it.

Line 5 has had 29 spills that released over a million gallons of toxic oil into the environment. Yet most of the spills were not discovered by Enbridge's detection systems.

Line 5 goes across Northern Wisconsin, right through the Bad River Reservation and over to the Upper Michigan peninsula. It runs for five miles under the Straits of Mackinac, between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and on to the refineries in Sarnia, Ontario.

As Line 5 crosses these waters, it splits into two pipelines that run along the bottom, completely uncovered. At the Straits of Mackinac, the currents are strong and constantly shifting, so any oil spill would be catastrophic.

It's such a super dangerous and antiquated pipeline that Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer ordered Enbridge to decommission the line by May 2021. Enbridge went to the U.S. federal court to get an injunction and the oil continues to flow.

The corporation had signed a deal with the previous governor (Rick Snyder, who poisoned Flint's water — ed.) to replace Line 5 with a new pipeline that would be encased in a tunnel beneath the bedrock of the straits.

However, Enbridge needs several permits before beginning what would be a 10-year process. Importantly, last summer the Army Corps of Engineers ordered an environmental impact statement.

In 2013, the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Northern Wisconsin did not renew Enbridge's leases on the Line 5 easement through 12 miles of their reservation.

Seeing the impact of climate change, more intense storms and increasing erosion of their land, the Bad River Band tried to negotiate with Enbridge. But when that failed, they took legal action.

But if Enbridge is known for anything, it's consistently acting above the law. They just keep doing what they're doing. They have billions of dollars to pay for attorneys in court and they'll just keep fighting.

Now Enbridge has proposed a Line 5 reroute that goes around the reservation, but a spill would still contaminate the watershed, its wetlands and wildlife. Most importantly, 43% of wild rice beds on Lake Superior are right at the mouth of the Bad River.

Those wild rice beds are the cultural foundation of the people who live there. It's their spiritual food, it's their physical food. It's really the center of their lifeways and their culture. And if that's threatened, they consider it genocide.

Wisconsin's DNR is currently conducting an environmental impact statement. It's probably another year or so before anything happens, although we hear that Enbridge is working on flipping a couple of votes on the Bad River tribal council. That way they can put a replacement pipeline through the reservation, which would be much shorter than a 41-mile reroute.

Enbridge is a dirty, nasty multinational oil company that is just bullying its way through Anishinaabe territory and creating all kinds of havoc.

DF: *So both Line 3 and Line 5 are older pipelines that Enbridge is upgrading?*

RK: Yes. Line 3 is the older pipeline. It's being not just upgraded but built along a new corridor. They're not going along the same route and its potential capacity is much larger — three quarters of a million barrels a day.

The pumping stations were expanded to be able to handle 1.2 million barrels a day in Wisconsin. Once they put in the pipe, they can upgrade the pumping station, increase the capacity, and just ram the oil through.

DF: *Enbridge of course it claims that it puts "safety first." They brag about how safe Line 5 has been through all the years, and they have*

The Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center of St. Paul, MN organized a protest at Governor Walz's house and a march to Chase Bank, one of Enbridge's largest funders. The Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli Mexica-Nahua dancers took the intersection at Grand Avenue and Oxford Street at afternoon rush hour on August 4, 2021. Photo by Rebecca Kemble

even agreed to encase the new Line 3 in a tunnel. They say that the alternative — of shipping the oil by rail — is more hazardous. What's the response to these arguments?

RK: The safest alternative is just to shut it all down, shut the tar sands down. We need to do that for a number of different reasons — not just for transportation safety, but for the climate.

We've had a hell of a summer, with the hottest summer ever recorded. For some, it is the fourth year in the row there have been wildfires and storms. We need to keep oil in the ground. The way to keep Lines 3 and 5 safe is to decommission them along with all the other pipelines.

We don't need tar sands. Enbridge is one of the wealthiest corporations on the planet. They could be part of the solution, but they're not, they're just not, they're worsening the problem.

Police State "Peace"

DF: *Tell us a about the role the Northern Lights Task Force is playing in helping Enbridge construct its pipeline.*

RK: After the Standing Rock (Dakota Access Pipe Line) protests, where over 400 law enforcement jurisdictions were present to suppress protesters, they made the decision to put together a multi-agency, multi-state task force in anticipation of pipeline protests.

My local sheriff, David Mahoney from Dane county in Wisconsin, was one of the program's architects. When I went to Standing Rock to bring a resolution that our city council passed unanimously in support of Indigenous rights, I was arrested.

As I'm getting arrested, I notice Dane county deputies. It turns out our county sheriff sent 13 cops there without informing even the county executive. No one in our community knew about it.

As soon as I got back home, I met with the sheriff and asked him about it. Because I made such a big stink about the participation of Dane county deputies and because other people in our community made such a big stink, he was forced to withdraw his deputies at the end of that week.

In my interview with him, he admitted he had been going out to Standing Rock. As soon as Sacred Stone Camp got started in the spring, he began consulting with the local sheriff's office about how to respond to the mass protests.

At the time Mahoney was vice president of the National Sheriff's Association. He went on to become the president and even met with Trump. He told me that their operation at Standing Rock was really a practice run for all the other upcoming pipeline struggles they were anticipating.

Enbridge was well aware of the opposition to their pipelines and had even been forced in 2016 to withdraw their application for an underground pipeline that would travel more than 600 miles from North Dakota through Minnesota and end in Superior, Wisconsin.

The Sandpiper pipeline was to transport fracked oil and would cross 28 rivers including the Mississippi. Having lost that battle, they were eager to have a mercenary force composed of sheriff departments in the area and linked to Homeland Security fusion centers. These exist all over the country and function as centers for law enforcement from various jurisdictions.

Those fusion centers were used as sort of a home base not just for public law enforcement, but for TigerSwan, a security firm contracted by Enbridge and previously used by Energy Transfer during the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL) struggle. The information they shared was surveillance on water protectors. [TigerSwan has not been identified as working for Enbridge on Line 3.]

When the state of Minnesota authorized the construction of Line 3, they mandated that Enbridge put money into escrow to reimburse law enforcement for their costs. There is a direct relationship to Enbridge paying for public law enforcement services in order to protect their property — this is something brand new.

Sheriffs will say, "We're here to keep the peace," right? Yet near the end of the drilling under the headwaters of the Mississippi there were some arrests, really violent ones.

Jill Ferguson, AKA Bad-ass Grandma, was injured in her head, shoulders and neck as she was arrested by an officer who used multiple "pain compliance" techniques. Others have been shot with teargas canisters and rubber bullets.

Dozens of officers are there to keep water protectors away from the pipeline property. So here we have our taxpayer-funded law enforcement agencies for hire by a multinational corporation.

That deal was facilitated by the state of Minnesota and by Governor Tim Walz who, when he was campaigning for the office he now holds, said any pipeline through treaty territory is a non-starter.

He chose Peggy Flangan, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, as his running mate. He got out the Native vote to win that election and totally turned his back on them. He won't even talk to any of the water protectors.

When five frack-outs happened as Enbridge drilled under the headwaters of the Mississippi, violent arrests took place. At that point the water protectors decided they would walk 256 miles to the state Capitol and publicize what was happening.

They walked for two-plus weeks down to St. Paul, but prior to their arrival, Walz shut down the roads around the Capitol, barricading the building with concrete barriers and high fencing. That's how unwilling he is to listen.

There were over 200 cops from this Northern Lights Task Force guarding the Capitol because these marchers are supposed to be such a threat. Governor Walz has a lot to answer for.

By now there have been more than 800 arrests, surpassing the number of arrests at Standing Rock. The construction on Line 3 is almost complete and none of the "decision makers" are listening. Once again, this country is using Indigenous territory as a sacrifice zone for profiteers.

DF: *How much money has Enbridge put into Northern Light Task Force?*

RK: According to Canada's *National Observer,* as of this April 2021 Enbridge had

put $1,250,000 in the escrow account. They are using it for overtime pay and to buy new toys, new weapons and surveillance equipment including drones.

Sometimes when people are arrested, they have been detained in cages. ("Canadian pipeline giant accused of paying U.S. police to harass activists," Timothy E. Wilson, 4/19/21) Enbridge's legacy will be the even further militarization of law enforcement agencies in rural Minnesota.

Another aspect of how this area is a sacrifice zone is the scandal of the "man camps" and the missing and murdered indigenous women. Early in the summer there were several arrests of Enbridge workers involved in the sex trafficking.

In fact, this is typical of the pattern that develops when these construction camps are set up. It becomes yet another layer in the wholesale exploitation of people, land, food and water.

Solidarity and Outreach

DF: *You were at Standing Rock. [See Rebecca's report "Eyewitness at Standing Rock,"* Against the Current *186, January-February 2017.] Could you compare the two mobilizations? What have activists learned from the DAPL struggle that informed the fight around Line 3?*

RK: One of the differences is that the DAPL fight was focused on one river crossing, at the Missouri river. The Line 3 struggle is dispersed and distributed throughout the whole territory of Northern and north central Minnesota.

There are at least five autonomous camps, but of course they talk with each other. There are treaty camps, culture camps, direct action camps. Each has a role to play, but they're all united in defense of the water, the land, the wild rice, and the territory.

This means there aren't 10,000 people in one place. Instead, there is an unknowable number of people all throughout the territory, monitoring Enbridge and initiating direct actions. This makes it a bit harder for the police because folks could be anywhere.

One of the lessons we learned at Standing Rock was the role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in approving projects, and the role of the banks in financing them. From the get-go, Line 3 activists have directed concerted action on those two fronts.

Stop the Money Pipeline (https://stopthemoneypipeline.com/) is a place where there is specific information about Wall Street's funding of fossil fuels, with a specific section on Line 3.

What happened at Standing Rock was historically unprecedented because it was a gathering of Indigenous peoples, not just from Turtle Island, but from all over the world. Kinship relationships and relationships of solidarity were made there. So much happened at Standing Rock to plant the seeds for other people to launch their struggles in their own territories.

Youth runners from Standing Rock and Cheyenne River who ran the length of Line 3 from North Dakota to Wisconsin count coup on an Enbridge pumping station at the headwaters of the Mississippi River on August 6, 2021. Photo by Rebecca Kemble

For the Line 3 struggle, solidarity relationships are already there. In one three-day period while I was in Northern Minnesota, we had water walkers walking Line 3 from east to west, from Superior, Wisconsin over to North Dakota. At the same time there were youth running from west to east, from Standing Rock and the Cheyenne River reservation to Superior. At one point the walkers met the runners and since they weren't aware of each other's plan, their meeting was joyful.

That same weekend the House of Tears carvers from the Lummi Nation brought their totem pole and performed a ceremony as they made their cross-country journey. That night we held a feast. As the carvers say, the sacredness is not in the totem pole but in the gathering.

There's so much indigenous solidarity and awareness around these pipelines. Folks from the camp in northern Nevada, who are protesting the proposed lithium mine at Thacker Pass, site of sacred land, came through. Indian Country is connected especially around these struggles for treaty rights, for the land and waters.

DF: *Has it been possible to build a relationship with any of the workers on these pipelines? You talked about the man camp.*

RK: When direct actions happen, sometimes there is the opportunity to talk to workers. People ask: "Don't you want to work to build the future, build a future new green economy? There are jobs for you in a new economy. You don't have to be building this machine of death for the whole planet. You can use your skills in other ways."

Those are the kind of conversations happening. The same thing with the police. When arrests are taking place, water protectors say: "When you took your oath to protect and serve, did you think you'd be hired out to a foreign multinational corporation to protect their project, one that will hurt your people?"

DF: *You helped pass a resolution in the Madison City Council to support the shut down Line 3. What's possible to project following the adoption of the resolution? What impact can it have on the population in Madison?*

RK: I was asked to help write that resolution in support of clean water and treaty rights for several reasons. Number one, just to raise awareness, Second, to draw the connections between Lines 3 and 5 and Line 61 that runs right through our backyard here in Dane county. We need to raise awareness about fossil fuel pipelines and the threats they pose to clean water.

Third, we need to learn about treaty rights. In Northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan there are several treaties between the U.S. government and tribal entities. These reserve the right to use land for hunting, fishing, gathering, and maintaining their lifeways in exchange for their ancestors having "sold" the title to settlers.

These were peace treaties initiated by the U.S. government as a less costly alternative to the military campaigns the government was waging in Indian Country.

The federal government was attempting to conquer and take the land. Those Nations who signed the treaties did so while reserving the right to live and maintain their way of life.

Article VI of the U.S. Constitution states that treaties are the supreme law of the land. So our resolution was raising consciousness that those treaties exist in our state as well as in Canada. They need to be respected.

The resolution passed our Common Council unanimously and the mayor signed on as a sponsor, Dane county passed a similar one. The resolution does ask the Wisconsin DNR to decommission Line 5.

We also ordered our chief of police to reject any law enforcement request for Lines 3 or 5. Our new police chief rankled at that and said, "Well, I wouldn't do that. You should just trust me."

We replied, "Well, no, this is a public document and a public statement that tells our community that the council and the mayor actually do have authority over police. We are ordering you to not participate. Whether or not you would not do it yourself doesn't matter. This document says that the elected people of this city are ordering the police chief not to participate."

Earlier in the summer, Minneapolis was the first city to pass such a resolution. Hopefully other communities will pass resolutions like this too.

The Indigenous people's assertion of their sovereignty seems to me a counterforce to the capitalist economy that is destroying the planet. Their struggle is not only a struggle for their justice, but a fight for humanity's very future. ■

The Ecosocialist Imperative

By Solidarity Ecosocialist Working Group

THIRTY YEARS AGO, climate modeling scientists predicted exactly the global events — massive wildfires, intensified tropical storms, flooding and droughts — that we're seeing right now. The only mistake was that they projected these disasters in 100 years' time — the effects have hit us 70 years early.

Capitalism, in its insatiable desire for profit, has ravaged the earth and led to the ecological disaster we now face. Given the extreme fires and droughts, climate change denial has gone out of fashion.

Mainstream media have begun calling this cumulative destruction the result of "human tinkering" with the natural world in which we live. That's a severe understatement when already more than 70 million people are displaced by rising sea levels, drought, the contamination of our water, industrialized corporate agriculture that exhausts the soil, plastics in the ocean, the rapid destruction of forests — particularly tropical rain forests — and the extinction of thousands of species reducing biodiversity.

Yet the root cause remains unmentioned. Politicians who take their cues from the capitalist class offer piecemeal solutions. The plans submitted at the UN Conference of Parties (COP26 coming up this November) offer little more, and project technological fixes that haven't yet been invented — and in some cases, such as "geoengineering" schemes, likely to make things even worse.

When a sixth "mass extinction" looms, a socialist perspective begins with a materialist view that humans are a part of the natural world and must live in concert with it.

Beyond the "Growth" Religion

In contrast, capitalist production has imposed an antagonistic and irrational "metabolic rift" between humanity and nature that leads to a dead end. That's why what we call *ecosocialism* rejects not only the goal of ever-increasing profitability for the enrichment of those who own the corporations, but the very imperative of continuous "growth" that's built into capitalism.

Instead, ecosocialism calls for a fundamental transformation of production to be democratically controlled ("socialized") and organized around human needs.

Why is it that "progress" and growth became the dominant ideology, tantamount to a religious dogma, not only within the capitalist class and its propagandists, but within labor movements and the former Soviet Union? How many times have labor leaders talked about "growing the pie" so there will be more for the working class?

We could conclude this ideology was sustained by apparently limitless possibilities. Yet Marx and Engels, building on the work of 19th century scientists such as the German agricultural chemist Justus von Liebig, noted the soil degradation and urban-rural imbalances occurring in Europe and North America. The exhaustion of capitalist agricultural production in rural communities demanded the importation of guano from Peru, while pollution took over industrialized cities. Other 19th century thinkers recognized it too.

Yet despite great novels and early sociological studies that revealed the extraordinary poverty of the working class, capitalism proclaimed a bountiful future as new industries spread. When "muckraking" journalists revealed the lack of public health, the capitalist ideology continued to extol the individual who had achieved success and promised that same path lay open to others. All the while, colonialism and imperialism pillaged the resources and enslaved Indigenous populations of what we now call the Global South — indescribable crimes against humanity that helped enrich the centers of capitalism.

Today the capitalist myth of overcoming poverty and inequality has come up against the reality that resources have been depleted and the future we face is one of increasing heat, drought and food insecurity. How can an ecosocialist vision offer a way out of this impasse?

For many who are worried about climate change, the reforms they call for consist in simply replacing current energy sources by non-polluting and renewable ones. Thus for example, the global auto industry attempts to refashion itself through developing electric cars, vans and trucks, not by admitting that the world cannot sustain itself on individualized transportation and the infrastructure necessary to sustain it.

Ecosocialists see several principles as fundamental to reorienting society, beginning with understanding that *we cannot go on like this* and that decisions about what to produce, and how, must be made democratically and not by capitalist profiteers or bureaucratic elites. And we recognize these important truths, which are hidden by the dogma of "growth":

- Resources are limited, therefore society must chose wisely what we need from the natural world of which we are a part.
- Because everyone has the right to a sustainable life, equality is a central goal in how we make decisions.
- Within the framework of equality, we must acknowledge the harm as capitalism has driven the economy internationally, causing wars, stealing land and its resources, and demonizing people on the basis of race, sex, sexuality, disability, nationality. The affected populations deserve reparations for past harm, including slavery and genocide, that has unfolded over generations.
- Immediate reforms need to prioritize the public good by shutting down fossil fuel production and providing for human needs: building efficient social housing; expanding public transportation, health care, education, and cultural programs. Eco-agricultural methods can put an end to the harm of industrial agriculture. The more that work and services can be decommodified, the better. Economist Robert Pollin has developed proposals that point a way toward such a transition.

Workers and our communities need to undertake these essential reforms as we increase our quality of life and decrease the work time required to carry out this process. This can provide us with the confidence to end the stranglehold of capitalism. ■

For further reading:

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John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, *The Robbery of Nature. Capitalism and the Metabolic Rift* (Monthly Review Press, 2018).

Michael Löwy, *Ecosocialism. A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe* (Haymarket Books, 2015).

Science for the People, Summer 2020 issue, A People's Green New Deal, Vol. 23, No. 2.

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Nicaragua, as Elections Approach

Margaret Randall

IN EARLY OCTOBER the Working Group on the Nicaraguan Crisis held a panel discussion, "The Nicaraguan Crisis: A Left Perspective" featuring Luis Carrión, a former member of the National Directorate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). He is a leader of the political party UNAMOS (formerly the Sandinista Renovation Movement) and living in exile.

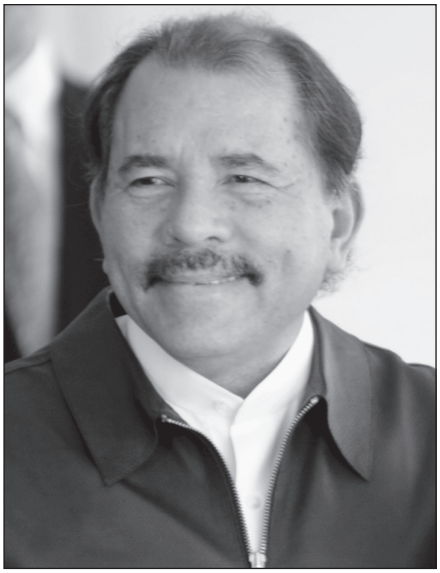
Socialist feminist poet and author Margaret Randall and Leonor Zúñiga, a prominent Nicaraguan sociologist and documentary filmmaker participated along with William I. Robinson, a sociology professor at UC Santa Barbara. Both Randall and Robinson had lived in Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution of 1979.

The speakers were leftist critics of the Ortega-Murillo government on the eve of the country's November 7th elections. They emphasized that since the country erupted in demonstrations in 2018, demanding a resignation of the government and new elections, the response has been massive repression. (For background see "Nicaragua 1979-2019" by Eric Toussaint and Nathan Legrand and "Sandinismo Is in the Streets" by Dianne Feeley in ATC *201, July-August 2019.)*

Early this year national security laws suspended habeas corpus, and recently seven opposition presidential candidates were arrested and are being held without charge. Several dozen other opposition leaders have been arrested, forced to go underground or into exile. A number of historic revolutionary leaders, including legendary guerrilla commanders Dora María Téllez and Hugo Torres have been imprisoned.

ATC *is printing the introductory remarks that Margaret Randall prepared for the panel. Randall is the author of many books including Sandino's Daughters (1981),* Sandino's Daughters Revisited *(1994) and Our Stories, Our Lives: Stories of Women from Central American and the Caribbean (2002). As Randall outlines in her brief remarks, many on the international left overlook the reality of Nicaragua today. However, most of the gains of the 1979 revolution have been lost and Nicaraguans and their supporters need to find a way to live through this dark moment. —The Editors*

THE SITUATION IN Nicaragua is complex. Sectors of the U.S. left remain in solidarity with president Daniel Ortega and vice president Rosario Murillo. People from those sectors have countered my declarations, some in a spirit of healthy exchange and others confrontationally. As I understand them, their reasons fall into the following three categories:



Roosewelt Pinheiro/ABr CC by 3.0BR

Daniel Ortega, January 2017.

Ortega and Murillo were part of the original Sandinista movement that ousted Somoza in 1979. The Sandinistas are revolutionaries, therefore Ortega and Murillo are revolutionaries. Ortega's win in a succession of presidential elections shows that the majority of the Nicaraguan people support him.

Successful programs in education and infrastructure place the country above others in the region.

The United States is critical of the Nicaraguan government, and when Washington is against a government, we should be for it. Those parts of the U.S. left that defend the dictatorship argue that we must defend any government that the U.S. government opposes.

I argue the following:

1. Ortega and Murillo were indeed involved in the anti-Somoza struggle of the 1970s and held prominent positions in the Sandinista government that came to power in 1979. However, subsequent years brought rifts and divisions among the Sandinistas, with Ortega and Murillo consistently coming down on the side of authoritarianism and greed. Other Sandinistas — all imprisoned or exiled today — formed more democratic movements.

2. I myself worked with Murillo for almost a year at the Sandinista Cultural Workers Association (ASTC) in the early 1980s. I personally witnessed her harassment and humiliation of coworkers, along with her petty jealousies and voracious attempts to grab power. Once Ortega regained the presidency in 2006 election by aligning himself with the extreme right, he systematically eliminated all opposition, both within and outside his party. Today, all viable presidential candidates are either imprisoned or in exile. The results of the upcoming November 7th electoral farce are a foregone conclusion.

3. Since the people's protests of April 2018, state terrorism under Ortega and Murillo has included more than 300 deaths, 150 political prisoners, the forced exile of tens of thousands, censorship of the media, the shutting down of more than 50 non-governmental organizations, and the elimination of all political opposition.

The most important human rights organizations — Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the InterAmerican Human Rights Commission, and the UN Human Rights Commission—have all denounced the current regime's flagrant human rights abuses. These are undisputable facts.

4. In a country where Ortega has eliminated every potential opponent, an "overwhelming" vote for him cannot be seen as legitimate.

5. There is one issue that I find particularly repugnant, and that is Daniel Ortega's sexual assault against his stepdaughter over a period of 19 years, beginning at age 11. At the time of Zoilamerica Narváez Murillo's 1998 press conference, I wrote a public letter condemning Ortega.

I do not believe that a rapist should hold public office. I have been appalled that U.S. leftists who call themselves feminists overlook this criminal behavior. Rosario Murillo defended her husband, abandoning her daughter. While this may not constitute a crime, it is not a position I can respect.

6. Nicaragua is a nation whose people endure poverty, repression, and an out-of-control COVID pandemic. I understand that sanctions by other countries and international organizations may hurt the Nicaraguan people. The egregious history of the 60-plus year-old U.S. blockade against Cuba has been unable to defeat the Cuban revolution but has meant ongoing hardship for that

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Haitian Migrants Brutalized, Deported

Crime Scene at U.S.-Mexico Border

By Malik Miah

The Biden administration deported thousands of Haitians back to one of the hemisphere's poorest countries, and after it was devastated by an earthquake last August. Logan Abassi/flickr.com

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT Joe Biden continues to show his government's true face in the mass deportation of Haitian migrants.

In mid-September, nearly 15,000 desperate Haitian migrants, camped under a bridge on the Mexico-Texas border, were rounded up by U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback, some using their reins as whips.

Thousands were dragged onto buses and planes and deported without the most basic due process under U.S. law for asylum seekers.

Haitian migrants reaching the U.S. border simply want a chance to live and work. They arrived as word spread that the Biden administration would extend special Temporary Protected Status to Haitians currently inside the United States following the recent earthquake. There are already 100,000 Haitians with this status inside the country.

Stay Out!

They were tragically mistaken. The U.S. policy towards new migrants and asylum seekers is simply "stay out."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported that it flew 2000 migrants back to Haiti in one week. Many more have been deported since. Most did not know where they were going, until they landed in the capital city Port Au Prince, many years after they left their homeland for South America.

Haiti suffered a magnitude 7.2 earthquake on August 14. A month earlier, Haitian president Jovenel Moise was assassinated. While Haiti's new government is unstable and seen as illegitimate, the Biden administration has given it support.

Hiding behind a "health mandate" used by former president Donald Trump, DHS has the power to exclude all migrants and asylum seekers. A federal court ruled that the imposition of this mandate violates U.S. law. The Biden government appealed that ruling, and continues to apply the exclusions arbitrarily.

Donald Trump blamed the country's woes on so-called "illegals" as well as legal immigrants, particularly Brown and Black people. Biden refers to migrants crossing the border as "non-citizens" — and would have us believe this reflects a more humane response. The cruelty at the Texas border exposes how meaningless a word change can be.

Nerlin Clerge, a Haitian migrant who was at the camp with his wife and their two young sons, told Reuters: "The government of the United States has no conscience." He is now considering applying for the right to stay in Mexico.

The brutality and speed of the deportations have exceeded the Trump and even Barack Obama administrations.

Outrage Grows

The outrageous footage of agents on horseback brought to mind old photos of white slaveowners going after runaway slaves. While some commentators dispute the use of whips, a vicious hit by horse reins can be painful and potentially deadly.

Cat Brooks, an Oakland-based activist, playwright and co-founder of the Anti-Police-Terror Project, wrote an opinion piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 23, 2021) expressing the anger and disbelief of the scenes under the bridge:

"Over 12,000 Haitians trekked thousands of miles, across countries and continents, through horrific conditions, including starvation, sickness, rape, and sodomy to get to the U.S. for sanctuary.

"The wealthiest and most resourced country on the planet told them to go home.

"Not just told them — screamed it at them — laced with vile, race-based obscenities, manifesting in arguably the largest and fastest mass deportation since the last time we expelled Haitians.

"The last thing America wants is more Black people.

"The images are grotesque. Black folks being herded like cattle. Like dogs. Whipped with horse reins. Charged by cops on horses. Huddled under a bridge. Sweltering in 104-degree heat.

"Humans seeking asylum and the American dream.

"What a nightmare."

Systemic racism is the truth of Biden's immigration policy: "Don't come here. You are not welcome."

Pressure is mounting from immigrants' rights groups demanding that Haitians be treated like the new refugees from Afghanistan. Afghan refugees must be interviewed and vetted. They must also be quarantined

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Malik Miah is an ATC advisory editor.

"Threshold Crossed" in Congress:

The Assault on Rashida Tlaib

By David Finkel

EVEN WHILE SCRAMBLING to hold their caucus together for votes on infrastructure bills, the Democratic Congressional leadership displayed a distinctive approach to party "unity" when it comes to subsidizing Israel's war machine.

Not a single one of these leaders, whether "moderate" or "progressive," stood up for Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) on September 23 after her courageous and principled one-minute statement opposing a $1 billion supplemental appropriation for Israel's "Iron Dome" system. Tlaib was immediately and viciously denounced by her so-called colleagues in almost unprecedented personal terms.

Billed as a defensive anti-missile array, Iron Dome enables the Israeli state to engage in offensive actions at will with minimal fear of retaliation. This expenditure is *in addition* to the annual $3.8 billion U.S. subsidy to Israel entrenched during the Obama administration. (Originally included in the overall military budget, Iron Dome funding was removed in procedural maneuvers involving unrelated issues.)

"I will not support an effort to support war crimes, human rights abuses, and violence" by Israel against the Palestinian people, Tlaib proclaimed. She cited the reports of Human Rights Watch "A Threshold Crossed. Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution" (www.hrw.org/report/, April 27, 2021) as well as the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem ("A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid," https://bit.ly/2WEwUxt).

There wasn't the slightest doubt, of course, that the Iron Dome appropriation would pass (the vote was 420-9). But that didn't matter to Congressmen Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), who immediately took the floor attacking Rashida Tlaib for the unforgiveable crime of calling our ally Israel an "apartheid regime."

Said Fleischmann: "You just saw something on the floor I thought I would never see, not only as a member of this House, but as an American!" As Rashida Tlaib is proudly Palestinian-American, the racist subtext (if it's right to even call it half-disguised) of Fleischmann's "American" reference was crystal clear.

David Finkel is an ATC *editor and active in Jewish Voice for Peace-Detrot.*

Crimes of Apartheid & Persecution

*"(I)n most aspects of life, Israeli authorities methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians. Laws, policies, and statements by leading Israeli officials make plain that the objective of maintaining Jewish Israeli control over demographics, political power, and land has long guided government policy. In pursuit of this goal, authorities have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated, and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity to varying degrees of intensity. In certain areas, as described in this report, these deprivations are so severe that they amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution." (*Human Rights Watch, *https://bit.ly/3BeyGVk)*

Deutch for his part ranted, "I cannot allow one of my colleagues to stand on the floor of the House of Representatives and label the Jewish democratic state of Israel an apartheid state…and when there is no place on the map for one Jewish state, that's anti-Semitism."

In a sardonic note on the episode, Peter Beinart commented that Deutch "is super woke. At first blush, that might seem strange. If 'woke' is merely a pejorative synonym for 'left-wing,' then Deutch's defense of Israel wasn't woke at all. But…wokeness doesn't just mean leftism. It refers to a style of political argument that employs accusations of bigotry to silence legitimate debates."

As Beinart observes, "the critics of wokeness rarely notice when Jews do the same thing to defend Israel." ("Woke Jews," October 4, 2021)

Threats and Complicity

What's important here isn't so much the remarks of a couple of Congress members eager to burnish their "pro-Israel" credentials. It's the silent complicity of the Democrats' failure to defend Tlaib's integrity and right to state her opinion. These so-called leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, know that Rashida Tlaib is the target of unceasing hateful smears on social media and elsewhere, including all-too-credible death threats.

The small handful of representatives who voted "No" in Congress represent a much more sizable sector of the U.S. population that's questioning the unconditional support of Israel as it continues its "crimes of apartheid and persecution." What Rashida said resonates with more and more people:

"We cannot be talking only about Israelis' need for safety at a time when Palestinians are living under a violent apartheid system and are dying from what Human Rights Watch has said are war crimes. We should also be talking about Palestinians' need for security from Israeli attacks."

It will take much longer, though, for the change in public sentiment to penetrate the military, corporate and lobby-infested corridors of Capitol Hill. As of now, stating as Tlaib did that "Israelis and Palestinians are equal people" deserving security is beyond what you're allowed to think, much less say, in Congress — at least, not if you actually mean to do something about it.

The honor roll of progressive representatives who voted "No" also consists of Ilhan Omar (MN), Ayanna Presley (MA), Cori Bush (MO), Chuy Garcia and Marie Newman (IL), Andre Carson (IN) and Raul Grijalva (AZ). The ninth vote was cast by quasi-"libertarian" Kentucky Republican Thomas Massie, who opposes foreign aid across the board.

Two "present" votes were cast by representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamaal Bowman, both of New York, who pretty obviously were being threatened with all-out campaigns to destroy them in next year's primary season.

The "Antisemitism" Smear

Something must also be said here about the disgraceful "antisemitism" slander that rears its head whenever Israeli "crimes of apartheid and persecution" come up for discussion.

When Human Rights Watch denounces, for example, the Chinese regime's violations of basic rights in Hong Kong or its crimes against the Uighurs, nobody (except Beijing's propaganda machine) calls it "anti-Chinese." Same thing if human rights are shredded by the governments of Iran, or Cuba, or Hungary…

But it's only when Israel's conduct is called out that "anti-semitism" is invoked to

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Reflections:
The '60s Left Turns to Industry

The Editors

BEGINNING IN THE 1960s, socialist organizations across the U.S. left, seeking to root themselves deeper in the working class, encouraged (and, in some cases, ordered) their membership to take jobs in specific industries. This led to building membership teams in order to coordinate their work as socialists. This process known variously as "industrialization," "the turn to the working-class" or "the turn to industry." In recent years, an emerging generation of socialist labor activists has become keenly interested in the history of that experience, and lessons to be learned for today.

The Democratic Socialists of America's Labor Committee (DSLC) hosted three panels in early 2021 to investigate what that previous generation of socialists who took working-class jobs had done. Preparation for the panels began with a questionnaire sent to people who joined such cadre organizations in the 1960s and '70s. The questionnaire sought to explore the group's initial expectations and how those changed as they carried out their particular version of "the turn." These responses became the preparatory readings for the panels.

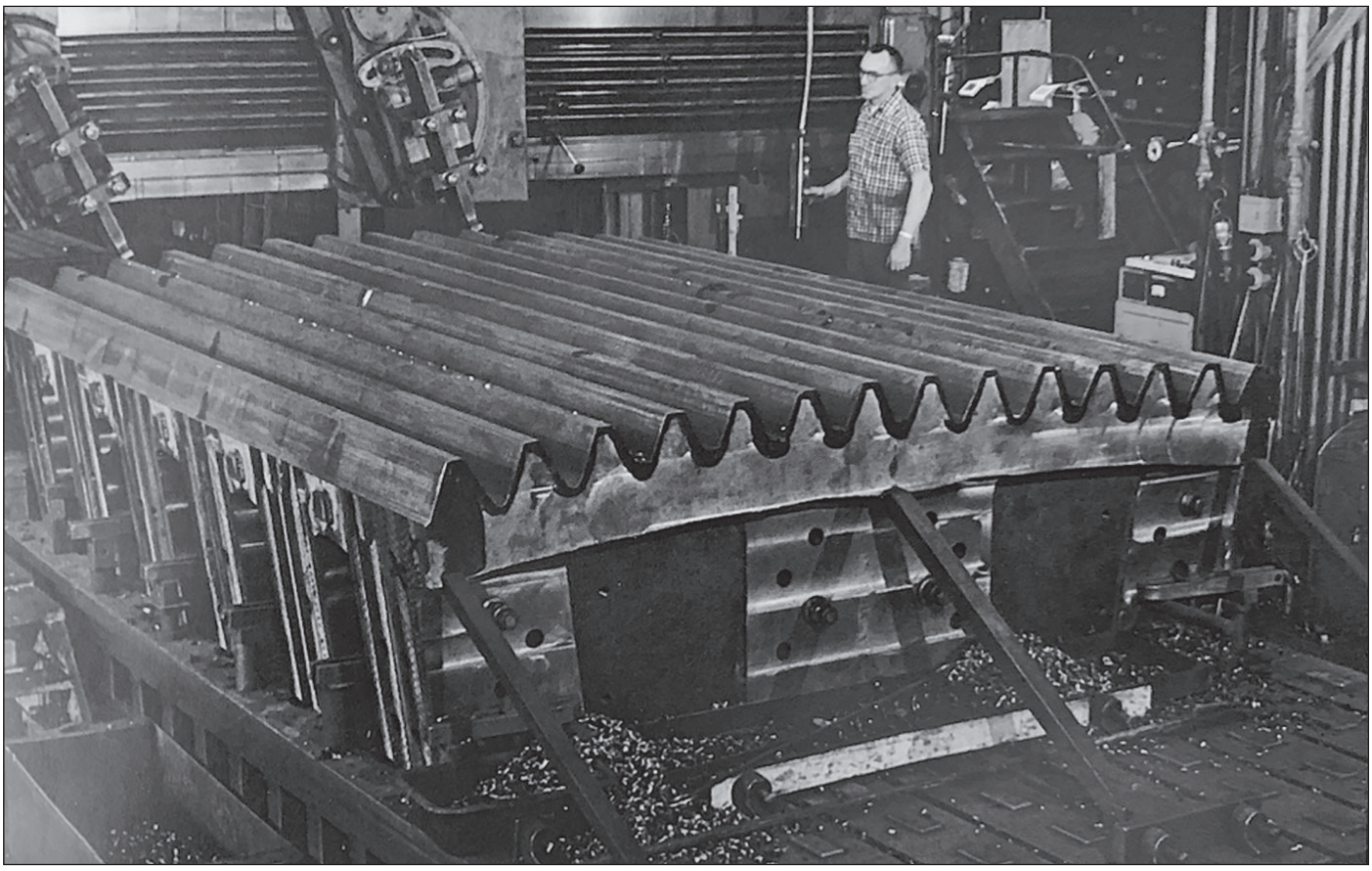
At each session, after panelists introduced themselves, two DSA members asked them questions. These ranged from details about the work to probing what insights they might have for today's generation. The webinars included questions and comments from the more than 200 who attended one or more of the sessions.

Against the Current asked the nine panelists who had written reports, if we could republish those. With this issue we are publishing two: one by Bill Breihan, who worked in steel — an industry where his father worked — and a second one, by Warren Mar, who reluctantly agreed to work in the San Francisco hotel industry because he spoke Cantonese. (Workers in the hotel and restaurant industry at that time were overwhelmingly Cantonese or Spanish speakers.)

Breihan was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and is now a member of Solidarity in Milwaukee. Mar was a member of the League of Revolutionary Struggle in the 1970s and 1980s and remains an active supporter of immigrant rights.

In our next issue, we will continue this series with additional accounts. *ATC* would like to thank the DSLC members who worked on pulling this series together, Steve Downs and Laura Gabby. ■

Cutting gears on a planner, Wehr Steel, one of the jobs Bill Breihan held.



A Labor Activist's Reflection: The SWP's 1970s Turn to Industry

By Bill Breihan

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS Party (SWP) was organized in 1938 as a democratic centralist cadre organization. Standards and expectations of membership were high.

Coming out of the 1950s witch hunt, party membership — which had peaked at 2,000 during the post-war strike wave — was down to only 400. Once concentrated in the industrial trade unions, few party members still worked there, the political conditions and prospects for recruitment considered so unpromising.

Growing in the late 1960s during a period of worldwide youth radicalization — and in response to the Cuban Revolution and civil rights and antiwar movements — the SWP had by the early 1970s a substantial presence in the public sector unions, particularly the teachers. Though nearly a quarter of party members were in unions, the only organized party groupings in industry were a few small local concentrations — the building trades in San Francisco, rail in Chicago.

In the early '70s an insurgent movement developed in the Chicago-Gary district of the United Steelworkers led by Ed Sadlowski, president of the 10,000-member local union at the South Chicago works of U. S. Steel. There were then 128,000 union members in the district, the union's largest.

When Sadlowski lost his bid for District Director in 1973 due to vote rigging, the Labor Department, responding to a union challenge, ordered a new election, which he won handily 2-1. As the half-million mill workers covered by the Basic Steel Agreement had neither the right to vote on contracts nor the right to strike when the contract expired, Sadlowski backed formation of a union Right-to-Strike Committee, in which the handful of SWP members active in the union, including me, got involved.

Steelworkers Fightback Work

I had worked in steel mills — including one where my father worked — off and on since 1968, the year I graduated high school. A portion of that time I was in college, where I learned about socialism, passing through Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), then the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), youth group of the SWP. When I helped establish a branch of the SWP in St. Louis in 1973, I was working in a mill.

One leading SWP steelworker activist, Alice Peurala, had worked at Sadlowski's South Chicago mill for 20 years. She recruited to the SWP a co-worker who had also worked in the mill for years. A couple of SWP members also got hired there and soon we had a presence.

When Sadlowski launched the militant, union-wide formation, Steelworkers Fightback in 1975, he followed it with a campaign for International President. The small, but growing, number of SWP members in the union threw themselves into the campaign.

SWP union groups were called fractions. These were our party work groups. My first, informal national steel fraction meeting was in Chicago on the occasion of a Right-to-Strike conference in 1974. In 1976 during the height of the Sadlowski campaign for President I took a week vacation to campaign at the Gary mills.

Steelworkers Fightback candidates were contending for local and district office across the country. I learned then that the SWP's presence in the union had grown to a dozen, a number actively engaged in the campaign. These members had not, for the most part, been directed by the party to enter the industry. They were more often than not rebel youth who wanted get into the thick of things.

There were a few older party stalwarts who acted as advisors. In addition to Alice Peurala, who went on to become the first woman elected president of a basic steel local, I remember Jack Sheppard, who had been a union leader at American Bridge in Los Angeles since the '40s, veteran of some of the big battles of the postwar strike wave. Jack came into Chicago to work on the campaign.

I can recall being with Jack and Alice at a campaign meeting at the Steelworkers Fightback office and then at Sadlowski's house, later at the home of labor journalist Staughton Lynd and at the union's annual memorial at the site of the 1937 Republic Steel massacre, where ten strikers were murdered by police. Sadlowksi lost that election, but three Fightback candidates were elected, then and in a subsequent election, to the International Executive Board — three District Directors, including the left progressive Jim Balanoff, who took Sadlowski's former District Director job.

The SWP would hold a big conference every summer in Ohio — one year a convention, the next an educational conference. In the '70s about 1500 would attend. I remember a steelworker fraction meeting there in August 1977 after the Steelworkers election. Several from the party leadership sat in on the meeting. The room was packed.

After listening to the discussion, SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes got up and explained how this was the most important work the party was doing, how the steel fraction was leading. That did it. For the next year it was all "steel, steel, steel" — the hot topic in the organization as dozens more entered the industry.

Turn to Industry

A few months later in December there was a SWP National Committee plenum. These national leadership meetings would take place every few months. The report coming out of the plenum had current SWP membership at 1780. In

addition, there were several hundred members of the party youth group, the YSA. A steelworker friend of mine on the National Committee told me later it was reported there were 2300 members total, including the youth.

That December NC meeting discussed the Political Committee's proposal to make a party "turn to industry." There was a fol-low-up plenum in February 1978 that finalized the decision and brought it to the membership, not for approval but for implementation.

The process of industrialization was already well underway by that time in steel. The SWP's weekly newspaper, *The Militant*, had expanded its coverage of the industry and union and hundreds of copies were being sold at mill gates — especially of the issue detailing the recent Basic Steel contract with its Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) no-ratification-vote-no-strike provisions.

I attended a national steel fraction meeting less than a year later and was surprised to learn we now had, as reported, "over 200 in steel." At that time we had some 120 party members in the Chicago-Gary area. Thirty-nine were now working in the mills. We had more than a dozen in rail there as well. And this was just the beginning.

For a full year, the focus had been almost exclusively on steel, but in many cities there wasn't much of a steel industry. We had about 300 party members in metro New York-New Jersey organized in eight branches, but there were relatively few steel jobs there.

There was, however, hiring going on at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and at a Ford assembly plant in nearby New Jersey. In short order, in an organized effort of impressive scale, we got nearly 50 hired at Ford and about the same number at the navy yard, building and refitting ships. It must have been something when they all got off probation and found themselves stepping on each other's toes trying to "talk socialism" and sell subs to the newspaper.

Never mind, the Ford plant soon closed. The navy yard had few of the unions now targeted by the leadership. A couple years later there were only a handful still working there.

In California where the SWP had several hundred members, the steelworkers had relatively few union locals. The autoworkers (UAW) and machinists (IAM) organized the aerospace industry. Autoworkers also had several auto assembly plants organized and the IAM represented mechanics at the big airline hubs. Dozens of SWP members got jobs in these industries and unions.

Living in Milwaukee by now, I was working at a big mining equipment plant organized by the steelworkers and my wife — also a party member — at one of the General Motors plants. There were soon seven in her local union party fraction, five of them women. They worked to revitalize the local union Women's Committee, organizing buses of unionists to various state capitols to mobilize for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

By 1980 the party's national auto fraction approached the size of the steel fraction. At one point there were, I was told, 180 in auto. The machinist fraction may have been about 150 at its height a year later. With these changes in colonization targets, the party's presence in the steel industry declined significantly. In fact there was considerable fluctuation in the size of the national union fractions over the next several years.

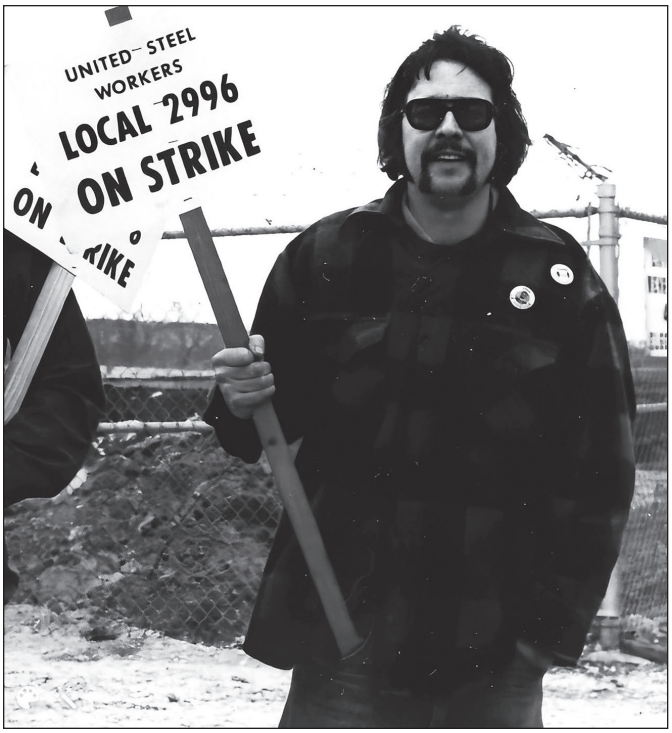
National union fraction meetings were held every summer at the Ohio party gathering but also periodically in between. My wife says she can remember attending auto fractions in St. Louis, Detroit and New York. Most of my national steel fractions were held in Chicago.

The members of the fractions usually elected their leaders. In most cases what that meant was whichever member of the party National Committee — or much smaller Political Committee — was assigned to work in a particular industry, that person would be chosen to lead the fraction. When Malik Miah was serving as National Chairperson of the SWP, he was also working at United Airlines and, as I recall, headed the national IAM fraction.

One noteworthy feature of this turn was that it knew few exemptions, particularly in the leadership. Unless you had a serious medical condition or were part of the small inner leadership circle, you went into industry. Party leaders were expected to lead the turn. Peter Camejo worked in a garment shop, Barry Sheppard in an oil refinery. If you were in the central leadership you might be expected go in for a couple of years, then be pulled out to work on a campaign, organize a new branch, or edit publications.

In the branches it was a little different. In some cases, pressure was brought to bear to get members to industrialize. Mostly, however, it was "patiently explain" and "lead by example." Nonetheless, several hundred members — who either held back from the turn, felt uncomfortable with the pressure, or went in and decided after a time it was not for them — left the organization. Some became "active supporters" rather than full members. Many simply drifted away.

There were some recruits from the plants to replace those lost to the turn, especially before the Reagan era, before the crushing of the air traffic controllers' strike. I recall seeing a report at a 1979 national steel faction meeting detailing the 35



Bill Breihan on strike at Wehr Steel, Milwaukee, 1977. One of three strikes in eight years.

workers recruited to the party out of the plants in the previous six months. "Not bad," commented one veteran party trade unionist as we socialized at break.

Two years later we were recruiting very few. This was due to several factors, including the changing political climate. Some other groups on the left did nonetheless find ways to grow. The SWP by contrast had begun to convert "turn to industry" into workerist panacea, while drawing wagons in a circle in hopes of maintaining ideological purity in the midst of what was by then clearly becoming a deep period of reaction.

Illusions and Contradictions

The turn had been rolled out to the membership as a means of growing the party into a substantial force in the labor movement. The party press reported a "mass radicalization" underway among U.S. workers. Expectations ran high. At first all went well. There was much excitement and optimism. But when the Reagan reaction set in, things went south quickly.

The rightward drift in politics coincided with a series of internal political disputes in the party on theory and political orientation with much factional warfare, primarily coming from the majority leadership.

By early 1984, nearly 200 critics had been expelled. Along with them went dozens of majority supporters, who were either kicked out or encouraged to leave as the party leadership introduced ever more restrictive "proletarian norms" of membership.

The turn had been promoted as the big opportunity to break out of the "semi-sectarian existence" the party had been forced into since the McCarthy period. Now the organization rushed headlong back into that familiar mode of existence, transitioning to a hidebound sect in record time.

Contributing to all this was a major miscalculation made in late 1979, when the SWP leadership decided it was running out of colonizers and turned to the still vibrant, mostly student YSA. The SWP leadership decided that the YSA would "decide" that it too needed to turn to industry. The YSA would henceforth be an organization of young workers.

Many dozens heeded the call, quit school and entered the targeted industries, which soon included meatpacking, as strikes swept that industry. I remember helping recruit a student activist to the YSA, then to the party. She was persuaded to move to another branch to take a 60-hour-a-week job in a packinghouse. No one ever heard from her again — a tale often told.

By the mid-1980s, the SWP had lost half its membership, down to only some 800. With a leadership unable, or unwilling, to make corrections and change course, the decline continued unabated. Soon the remnant youth group collapsed and hundreds more drifted away. Today the SWP has about 100 formal members and perhaps 200 supporters, mostly former members — an organization of no consequence. Having recruited few in recent decades its membership is now mostly retired, or nearly so — a sorry tale.

But in the early days, the SWP's turn to industry went well. The political motivation for the turn was well thought out and intelligently explained. It was argued that this was not a therapeutic move to purge the organization of alien class influences, but rather that of a revolutionary organization taking advantage of the first real opportunities since before the McCarthy period to win workers to socialism. Certain "therapeutic" blessings were in fact discovered, but that came later.

All those years since the 1950s witch hunt were characterized as "the long detour," a period when the organization had been driven from its natural milieu — the unions and the work places. Now with the turn, the party would be back on its historic course.

The errors and setbacks of the '80s detract little from the achievements of the '70s. The SWP had in fact organized its turn to industry in a methodical manner and with great success. The plants were hiring in the late-'70s, the peak of a business cycle. Members were assigned to watch the newspapers for employment ads.

When news came that an auto plant was about add a shift, word went out to the branches, and members were sent down to apply not only from local branches, but nationally. Many members transferred to other cities to get jobs where they were hiring and the party had targets.

Sometimes a member with previous manufacturing experience would get a job in a targeted plant. That member would then conduct informal classes to prepare others in the branch for the required employment tests.

Party members in Milwaukee applying at the two big General Motors parts plants trained each other in blueprint reading and use of micrometers and calipers. Members already in apprenticeships helped those preparing for an interview. Jobs committees researched industries, unions and hiring — both for targets and for who to talk to in the union or the personnel office.

SWP branches got so good at this that when recession came in 1980 we still managed to get a great many people hired. You just needed to know where and how.

The deep recession of 1982-83 was a different matter. We still got members hired, but bore the labor of Sisyphus as plant after plant, mill after mill, closed. Some members laid off from industry went on full-time for the organization, while drawing extended unemployment benefits.

"Talking Socialism"

Though the SWP probably never had more than 700-800 members in industry at any one time in the period from 1978 until the recession of 1982, certainly well over a thousand passed through the plants, some staying just months, others decades.

Other industries the SWP targeted as the turn progressed were garment and coal mining, the former because it was among the most exploited sectors of the working class, the latter because of its importance in the economy and because of a militant strike wave, particularly the four-month 1978 national coal strike. At one time the SWP had two branches in the West Virginia coalfields and several dozen working in the mines.

In the mid-1980s the SWP, now much smaller, shifted a number of people from high-paying industrial jobs — "the aristocracy of labor" — to low-wage garment shops, particularly in New York and Los Angeles. In Milwaukee we had small fractions at two union garment shops. It was not unusual then to see a party member three years into a machinist apprenticeship quit to take a job in a garment shop at less than half

the pay. To assist members in their political work and recruitment in the plants many party branches conducted Spanish language classes.

Another industry in which the SWP had a significant presence was rail. At its high point the national rail fraction may have numbered a hundred. There was also at one point a national oil workers fraction of several dozen.

One union the SWP did not send members into was the Teamsters. Given the historic role of the SWP and its predecessors in that union this might seem strange, until one considers the presence in the Teamsters of the competing International Socialists and the formation they helped lead — Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). The SWP just stayed clear.

Party industrial fractions were organized not only on the national, but the local level. A small branch like Milwaukee, which only briefly numbered as many as 40 members, had at different times fractions in auto, rail, steel, garment and the machinists union.

Fractions at General Electric and General Motors, numbering a half dozen each, met regularly to discuss work on party campaigns, potential recruits, to plan union interventions, and how to defend against red-baiting, where that was a problem. Members lent each other support and assisted where individuals were running into difficulties — with job skills, with management, with co-workers, with union officials.

There were many problems with the manner in which the SWP conducted itself in the trade unions. One was with the approach of "talking socialism."

Although winning workers one-by-one to socialist ideas is a fundamental, how it is done is important. With the SWP there was a tendency toward propagandism — measuring success in winning workers to socialism against the yardstick of socialist pamphlets or newspaper subscriptions sold.

A second and related problem was that of discouraging members from initiating struggles. When fights broke out we would participate — more often than not with stacks of socialist newspapers under our arms, but we were there. But the SWP did not, at least in this period, have a strategy for taking on the boss.

I had some firsthand experience with this. During the high tide of the "bosses' counteroffensive" in the mid-1980s — after Reagan had signaled to the entire employing class with his crushing of the air traffic controllers' strike that it was open season on workers and unions — we were confronted with concession demands at my steel plant that would have set us back decades.

When a concession proposal was voted down, union and company went back to the bargaining table. When we got the company's "last, best and final offer," we took a strike vote. The International rep and local union bargaining committee recommended a "yes" vote on the company offer with its steep wage and benefit cuts.

There were 500 union members at the meeting. I got up and spoke against the agreement and said we needed to strike. Afterward, the former union president told me he thought things hung in the balance until I spoke, that my speech resolved the issue. We struck the company for six weeks and got them to drop the worst of their concession demands.

When I reported what happened at the contract vote to my SWP branch I was roundly criticized for adventurism, that I was irresponsibly leading the workers into a fight they would not likely win, given current political conditions.

Besides, that was not why we were in the trade unions; we were not there *to lead struggles*. We were there to win workers *to socialism*. I left the party a couple years later.

Where's the Radicalization?

There were other problems. The line was that the U.S. working class was undergoing a mass radicalization. The problem is, when members went into the plants for the first time, they had difficulty finding it. They knew there was a radicalization going on because they had read about it in the party newspaper — it was just a matter of finding out where.

If your shop or industry seemed conservative, that was because the radicalization was obviously going on elsewhere. There were always greener pastures.

Consequently, there was an extraordinary amount of moving around. It was not unusual by the mid-'80s to meet party members who had already worked in three, four or more industries in as many cities in the few years of the turn.

Some of our European co-thinkers referred to this as the "grasshopper effect." Comrades jumped from plant to plant, industry to industry, city to city, in perpetual search of the holy grail of the radicalization. The result was a rootless presence in the working class. The party's relationship to the class was abstract and general, not concrete and specific. We were like itinerant missionaries *to* the working class, *not part of it.*

And more problems: though not prone to the sectarianism or ultraleftism displayed by some socialist groups, the SWP's insistence that its members decline nomination for union office until such time as the working class was prepared to accept revolutionary leadership lent itself to a form of abstentionism. Members were discouraged from running even for shop steward — advice that was sometimes ignored, especially in the early days of the turn before the central leadership took charge of directing the work.

This unwillingness to take leadership responsibility, for fear it might politically compromise us, meant that the SWP had an influence in this period far less than its numbers might suggest. Another socialist organization — the International Socialists — with far fewer members but with a dynamic and well thought-out union strategy had a greater impact.

During my first 20 years in the steelworkers union I served on local union committees and was elected as a delegate to the central labor council and to district steelworker conventions, but held no local union office. When I dropped my formal party membership in 1988, I was elected shop steward, followed by financial secretary, then president of the 1,000-member local.

A decade later I was asked to go on staff for the International union. I retired in 2012 as sub-district director, responsible for the union in the southern half of Wisconsin. I remained an active socialist, a member of the revolutionary socialist organization, Solidarity, throughout.

My socialist politics were known in the union. Much had changed in the labor movement over the previous decades. Being a red was not such a big problem anymore. One fellow International rep loved to introduce me at conferences as his "favorite communist." I was good with that. ■

Organizing in HERE, 1979-1991

By Warren Mar

THIS ARTICLE WAS first written in preparation for an online forum hosted by the Labor Caucus of the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA). It has been edited for historical context and some background information on my involvement with the I Wor Kuen (IWK) and the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), groups founded as part of the new socialist left during the late 1960s and '70s.

Some background knowledge of the groups I was affiliated with is helpful to understand why we chose to go into particular workplaces and industries.

In new left stories from the 1960s and '70s, the protagonist usually begins with their political awakening on a college campus. They then put their careers or graduate studies on pause, sometimes for a lifetime and entered a workplace to organize the working class because that is what their Marxist-Leninist political line encouraged if not mandated.

My story is a little different. Not in search of the movement, the movement lands on me: I was introduced to the new left and Marxism prior to my entrance into high school.

Born in 1953 and growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown and North Beach, I became a regular in the pool halls. In one of these pool halls, Leway's — short for legitimate ways — some of the regulars branched off and formed the Red Guard Party in 1967, one year after the Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland, across the Bay.

They were allies of the Panthers, so Bobby Seale, David Hilliard and other Panthers would occasionally come by and hold court in the back of the pool hall as guests of the Red Guards. I got my first Red Book from an older sister's boyfriend, who was in that circle.

I opposed the war in Vietnam, because they were killing Asians, and I liked Mao, mainly because white American politicians feared and hated him.

San Francisco was an epicenter of the antiwar movement and I was surrounded by it. I attended many demonstrations including the national mobilizations. On the west coast, these were held in San Francisco. In the '60s San Francisco still had an active army base in our Presidio and Alameda Naval Air Station was seven miles away next to Oakland.

I fought with many of these soldiers on the streets and pool halls of Chinatown North Beach as they visited the strip joints on Broadway on leave. Before my conversion to socialism, I was a nationalist.

The Panthers and Red Guard also appealed to me because I hated the cops. Hanging out on the streets or in pool halls since junior high school, I was a regular target of police harassment. When I was 13, I was formally arrested for gang activity in a group fight. A member of the Red Guard found me and offered me and my friends legal representation in juvenile court.

This bound me to the Red Guards and Asian American new leftists, although I continued to avoid their recruitment efforts until I was well into my twenties. The Red Guard existed only a few years and their remnants would end up in I Wor Kuen (IWK, Righteous Harmonious Fist), westernized as "the Boxers." The name was taken from the Boxer Rebellion in China, the peasant-led anti-imperialist movement that almost drove the first colonial powers from the mainland of China in the late 1800s.

The IWK was actually formed in NY Chinatown, with Asian students from East Coast Ivy League campuses and like the Red Guard in San Francisco, they first modeled themselves after the Panthers with a 12-point platform. They would move west in the early '70s to begin work in the other of the two largest Chinese communities, NYC and SF, recruiting what remained of the Red Guard Party.

It was this group of IWK that I would formally work with in the early '70s, culminating in my recruitment as a cadre in 1975. I would stay through the mergers when IWK became the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), officially declaring ourselves Marxist-Leninist. I would remain, until our dissolution in 1990.

Imbedded in the Working Class, Prior To Marxism

I was 22 years old when I joined IWK and had already worked for many years both in union and non-union work. I had been a grocery clerk and member of UFCW, also a clerk at the phone company, CWA, and been in two Teamster Locals, warehousing and working in garages in San Francisco.

The first work place I met members of IWK was at the

phone company. There was a national contract expiration in 1972 and a wildcat strike (non-authorized) in 1973. With other leftists, IWK was involved in that wildcat strike and worked with me, and I was able to learn more about the differing left groups involved at the phone company.

I also learned that part of fighting the company was fighting the union leadership involved in San Francisco at that time. The skilled trade white guys such as installers, linemen and splicers were the crafts that held most of the leadership in the SF Local 9410. The back-office service workers and operators, mostly women and people of color, were not involved and rarely attended meetings, much less held union office.

Although the wildcat strike was lost, CWA 9410 would change with the activism of the service workers. These workers would become the majority of the local and soon the leadership would change.

I was raised in a family of 10 children; my parents were immigrants from China and non-union garment workers. San Francisco was very segregated then. School integration did not even begin until I was in my senior year of high school, so I never went to a non-majority Chinese public school until I was in college.

My father came over at the height of the Chinese Exclusion laws in 1922 as a "paper son." [Given the racist restrictions against the Chinese, those able to obtain papers indicating they were the children of U.S. citizens were able to immigrate. — ed.] San Francisco still barred Chinese from public schools and the public hospital, but it was okay for him to work 12 hours a day in a factory and that's what he did.


LATINO MIGRANT WORKERS FIGHT RACISM

Unity

NICARAGUA'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Mandela!

Firsthand images and report from South Africa

Pittston strike: A victory for us all

Unity, *the weekly paper of the League of Revolutionary Struggle.*

He would remain in that line of work throughout my childhood and well after I left home. He worked in a garment factory until he was 83. My mother joined him in that line of work when he was allowed to bring over a war bride.

For Chinese-American men who served during WWII, in lieu of other GI benefits, this was an important privilege. Anti-miscegenation laws were still in effect in California when my mother arrived in 1946.

If there was ever a major manufacturing industry in San Francisco, garment would have had to rank as one of the top two with food processing being the other. It was one of the few industries that hired Chinese, for both union and non-union work. Chinese women along with the growing Latina immigrants would remain the majority of the garment workers in San Francisco until the industry's ultimate demise in the 1980s.

I explain my background: going into the working class or even getting a working-class job was not a choice, although IWK pushed me into HERE (hotel and restaurant employees' union). I worked because I had to, as did my parents and all my siblings.

That we found the best jobs possible and often unionized jobs, was by chance and struggle. First, we found out that union jobs paid better and we had to get into industries and unions that would not block our entrance.

Even in liberal San Francisco, most skilled trades and even the better public sector unions were still excluding Chinese and other people of color in the '60s and '70s.

Marxist Path into the Proletariat

IWK did not declare itself Marxist-Leninist until the mid-'70s, just a couple of years before our transformation into the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), with our merger with the August Twenty Ninth Movement (ATM), with roots in the Chicano/Latinx movement and the Congress of African People (CAP), led by revolutionary nationalist poet Amiri Baraka, who also gravitated towards Marxism.

In short, our formation started with a majority of cadres being people of color. Even when white recruits swelled our ranks, we remained a heavily people of color organization, dominated by women of color in our leadership.

This is important because it not only limited our entrance into the industrial working class, especially the skilled trades, but also informed our political decisions of what part of the working class it was important to organize.

ATM, CAP and IWK also were rooted in our own communities of color. All of us did work beyond the college campuses in our own communities: CAP in the ghettos of St. Louis, New Jersey, NYC and Detroit; ATM which formed in Los Angeles, moved north to San Jose, Oakland and east to Colorado.

IWK, which started in the New York and San Francisco Chinatowns, became Pan-Asian and moved to most communities on the west coast from Los Angeles to Seattle, Washington and some of our cadre moved back to the Hawaiian Islands. It was in some of these cities in the Northeast where IWK and CAP first did work on issues such as police brutality, school desegregation and equal electoral representation.

Likewise, IWK and ATM met in Oakland, San Jose and Los Angeles on issues such as U.S. intervention in Central and South America, police violence, housing rights, immigrant rights and a host of other issues. In short, our community issues were never separated from working class issues and we never relied on an industrial concentration as a sole or even main place to organize workers.

Ironically, the same issues I listed above are as relevant today as they were forty years ago and still resound with divisions between the white working class and workers of color.

We also had to be realistic about where we could have an impact, where we could land a job, and whether a small group of left-leaning people of color could impact a largely white, male-dominated union, industry or work force.

I am proud to say even today that we never gravitated totally to the industrial proletariat, especially in manufacturing. We went where our people worked: in the service sector, hotels, restaurants, back office typing pools (before computers), hospitals, delivery and other types of drivers, public transport, communication (phone companies), warehousing.

In the public sector we worked in a lot of hospitals and schools because they not only were union jobs beyond the control of union apprenticeships that barred our entrance,

but also because they served our underserved communities of color so that organizing better conditions at work often meant better outcomes for our communities.

This was also true of public transport, which in the '70s became one of the better jobs for men of color.

Once I became political, there was no turning back. We were attacked by the Chinese Nationalists (KMT) in street battles because we were pro-China. The FBI has called and even went to my mother's house after I was long gone.

The hotels that hired me knew I was not only an open commie, but we sold our paper in back of the employee entrances, as I did on the streets of Chinatown. Even with the various mergers, I always remained an open member. This meant that I was always redbaited, and for a time blacklisted from San Francisco hotels. But I got back in.

Brief History of Local 2

The Hotel and Restaurant Union, Local 2, by the early '70s became the largest private sector union in San Francisco. Even with the demise of unionization generally and the loss of union restaurants in San Francisco, Local 2 holds this place today, mainly through the growth in hotel jobs, the expansion of the city convention center and the building of new sport stadiums and their representation of food service at the expanding SF International Airport.

In the 1960s and before, HERE was not one union but five. There were two craft unions, Cooks and Bartenders; two server unions, waiters and waitresses; and a miscellaneous union.

Food servers were separated by gender in those pre-affirmative action days, with men only in the first-class fine dining dinner establishments and women relegated to the lunch counters and diners. Having two separate unions codified this sexual discrimination.

The miscellaneous union — dishwashers, bellhops, porters, room attendants etc. was majority people of color. In San Francisco, African Americans held these jobs during the great migration; by the 1960s it was predominantly Chinese, Philipino and Latino.

Even in the 1980s it was not uncommon for the class A houses to hire men only as servers. I worked in an Italian restaurant where all the waiters were white men. The only Black person in the restaurant was the hat check "girl," a middle-aged African American woman.

Most of the cooks on the line, including myself, were Chinese. Only the Chef and Sous Chef were white. The dishwashers were Latino. This was not an uncommon racial workplace distribution of labor for many of the places I worked during my decade as a cook in San Francisco.

With the merger of the five unions into one industrial union in 1975, making up HERE Local 2, we became the largest private sector union in San Francisco and a minority-majority and female-majority union. However, the union officers and staff, many of whom came from the old craft unions of cooks, waiters and bartenders, did not reflect the membership.

This would remain a source of tension with the members, and it was in this period when I became a member, activist and eventually one of the few elected Chinese officers of Local 2 and also a delegate to the SF Labor Council. This was part of our strategy in the LRS, not only to improve the industry and workplaces for minority workers but also to change the unions by empowering the members within those unions, especially women and people of color.

My Entrance into Local 2

I hated restaurant work. I washed dishes and made salads at a small place downtown when I was in high school. I swore I would never do it again after I got other jobs mostly in warehouses or garages. I hated interacting with customers, mostly I hated serving white people.

To this day, one of the reasons the service sector has become predominantly immigrant is because subservience is almost a job requirement, although it is now couched in terms such as "social skills," by human resource wonks. Restaurant and hospitality customers were condescending and racist, which is why I always gravitated toward garage work or warehouse work.

This is the same reason I became a cook rather than trying to ingratiate my way into becoming a waiter or bartender, which in this industry, with gratuities, were much better paid positions.

But in 1975 I was already a cadre in IWK, which became LRS in 1978. The LRS had one of the most radical positions on the "national question," which was the reason I had joined IWK. Our concentration in jobs was determined not only by our own politics but came out of how the capitalist system was organized in the United States.

The foundational racism woven into many unions still haunts white workers in this country by limiting their ability to organize. The LRS always had more people in service rather than production, because those were the industries that first allowed people of color and women in.

The reason IWK/LRS was so insistent and needed me in Local 2 is the same reason I was an asset to them in Chinatown. I'm fairly fluent in spoken Cantonese, the predominant dialect for most Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, especially San Francisco.

IWK had some cadres already working in Local 2, but they were not making much headway, especially among Chinese immigrant workers. Most of their cadre at that time had not grown up in Chinatown, nor been forced to attend Chinese school by immigrant parents.

As a result, many Chinese American radicals were not bilingual. This precluded them from effective organizing of immigrant workers, especially in lower-level jobs. This was the majority workforce in HERE.

By 1979 I was a seasoned and good cadre, so as much as I fought it, I gave up my Teamster job and went into Local 2. Even with a union, I always made less money and had lower benefits in HERE than I would have had I remained a Teamster at UPS.

Another Chinese American cadre (who was not bilingual) was already working at the Holiday Inn as a waiter. He was competent and well-liked by the managers and upon his recommendation I was given a job as a busboy. Just as I suspected, I hated it.

Due to my fluent English, I was in line to be promoted to waiter in short order, but this never happened. Finally, after over half a year as a busboy, my white female supervisor sat me down for a cup of coffee and told me why. She said I needed a better "attitude."

She told me I was a hard worker but needed to be friendlier. I didn't smile enough. She was trying to help me. I wanted to kill her, right there, in the dining room in front of witnesses and all. I needed to get out of there and started looking.

I spent about a total of nine months as a busser in Local 2. I even thought about trying to transfer into the hotel storeroom, which is the receiving department inside most big places. My long experience as a shipping clerk and warehouseman would have easily qualified me. The problem is they were not in a social working environment. Very few of these jobs existed, in hotels and they rarely interacted with other workers, not a good place to be when organizing.

Read Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*

But I found one group of workers who were, if not respected, feared by everyone: cooks. They could swear, they could yell, they had skills many managers did not and if they were good, they were indispensable. So I left the Holiday Inn, enrolled in a quick six-month course at the SF Community College which got me back into Local 2, HERE as a line cook at a union restaurant down by Fisherman's Wharf.

The goal was to always get into a hotel because that is where the organizing power of the union was. The goal of the LRS was to change the union leadership and get ourselves and progressive allies elected into union office, which I would eventually do. We also changed that leadership and eventually the staff to reflect the makeup of the membership, majority Asian-Pacific Islanders and Latino.

The line of the LRS at that time was that we would not take any staff or appointed positions. All union positions we held had to be elected from our position in the rank and file.

We would change this position in the late '80s. But at the time of my entrance into HERE, Local 2 we only sent cadre into rank-and-file jobs as workers, never directly into staff positions. We believed then that we should only occupy positions within the union that our fellow workers elected us to.

I was quickly promoted in that restaurant and served as the chef there until I entered the union's apprenticeship program. This is something that no longer exists today. Chefs in restaurants could be union members, even as supervisors.

In many ways I was over-qualified to be an apprentice, but the apprenticeship gave me two advantages besides a higher formal paper certificate. It got me entry into one of the largest hotels in San Francisco — in one of the largest chains in the country. We said that working for the Hyatt was like working at General Motors.

In the early '80s when I cooked at the Hyatt on Union Square, now called the Grand Hyatt, they had over 500 workers, three restaurants, banquet facilities for 700. The kitchens had over 50 cooks, the majority were Chinese, followed by Philipinos and Latinos.

I fit right in. I took my training seriously and the apprenticeship put me back at SF City College night courses for culinary. With my experience in a good restaurant, I became one of the better cooks at the Hyatt, gaining respect from co-workers and also begrudging respect from management.

Because of my native-born English abilities, I was able to buy cookbooks and read them on the side, I subscribed to *Gourmet* and other in vogue culinary magazines. I was also not unaware of the privileges I had in education. I once shared all my notes with a Salvadoran immigrant who was the apprentice behind me, because his note taking abilities in English did not help him keep up at the SF City College night classes.

This was another example I tried to set with my organizing. I shared my knowledge with the Latinos and Philipino cooks even if they were not working in my station. Once a Chinese cook asked me why I was showing a Latino dishwasher how I was making a sauce. The dishwasher asked me, "What I was making?," and I showed him.

Many Chinese cooks who had to learn from memory did not want to share with other nationalities their craft, just as the older European cooks tried to keep Chinese from moving up in the kitchen hierarchy.

Within a year at the Hyatt I was elected shop steward, and being bilingual also helped me to cross departments where other Chinese immigrants worked, especially housekeeping and stewarding. Violations of the union contract were more prevalent among the unskilled, immigrant departments. I also tried to promote interdepartmental and craft solidarity which at that time was not easy due to the historical divisions in the industry and union.

I headed this section with "Read *Kitchen Confidential*" because if any leftist is thinking about getting into cooking and hasn't really worked in a shit industry or had a long list of backbreaking, physically draining jobs, read *Kitchen Confidential* to see what the work environment is really like.

The reason many cooks of all nationalities love Anthony Bourdain's portrayal of our work is because he came out with the first, if not only, honest rendition of what it was like to work in a first-class professional kitchen and survive. He also finally gave due credit to why every professional kitchen I ever worked in was mainly staffed by men and women of color, regardless of cuisine.

It was not just the sex, drugs and booze although there was plenty of that, but the grueling pace of the work which is why we hold industry power. It is why when cooks walk out, a restaurant closes. It was why I was able to tell an owner to go fxxk himself, and he offered me a promotion.

I always could work because hiring in restaurants was held by chefs, not a corporate HR dept. Back then there were no resumes or even a job interview. You showed up at the back door, talked to the chef and came equipped with your knives, and asked for work. You worked a shift (that was the interview). You made it or not, some didn't even finish the shift.

I was also one of the best and fastest cooks and could work any station, help any cook who was behind or in trouble and set an example of this on the line. I could also really screw my managers, if I was unhappy, and they knew I could do things faster, and often better than they.

I learned this from other Chinese immigrant workers who said to me, "Warren, what we lack with our mouths, we must make up for with our hands." I learned to have both. Like Bourdain, my time on the lines in the hotels and kitchens in San Francisco has given me more scars than in any other jobs I've ever held, and I cut my teeth in construction warehouses, and garages as a Teamster.

Getting Elected, Going on Staff

The LRS had run for union office before but we had lost. Just prior to my entrance, Local 2 was actually under interna-

In 2020 HERE Local 2 carried out a successful campaign to explain the need for higher wages in the food industry: "One job should be enough — enough for us to go to the doctor, to retire with dignity, to live the American Dream. The clearest path to creating more jobs that provide enough is to grow the labor movement."

tional trusteeship, because a reform slate had won office the year before.

When I was a shop steward at the Hyatt, the President of the local was actually a member of the old reform slate who split off, so the International in lifting the trusteeship allowed ex-Vice-president Charles Lamb to become the president. All the other members of his slate were excluded from office because they never renounced their opposition to the International or the trusteeship.

He would swear me in as shop steward with the support of my co-workers, then remove me when management complained about my filing too many grievances at the Hyatt.

I would be on a slate to run against him in 1982, which we won, removing him from HERE Local 2.

Ours was a coalition slate. The LRS was preparing a slate under our own leadership with a Latino member running for President and myself running for vice-president. But the problem was that Local 2 always had a lot of leftists and for that election we actually had five slates, three of which could be called progressive or reform slates under various left leadership.

Given the existing conditions, all the reform and left slates could have lost, and the incumbent slate would have probably won. Under this scenario, there was a lot of jockeying for slates to merge.

No slate wanted to give up the presidential seat except us. We finally did so, with our Latino candidate dropping back to the vice-presidential slot and I dropped back to an elected position as a rank and file member on the executive board, which meant that I remained cooking even after the election.

There are practical reasons why most left groups or even reform groups did not want to give up the presidential candidacy. Under the HERE constitution, all power resides with the president. All staff, hiring, staff assignments and even shop stewards such as myself who were elected could be removed by the president.

Past practice has also given the President total control over the bargaining of contracts. Elected rank and file bargaining committees can serve as little more than a rubber stamp if the president is so inclined.

Before our tenure, it was not uncommon for the President of Local 2 to sit down with an employer, sign a contract or extend one without so much as a notification announcement to the affected workers on what was being signed and for how long. Translation was nonexistent.

So, why was the LRS willing to give up the presidency with this concentration of power which exists to the present day? Local 2, as with all of the U.S. labor movement, had another problem looming. We were not organizing new workers and in fact unions no longer knew how to do it.

One of our major policies or required points of unity with the other slates was that they must put new organizing as a priority. Only one slate was willing to make this commitment to us, and that is the one we merged with.

Sherri Chiesa, who served as Secretary Treasurer (in HERE mainly an administrative job) under Charles Lamb, in unity with a group of young organizers, many whom were Alinsky-trained formerly of the United Farm Worker (UFW) campaigns, decided to break with Lamb. [Saul Alinsky was the author of a staff-driven method of community organizing — ed.]

They felt the union had to pivot into organizing new hotels rather than focusing on protecting what we already had. We agreed.

Without the Left, including the LRS, in Local 2, I do not believe that the union would have changed as much as it has nor as rapidly, especially in the area of minority representation among the rank and file and on the union staff. Our success in organizing also forced the discussion nationally and many HERE locals without Left influence have changed, because the International Union today has changed.

However, this doesn't mean there aren't challenges. HERE is under a similar Alinskyist-style leadership represented by Sherri Chiesa. Because HERE as a whole is still staff driven, the Alinsky model has favored the hiring of educated outsiders, college-educated middle-class workers who themselves never had to work in the industry and cannot really understand what the workers face or why they hate their jobs.

In a union, I fear this cannot but have a detrimental effect. This goes way beyond wages and working conditions. In the service sector, where immigrant workers are concentrated, it is the daily, hourly erosion of human dignity, usually operating through sexism and racism.

Revived Organizing

In 1982 the writing was on the wall, because we were in the midst of a one-year strike against most of the restaurants in San Francisco, a strike we were losing and would continue to lose after our election.

Under the old regimes, because of history and San Francisco having a liberal patina, many leaders including Charles Lamb thought they could bargain their way out of a fight. But in 1981 after Reagan's firing the air-traffic controllers, the restaurants were not in a bargaining mood. They wanted decertification and their argument was that we had not organized the new non-union restaurants, therefore why should they stay union?

In a twisted way they were right. The hotel contract was set to expire in 1983, so the 1982 union election would determine how we would deal with that same issue. The one

advantage in the hotels was that we still held on to the critical mass of hotels. Only a few large ones had opened non-union, but we had not started any organizing drives.

Our position was that we could not allow the non-union sector to grow like the restaurants. We had to go after the non-union hotels. On this basis, we gave up the presidential seat for Sherri Chiesa and our slate won: all of the top three executive offices, and nine out of 10 rank-and-file executive office positions.

Under her leadership not only the elected officers but the staff composition changed. We hired more bilingual staff and people of color. Local 2 also hired gay representatives, reflecting that part of our membership.

More important, the staff culture slowly changed to be more organizing focused. Business Agent titles were changed to Union Representative. We expected more from staff. Turning out or activating members became a bigger part of the job, not grievance handling.

We formed workers' committees in each hotel, sometimes in various departments to replace the old shop steward system. We made the workers in the union hotels fight their own grievances collectively.

Meetings were translated into at least three languages. In larger meetings they could be simultaneous with workers wearing earphones so a meeting could be shorter. For important meetings, especially on organizing drives, we would hold them at different times of the day so various shifts would not have to come to a meeting during their sleep times or miss a meeting because they worked a swing or night shift.

Eventually I would join the organizing department and work full time in Local 2 on the first organizing drive in one of the largest new non-union hotels. It took over three years, but we won that organizing drive. As with the LRS, Local 2 needed a Cantonese-speaking organizer. We won that hotel after a bitter three-year fight of underground organizing, hundreds of demonstrations, civil disobedience, arrests, and a boycott.

This organizing drive would serve as a model and an example telling other hotels in San Francisco that Local 2 would do whatever it takes to organize and win. The 1983 hotel contract was also signed without a strike because the employers knew what we would do: no more walking in a circle picketing.

Our picket lines became mass demonstrations. We occupied hotel lobbies, we blocked cable cars in front of hotels, causing traffic jams. We took arrests. We demonstrated at the opening night of the SF symphony because the owner of the hotel we were organizing was on the board. We hounded owners at their mansions in the suburbs, posting wanted posters for them in front of their neighbors.

Epilogue

While I will always look askance at college graduates as staff organizers, I became one. I went back to college after leaving Local 2 and graduated when I was over 40, after years of organizing on shop floors.

I went on to get a Master's degree and when some of my high school friends seemed surprised, I told them, if you can read Marx, Lenin and Mao you can read anything. ■

Hitting the Bricks for "Striketober"

IT MIGHT NOT be a massive strike wave by historic standards, but a rash of fall walkouts have earned the label "Striketober" and attracted the attention of the media:

"From Alabama coal miners to Hollywood theater hands and from Kellogg's to John Deere, American workers are flexing their power across the economy." (*Business Insider,* October 16, 2021) The miners have been out on strike since April. They not only hold weekly mass meetings but they have taken their picketing to Wall Street itself.

Nurses in Tenet-owned St. Vincent's Hospital in Worchester, MA have been striking since March for a lower nurse-to-patient ratio. One of the largest for-profit corporations in the country, Tenet threatened to permanently replace the strikers, but failed to attract enough new hires it. As the strike continues, Tenet faces strikes at other hospitals.

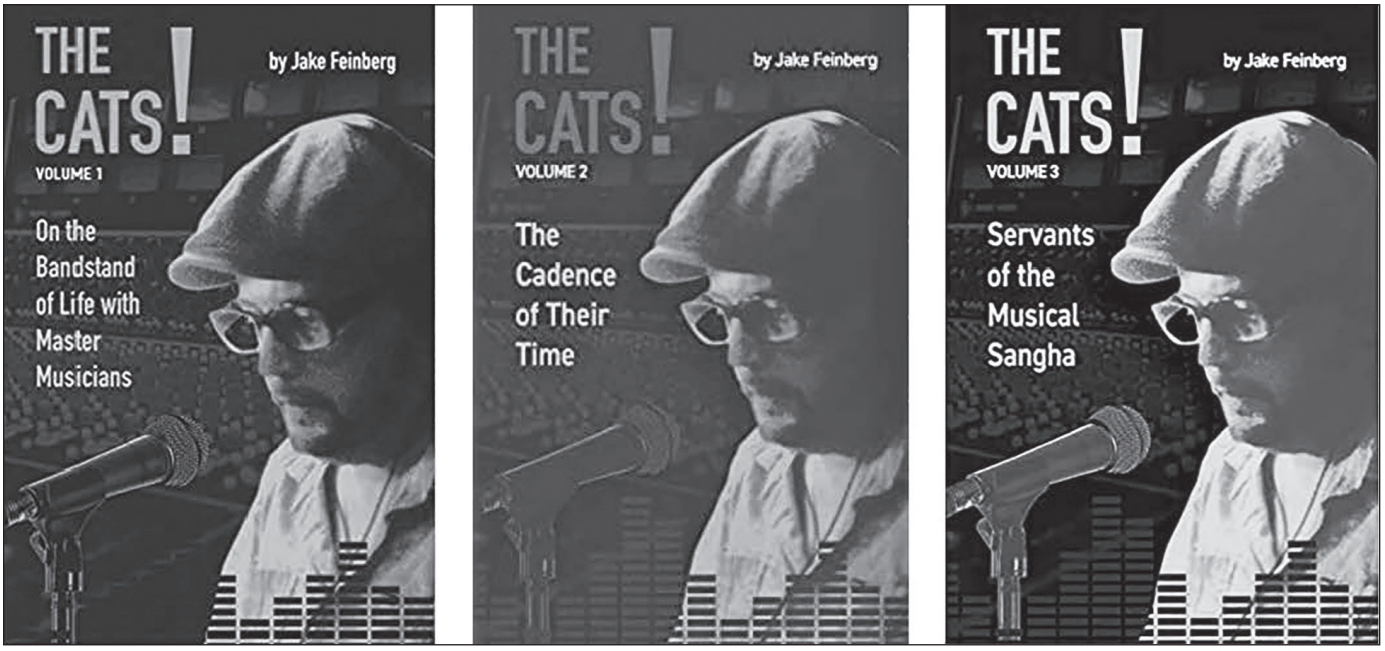
While corporate profits — and the wealth of the super-wealthy — surged during the pandemic, working-class America suffered. Now, employers want to impose greater sacrifices, either permanent wage cuts or insidious two-tier contracts with fewer benefits for newly hired workers.

At John Deere ($489 million operating profit in the second quarter alone) 10,000 workers in 14 plants went out on strike. Since the 1997 contract Deere has implemented a two-tier wage and benefit system that workers see as unjust. While management has laid off hundreds, during the pandemic it implemented mandatory overtime. The latest contract had so little to offer that strikers are angry the negotiating committee signed off on it. The tentative agreement offered paltry wage increases, cuts to post-retirement healthcare and a third-tier for new hires by replacing pensions with a 401k. Earlier in the year Volvo workers turned their contract down three times, only passing it under when the corporation brought out their scare tactics and the UAW leadership offered no strategy forward. Will that happen again?

For Kaiser Permanente workers — pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists and special language pathologists, a central issue is killer work schedules that make it impossible to provide proper care and attention to individual patients.

In addition, in the midst of the pandemic, these corporations seek to permanently depress wages, increase co-pays for health coverage and impose lower pay and benefits for new hires as they rake in their profits.

Thousands of Kellogg's, Nabisco and Frito-Lay workers are on strike over pay, pensions and working conditions. Scab "replacements" have been brought in to keep production running. Remember: No sugar-frosted flakes for the duration! ■



Preserving Voices and Legacies:

Jake Feinberg's Jazz Oral Histories

By Cliff Conner

The Cats!
Volume 1: On the Bandstand of Life with Master Musicians
Volume 2: The Cadence of Their Time
Volume 3: Servants of the Musical Sanga
By Jake Feinberg
Portland, OR, Instant Harmony, 2020 and 2021

JAKE FEINBERG IS a talk radio and podcast personality in Tucson, Arizona who has interviewed thousands of musicians, mostly unheralded but highly talented sidemen and studio musicians, but with an occasional artist with name recognition — a "headliner" — in the mix.

If you don't happen to live in Tucson, to introduce him to you an analogy with the late Alan Lomax is perhaps appropriate. Feinberg may become to American jazz and blues what Alan Lomax was to American folk music.

An obituary of Lomax called him a "musicologist, writer, promoter, record producer and sometime disc jockey" who "chronicled a social real-time art form that had evolved without being written down." Lomax "felt that his work represented not simply the preservation of unique creativity, but was one of the keys with which humanity could unlock its past."[1]

Leaving out "record producer," those words apply to Feinberg as well. Feinberg is only a decade into his career and his body of work cannot yet be fairly compared with Lomax's. But it already constitutes an impressive work in progress. It is an open-ended oral history project chronicling a vibrant and creative American subculture.[2] His interviewees call him Jake, and I will follow suit.

In January 2011, the Jake Feinberg Show began life on KJLL ("the Jolt," 1330 on the AM dial), later moving to KEVT ("Power Talk Radio" at 1210). Meanwhile, Jake also conducted interviews with luminary musicians for southern Arizona's NPR affiliate, KUAZ.[3]

In 2016 the program shifted to live streaming on the internet when the station's owners converted to an online format. It further extended its reach via social media, broadcasting hundreds of interviews on Facebook Live and establishing a presence on YouTube and Instagram. No longer a talk radio show, it has been reborn as a podcast.

In the early years, the conversations were mostly conducted over telephone lines, but more recently Jake has taken to the road to interview his subjects on their home turf, from New Orleans to Nashville, from California to New York, and many points between.

The project flourished as Jake's reputation as a knowledgeable and well-prepared interviewer spread throughout the musical subculture. Not surprisingly, many previously underappreciated artists welcomed the attention and respect.

As the show gained wider exposure, it began to attract well-known guests such as Taj Mahal,[4] Ahmad Jamal,[5] Maria Muldaur,[6] and Dave Brubeck.[7] Meanwhile, the kind of devoted music fans who peruse album liner notes and recognize names of musicians unfamiliar to the general public began to become aware of the program, and its audience gradually increased. Listeners gained vicarious access to the "free jazz" subculture with its aura of spiritual freedom.

In 2019 Jake decided to publish selections from the interviews in a series of books entitled *The Cats!,* which has now reached three volumes and counting.[8]

The interview excerpts were not pulled randomly from the podcast archives: they are a "best of" selection, chosen for their colorful anecdotes and general entertainment value.

A fourth volume compiled from interviews that don't quite fit *The Cats!* format has been published as *The Bus to Never Ever Land.*[9] By Jake's estimate, the material in the four printed volumes represent less than 30-40 percent of the audio archives' total content.

The Interview

The contents of *The Cats!* cannot be better described than by Jake himself, so I interviewed him about the books and the podcasts they're based on. I began by asking him to define the population represented by the people he'd interviewed.

Jake Feinberg: When I first started, people were saying, "Oh, he's a jazz journalist." I don't like labels like that, so just for the record, I want to say that the show has been about all kinds of music. I've sought out musicians from all genres; I've interviewed all

Cliff Conner is a historian and author whose books include The Tragedy of American Science *(2020),* A People's History of Science *(2005) and* Jean Paul Marat: Tribune of the French Revolution *(2011). He is a frequent contributor to* Against the Current.

sorts of folk musicians, bluegrass musicians, and soundtrack pioneers like Lalo Schifrin and Bill Conti.

Cliff Conner: *I understand why you don't want to be constrained by arbitrary categories, and pigeonholed into them, but some of the genres, I think, have fairly solid boundaries — gospel, for example. Talk about how specific genres like gospel, R&B, funk, rock, and so forth relate to jazz and blues.*

JF: Well, let's consider funk. In the mid-to-late-'60s, there was no word in the lexicon for funk music. So a lot of bands like Horace Silver's might say, let's play a funky blues, or something funky like Cannonball Adderley might play.

Then Sly Stone came along, and in 1973 Herbie Hancock did an album called "Headhunters." It was considered a crossover record, meaning it had jazz influences, R&B influences, and so forth. And it was one of the highest selling jazz records of all time. That's the point where the word "funk" came into the lexicon.

The musicians of that time, the early '70s, grew up being huge jazz fans. They were playing or listening to big band jazz, and they loved it. But at the same time, along came rock music and Fender Rhodes pianos, and electric basses, and sound systems. They adapted to that and integrated those jazz rhythms into rock, R&B, groove music, and that became funk.

CC: *You're talking about things that* came out *of jazz. I was also thinking about the other end of it — things that* preceded *jazz. Many of the musicians you interviewed said they came out of the church, gospel music.*

JF: Yes, James Brown's drummers Jab'o Starks and Clyde Stubblefield,[10] for example. They grew up listening to the sounds of trains, you know, chugging and rhythmic. And then they were in the sanctified churches, and there were no drum sets there. There were sticks, and tambourines, and hand clapping, but the rhythm wasn't necessarily on the one and the three beat, or the two and the four. It can be traced back to the diaspora, to Congo Square in New Orleans.

They incorporated those rhythms into blues-based music. And that fused into what James Brown was doing. Or even earlier than that, like Otis Redding — heavy R&B, and then moving into funk. So a lot of it had to do with the nontraditional sort of jagged rhythms that they were hearing.

When my generation grew up listening to B. B. King and Bobby Blue Bland, we just thought, "Oh, they're playing blues." But the musicians in their bands — Ray Charles' band too — would often open the show with a full set of jazz. They could really blow — they had a big vocabulary of music.

I'm also fascinated with new musical vocabulary, extensions of music. For instance,

Jake Feinberg and tenor saxophonist George Harper (1942-2011).

like in '65 with Miles Davis and the Plugged Nickel sessions.[11] The band — Tony Williams, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter — was bored to death with just playing standards. So they took a blood oath that they were going to change up the tunes.

They were going to play the head of a tune like, say, "My Funny Valentine" — and then once they'd run through it, they were going to leave it and then go out — way out — and then it could be any kind of music. Ultimately, because of their gifts as musicians, the theme could always be magically held together, but they would go off for long stretches of time and then come back in.

That was in '65. Now, that had as much of an influence on folk music as it did on jazz, because folk musicians began thinking, well, we can improvise, too. And that led to a general increase in vocabulary.

Mastery Through Mentoring

CC: *How did the cats you've talked with achieve mastery of their musical craft? Did many of them have formal training? And if it's mainly transmitted through mentorship, how does that usually come about?*

JF: Well, with regard to mentoring — fundamentally, the guys that I interviewed learned by being thrown in the deep end and they had to learn to swim or they were gone.

In 1965, if you went to Juilliard there was no jazz program. There were maybe two schools in the country that included the languages of jazz, the Berklee School of Music and North Texas.[12] So you'd have a guy like Charlie Mariano (alto saxophonist — ed.) get off the road and go to school. He was already an established professional musician.

These guys were working 250 days a year, maybe more. They would literally have two weeks off, and then they'd be back on the road. The point is that the mentorship was on the bandstand.

If you went to Berklee or North Texas, you played live *a lot*. You were playing clubs. That's how you learned. And then ultimately older cats would come through town and you'd be on the bandstand with them. And if you couldn't play a shuffle,[13] they kicked you off the bandstand.

It was like, "Hey, come back when you're ready." It wasn't "Get outta here and don't ever come back." And a lot of people took it as emboldening. They knew what they had to work on.

Another thing: There was no YouTube then. TVs were still very primitive. There was no rewind button. So, maybe you had the opportunity to hear a tune on the radio quickly. You couldn't go back and listen to it again. You had to integrate it and then come up with your own feeling about it.

CC: *When you talk with gifted sidemen and studio musicians who haven't attained fame and fortune, what do they tell you about the need to make a living? Do they chase paying gigs that require them to play music they really don't want to play?*

JF: On the one hand, there are the people who are committed to staying true, as innovators, as pioneers of the music — people trying to play stuff that is true to them and not commercially viable. They own that existence, and it's a lonely existence, and it's a struggle.

I'm talking about people I've interviewed like Chuck Israels,[14] who played bass with Bill Evans. In 1950 he was on a porch with his Communist family singing work songs with Pete Seeger and then eight years later he's playing on an album with John Coltrane. So

that's the kind of vocabulary this guy has.

The music he makes — which he considers to be sophisticated, emotive, contemplative, good music — is not commercial. He's playing what's true to himself, but he can't get a gig.

On the other hand, a lot of cats who have been studio cats are absolutely set for life. They came up in the heyday of the studios. They knew at a certain point that they couldn't play jazz gigs for twelve bucks a week, so they went into the studios and began to play sessions.

They could play the music they wanted to at night in the clubs or in the lofts, and make up their own music, and have enough work on the side, through studio work, to get ahead, because the cost of living wasn't so high.

If you were a musician, you could be in the city and join Radio Registry. You'd get calls for gigs. Randy Brecker[15] would be leaving an Ornette Coleman rehearsal and he'd get called to come in and do mariachi trumpets with Johnny Cash. There was a lot of work.

Today, I don't even know. It's such a harrowing situation coming out of the pandemic because the future of domestic live touring music is beyond uncertain, and the only way you can make money now is to go on tour, because there's no studio scene any more.

Technology and Pacification

CC: *I've heard you frequently call attention to some of the ways modern sound technology has tended to corrupt today's music, such as the automation of drum tracks, overdubbing and so forth. Would you care to elaborate on that?*

JF: I just think that the technology has become onerous, actually, in the sense that people are hung up now with perfection versus how it feels.

You used to have people like Arif Mardin, Jerry Wexler, Tom Dowd producing the records. They weren't musicians, but they were music fanatics, and they knew if the music *felt* good. They weren't going to put out stuff that was sloppy, but it was about feeling good.

It wasn't about trying for perfection. You can suck all the soul out of music, especially recorded music, when you try to get something so perfect that it becomes sterile.

Actually, that's what a lot of bean counters want today. Many of the cats I talk to say music today is made for pacification. It's not made for burning introspection.

CC: *Your allusion to "bean counters," or accountants, suggests that cost-cutting — by automating drum and bass tracks, and so forth — was a key factor driving a lot of their decisions.*

JF: Well, just like anything else, it got gluttonous. By the '70s, a lot of unknown bands were getting budgets of $200,000. A lot of money was involved. And then people came along and said, how can we just get something out consistently and get in the black and not spend a lot of money?

It was thought to be too expensive to get all the musicians in a room and to record with minimal overdubs. So today you're getting overdubs on whole albums.

Now they get a guitar player from Sweden to email a track in, and they patch it all together. It's just not going to feel good. It's going to be off.

"...fundamentally, the guys that I interviewed learned by being thrown in the deep end and they had to learn to swim or they were gone. In 1965, if you went to Juilliard there was no jazz program. There were maybe two schools in the country that included the languages of jazz, the Berklee School of Music and North Texas. If you went to Berklee or North Texas, you played live a lot. You were playing clubs. That's how you learned. And then ultimately older cats would come through town and you'd be on the bandstand with them."

CC: *In one of your books, you said some of the leading drummers sell their drum patterns, their rhythms, that get incorporated into the electronic drum tracks.*

JF: Absolutely. I'll tell you about a drummer named Harvey Mason.[16] He was on that Herbie Hancock *Headhunters* album, that crossover album that brought "funk" into the lexicon. Let me read you something that Ernie Watts said about him. Ernie Watts is an incredible saxophonist and wind player and a very spiritual cat. He said:

"In 1980-81, the synthesizer entered the pop music world and it was the new toy. Drummers like Harvey Mason were making their money from programming drum machines. They learned how to work those machines and they were putting those tracks on pop records and some fusion records, because that was the sound of the day. The bass became a keyboard bass for a little while. All the string sections became synthesized. All the brass sections became synthesized."[17]

So that's what happened. Cats like Harvey Mason learned how to work the machine, and they put in their sound. And then through a synthesizer, you were able to build all these tracks, even though it wasn't really a brass section. But if they put your groove on an album and it became a hit, you'd get royalties for that. But it was done through a machine and not in real time.

CC: *What about rap music? How does the younger generation of popular musicians, the hip-hop generation, fit in? Is there a "generation gap," would you say, between the cats you've interviewed and hip-hop?*

JF: The industry changed a lot in the late '60s. In Detroit, for example, after the riots [in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.], at first the government brought in federal money, a huge infusion of money, for the arts, which bolstered the music profession, especially among people of color.

But then in the '70s and early '80s, it went in the other direction and there was no money even for musical instruments in the public schools. So a lot of kids who came from underserved areas didn't have any other choice. They didn't have instruments, so they went home and they started scratching records. They started sampling.

When people stopped playing instruments, the idea of collective units, bands, declined and music became a much more isolated thing.

As for rap music, David Lindley,[18] an amazing musician, said that rap music is modern day folk music, because it's telling the true story of what's happening now, in the moment.

It's not like pop songs with their phony "I love you" emotions — it's talking about real life. Rap music is very popular, but it's very much in isolation. And a lot of its rhythm is either human beings playing machine parts or just electronic drums.

But don't get me wrong. I've interviewed a lot of guys who have worked with great rappers. They're very talented cats, but there's been a shift in the culture, and my feeling is that it speaks to the way society in the past viewed music as a profession versus today when music is seen as the musicians' gift to the world. I think the de-emphasis of music as a profession has created a generation gap.

CC: *Now I have you about another gap — the gender gap. How about female cats? How do women musicians fit into the "brotherhood" that many of the musicians you've interviewed talk about? Have the women you've interviewed been mostly vocalists? Do any female instrumentalists stand out in your memory?*

JF: Yes, of course. It hasn't shown up in the *Cats* books yet, but I realized there was an imbalance and I've made a concerted effort in the last few years to reach out in that direction.

I just interviewed a phenomenal bass player named Noga Shefi.[19] She lives in New York but she's from Israel. Most of the women I've interviewed, like Rita Coolidge[20]

and Dee Dee Bridgewater,[21] are spectacular in terms of their musicianship, but they're known more for their voices. Maria Muldaur plays guitar and other instruments, but she's also best known as a singer.

CC: *Maybe you should consider devoting a future volume of* The Cats! *to female cats.*

JF: Yes, definitely. In a sense, that book is already there. But because the interviews with female musicians are among the most recent, they haven't all been transcribed yet. I'm working on getting them transcribed now.

CC: *You've been doing these interviews for ten years now — a nice round number — so maybe it's a good time to step back and reflect on the "big picture." How do you feel about the value of what you've been doing?*

JF: Even though I'm not a religious person, I feel like the work I'm doing is holy work. It's holy because it's so much more than preservation, or reminiscing, or waxing nostalgic.

Let me tell you about Jerry Granelli[22] and Rick Laird.[23] Again, they're not necessarily well-known on the pop level, but both are incredible musicians with incredible resumes. They were healthy going into this year, but both of them had unforeseen catastrophic health issues at the start of the year. I knew I had to go and do another interview with each of them, because time was running short.

Rick Laird had gotten a diagnosis of lung cancer, even though he never smoked. He had become a shell of himself. He was a really beautiful cat and I interviewed him in hospice. His stories are amazing.

We had this beautiful connection, and the same thing with Jerry. Within the last month, they both left us.[24]

And then there's my dear friend Neal Casal.[25] Neal was just an incredible human being and musician. I had done two interviews with him and I was getting very close with him personally.

So I reached out to him. I said, "Hey, I'm writing my first book. I'd like to publish an excerpt from our interview, and I'd like your blessing." He goes, "Oh man, awesome." I asked him to sign a waiver form, so he snail-mailed it to me. Ten days later he took his own life.[26]

And that put me on a path — I didn't realize it, but now it's becoming clear — it's like a holy mission to make sure that there's a definitive mark before these spirits leave this life. That's where the value is.

The reality is that when these guys pass away, the only traces of their voices are from my interviews. And that's of value for people who might be very close to them, love them, or just for the definitive record. That's a big part of my purpose.

CC: *That's a powerful purpose, and an appropriate point to end on. But before we end, do you have any final comments or observations?*

JF: *The Cats!* books aren't academic books, they're not scholarly books, but I would like people, if they're having a hard time going to sleep at night, to be able to open to any page and get into a meditative state. Or if they're looking for some inspiration, open to a page and find something that's going to help them make the world a better place. ■

On COVID's Death Toll

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has taken a devastating toll everywhere, of course, not least in the world of music in deaths — to say nothing of the crippling economic loss of performance opportunities. For labor and the left, one of our great losses was *Anne Feeney*, singer and longtime inspirational fixture at picket lines and progressive labor events (died February 3, 2021, age 69).

The following brief list covers losses among internationally known jazz musicians in 2020 alone — the actual toll is undoubtedly higher.

Bootsie Barnes, saxophonist prominent on the Philadelphia scene, died March 22, age 82.

Eddy Davis, traditional jazz guitarist, died April 2, age 79.

The great Ellis Marsalis, 1934-2020
https://ellismarsalis.com

Manu Dibango, multi-instrumentalist and composer from Cameroon, died April 24, age 86.

Henry Grimes, bassist prominent in the 1960s and rediscovered in the '90s, died April 15, age 84.

Onaje Allan Gumbs, pianist, died April 6, age 70.

Lee Konitz, saxophonist, d. April 15, age 92.

Ellis Marsalis, pianist and New Orleans musical family patriarch, died April 1, age 85.

John "Bucky" Pizzarelli, guitarist, died April 1, age 94.

Wallace Roney, trumpeter, died March 31, age 59.

"There were great teachers and reachers and preachers in our music and their message is always with us. We have to live what they imparted to us. We have to live their lesson or we're not doing our job." — Todd Barkan, award-winning producer and owner of the legendary jazz club The Keystone Korner

— David Finkel

Sources: *Billboard,* February 9, 2021; ABC News online, June 12, 2020.

Notes

1. John Fordham, "Alan Lomax," *The Guardian*, July 22, 2002.
2. According to Jake Feinberg, all interviews are housed at Anchor.fm: https://anchor.fm/jake-feinberg. Anchor disseminates the podcast to 8 different platforms, the largest being Spotify, a digital catalog that can be searched for all of the interviews: https://open.spotify.com/show/3DBNGj2uyGfuxoYfR6ZCOR
3. KUAZ-FM, NPR 89.1, Arizona Public Media, University of Arizona.
4. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/3J5NQJtqTB8l9LpLwIq1Bn
5. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/1qSnQGvNO2PHmEKnLC3oDb
6. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/6uX8gyog1eLS859nNyfCqS (interview begins at 05:52)
7. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/2PhB12WGC1JNpB3YziJdTt
8. *The Cats!* series is not analogous to Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, but to his subsequent volume, *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove (Seven Stories Press, 2004).
9. Jake Feinberg, *The Bus to Never Ever Land* (Portland, OR: Instant Harmony, 2020).
10. *The Cats!*, vol. 3, 8-10 and 21-23.
11. Seven performance sets over the two nights of December 22-23, 1965, by the Miles Davis quintet at the Plugged Nickel nightclub in Chicago.
12. University of North Texas School of Music, Denton Texas.
13. A shuffle is a pattern in which a drummer breaks each beat into three notes per beat (triplets), and plays the first and third parts of the triplets, leaving out the second.
14. *The Cats!*, vol. 2, 67.
15. *The Cats!*, vol. 1, 41–46.
16. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/6nUM5urUTzmwS5VbWsJXs9
17. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/7sSsOENRYIDIFTIS889KOb?si=NT3wbH2-SGqCt2Z4vobqqw&dl_branch=1&nd=1 (quotation begins at 46:05)
18. *The Cats!*, vol. 1, 153-161.
19. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0tJ8fEHEwxNb5XPleLzmsS
20. Podcast link: http://www.jakefeinbergshow.com/2016/03/the-rita-coolidge-interview/
21. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/6n483n3WJ20l8q4iEG6LHC
22. Podcast link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/5M31ORoBBFMo21u692dM77
23. *The Cats!*, vol. 2, 63-64.
24. Laird and Granelli died on the 4th and 20th of July 2021, respectively. This interview was conducted on August 6, 2021.
25. *The Cats!*, vol. 1, 85-99.
26. On August 26, 2019.

REVIEW

Party Lines, Party Lives, American Tragedy

Reflections on Two Biographies

By Paula Rabinowitz

Michael Gold:
The People's Writer
By Patrick Chura
Albany: SUNY Press, 2020, 354 pages,
$26.95 paperback.

Ethel Rosenberg:
An American Tragedy
By Anne Sebba
New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021,
304 pages, $17.50 hardcover.

Ethel Rosenberg, surrounded by security. Photo from the cover of the Sebba's *Ethel Rosenberg*.

OKAY, I ADMIT it: I am an inveterate gossip, a sucker for memoirs. However, I dislike biographies. I rarely read them and when I do, it is more for some juicy detail, on the one hand, or the cultural milieu of the subject, the times, than the life, on the other.

It's not the narration of a life that bothers me about biography; perhaps instead, it is the gap I often find when a third person attempts to tell another's story and set it in history. How much life, how much history, how much subject's voice, how much teller's?

Two recent biographies of American communists make clear the limitations of narrating another's life story, especially one that tries to make sense of a life lived within the confines of the virulent anti-communism of mid-20th century America, even as each offers insights into how working-class Jewish radicals lived through the turmoil of those decades. It's difficult to place oneself into another time, another culture, another place.

Readers of *Against the Current* probably know the outlines of the Rosenbergs' story. The name Ethel Rosenberg is among the most recognized Cold War identities. She and her husband Julius were arrested, jailed, tried and executed for the crime of conspiracy to commit espionage against the United States. In the popular imagination, they stole the secrets of the A-bomb and delivered them to the Soviet Union.

Until last year, when Donald Trump's Attorney General William Barr authorized the execution of federal prisoner Lisa Montgomery, no woman had been executed by the U.S. government in the 70 years since Ethel Rosenberg's murder by electrocution at Sing Sing prison in New York — a travesty, or as British journalist and biographer Anne Sebba calls it, "an American tragedy."

This story is part of the sensational lore of Cold War America, one of the numerous "crimes of the century" titillating and inspiring fear among everyday citizens of the United States and the world.

Contrasts and Memories

By contrast, outside the small circle of scholars of the literary left, Michael Gold is hardly a household name. But during the 1930s, among the Left, his presence was widely recognized as "the people's writer," according to his biographer, literary critic Patrick Chura.

Almost everyone who works in the area of communist literary studies has a Mike Gold story. Mine: my late mother-in-law babysat for his sons in the late-'30s and early-'40s when she was a communist and labor organizer.

Usually, the image of Gold gleaned from these tales is of a wildly intense and sweet man; his reputation as a critic in the pages of the *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses*, and especially his infamous essay on Thornton Wilder for the *New Republic*, or his screed *The Hollow Men*, is of a taciturn and vicious upholder of a Stalinist party-line who regularly branded writers, even friends and comrades, as political apostates.

Patrick Chura, a scholar of class and labor within American literature, seeks to make sense of this contradictory portrait of Gold for us, those few scholars working on literary radicalism, but also to enable scholars of modernism to appreciate his contributions to 20th-century American literature tout court.

When it comes to the Rosenbergs, the collective stories are far grimmer and extend beyond the small circle of left-wingers in New York. Almost everyone born since 1950 to even liberal (usually Jewish) parents recalls how they learned of Julius and Ethel's deaths. My girlhood was haunted by them as my artist mother felt it to be the last gesture of the Holocaust come home to America and my engineer father sneered at the charges, claiming any scientist who read the *New York Times* could know how to produce a bomb. In the 1970s, I worked at the Cookery, co-owned by Barney Josephson and Gloria Agrin, one of Ethel's lawyers.

Anne Sebba, a British biographer of eccentric women — from Wallace Simpson to French members of the Résistance — seeks to make sense of the obscenity of Ethel Rosenberg's state-sponsored murder as new material about the grand jury testimony preceding her and Julius Rosenberg's trial has been made public.

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Retrieving Michael Gold

As I said, I am prone to gossiping. Both books deliver enticing details about their subjects, but something is missing from each. I'm not sure I can discern what that is.

As Chura notes, although others have attempted to write a biography of Gold, nobody before him has succeeded. Chura's unrivaled accomplishment relies on the research of earlier scholars, but he pushes past their stumbling blocks, mining interviews with family members, archival materials, FBI files, and a close reading of the hundreds of columns Gold wrote over the course of his decades as "the people's writer," primarily in his "Change the World" pieces for the *Daily Worker*.

Through mini-biographies of many others with whom Gold worked on politics and art — John Reed, Eugene O'Neill, Pete Seeger, W.E.B. Du Bois among them — Chura rightly articulates the central place Gold, and more so his 1930 novel *Jews Without Money,* holds in American literature.

This novel essentially demarked the subgenre of urban, immigrant *Bildungsroman* that Michael Denning dubbed "ghetto pastoral" by inserting a critique of capitalism into the immigrant tale etched by Abraham Cahan in 1917 with *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Along with Henry Roth's 1934 *Call It Sleep, Jews Without Money* called attention to the psychological alienation in second-generation immigrant children who were (and still are) called upon by parents, schools, police and neighbors to negotiate among competing social forces and languages.

These two novels, along with Daniel Fuchs' trilogy, served as a gateway for a generation of postwar baby boomers trying to make sense of their families' untold stories. And like Tillie Olsen's novel from the 1930s *Yonnondio* (unpublished until the 1970s), they showed that proletarian literature was as modernist and experimental as O'Neill's plays or William Faulkner's novels. Gold's episodic story of New York's Lower East Side echoed the construction of Dublin locales through which Leopold Bloom wandered one day in June.

In short, Chura reinforces arguments made by many scholars of 1930s literary radicalism that proletarian literature was more complex than either a simplistic social realism or smarmy popular front singalongs would imply.

Chura follows critic Michael Folsom's assessment that 1950s New Criticism, on the one hand, and the emergence of the anti-Stalinist left (and its complex rejection of 1930s literary radicalism, as Alan Wald has shown), on the other, were responsible for the dismissal of Gold as a serious American writer.

Gold was a popular writer, as Chura argues, and for this perhaps left out of the canon being developed in the 1950s; he was a communist writer, and for this he was surely subject to a kind of intellectual, if not actual blacklist during the Cold War; he was a Jewish writer and subject to the subtle and not-so-subtle anti-Semitism of postwar American publishing and academia.

But, and I would have liked to hear about more about this, Gold was, as so many working-class writers (cf. Henry Roth until the final decades of his life, and Tillie Olsen), a one-book novelist. He got stuck, even if he continued to write biting commentary and a few experimental plays and *recitatifs*.

Chura's biography gets around this critical obsession with the novel as the ultimate emblem of literary expression, by focusing on other aspects of Gold's writings. These include his literary criticism, which has been dissected before, but Chura also takes seriously the various *Daily Worker* columns as venues where Gold explored intersections of aesthetic, politics and personal life (as his novel had), his plays and his poetry.

Chura shows that Gold spent his lifetime railing against racism and anti-Semitism in all their facets — genteel literary works, on the one hand, vicious state-sanctioned organized violence, on the other. Moreover, by looking at the various figures with whom Gold spent time — Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker, Reed and O'Neill of the Provincetown Playhouse, Pete Seeger of People's Song — he stresses that Gold was a serious playwright and (folk) music critic as well.

Life in Perpetual Motion

Gold's peripatetic life — roaming from the Lower East Side to Harvard and then Mexico, the Soviet Union and France to settle uneasily in San Francisco, often going incognito as many communist organizers did — matches his evolving names: Itzhok Isaac to Irwin Granich to Mike/Michael Gold and the ever-changing little left-wing publications for which he wrote and served as editor.

Chura gamely tries to bring order to this disorderly conduct as he moves chronologically through a life lived outside mainstream society. There is much to be grateful for in this book, which unfortunately is marred, as so many academic publications are these days, by shoddy editing, replete with many typos and misspellings and errors.

Chura brings theater and music into the drama of Gold's life in compelling ways, but occasionally he downplays politics — much more might have been said of the ricocheting positions Jewish Communists found themselves in between 1940 and 1941, for example — which sometimes become mere backdrop.

For instance, his engagement with Peter Cacchione, a communist city councilperson from Brooklyn, led to Gold's last play, *The Honorable Pete*, completed in the midst of the Cold War. According to his unpublished memoir, Gold routinely appeared at the campaign and council headquarters, which was a hotbed of CPUSA organizing under the tutelage of Spanish Civil War veteran Eddie Bender (not mentioned by Chura nor perhaps by Gold), giving readings and discussing literature with the unemployed hunger marchers hanging out there.

An earlier play from the 1930s, *Moscow Lov*e, derives from his time in the USSR when he attended the Kharkov conference sponsored by the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. This play revisits themes of sexual tensions emerging among the new post-revolutionary that had animated the fiction of Alexandra Kollantai and the filmmaker Abram Room's 1927 *Bed and Sofa*. The play's theme of feminist critique of the male workers' zeal for Five-Year Plans at the expense of women's freedom echoed American proletarian novelist Myra Page's 1935 *Moscow Yankee.* It would have enriched our sense of Gold as being alive to the debates — political and aesthetic — raging among communists during his heyday to hear about this context.

Gold sat for painter Alice Neel, who in addition to painting two portraits contributed illustrations to most of the periodicals he edited. Gold wrote a pamphlet for the A.C.A. Gallery on Russian Futurism and the work of David Buriuk, but this side of Gold's biography — his engagement with the visual arts — is elided.

While Chura introduces material on the Composers' Collective, he neglects to mention that composer Elie Siegmeister (of the Composers' Collective) set Gold's 1920s poem "A Strange Funeral in Braddock" to dissonant music in 1936; recent performances of it can be found on YouTube.

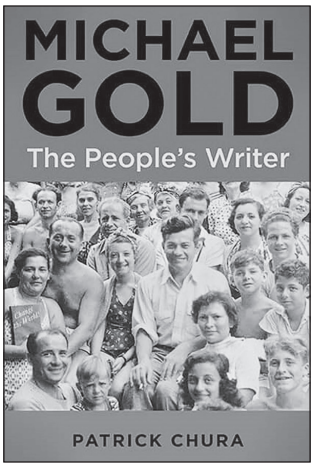
Gold's scathing critique of Gertrude Stein was mentioned as one reason Richard Wright became disillusioned with the John Reed Clubs and the Party in general; Wright found voice for Black vernacular in Stein's novella "Melanctha." More attention to the varied contradictions of Gold's wider cultural associations would have strengthened the case that Gold had an influence on mid-century modern American arts and letters.

To right the record of someone who appears as sorely misunderstood as this unrepentant Jewish communist agitator was, a scholar must be alive to complexity. For the most part, Patrick Chura does an admirable job of encapsulating Gold's weird story without simplifying it into a tale of "on the one hand, on the other hand."

One limitation of a 350-page critical biography is that its author must frequently bounce between criticism and biography; it is not an easy task. Chura carefully reads Gold's diffuse writings while trying to piece together a coherent life story about some-

one who, like most American communists, purposely worked to evade detection despite a lifetime under FBI surveillance.

Gold's life represents a crucial avatar of 20th-century America, as smart and daring sons (and a few daughters) of impoverished immigrants were able to move in and out of working-class jobs and labor struggles, as well as Ivy League colleges (Gold briefly attended Harvard) and bohemian artists' circles.



All this was achieved in part because of the role that communism played, ironically, in Americanizing Jews.

Gold's work is so diffuse, in terms of genre and subject matter, that it also maps the ad hoc methods left-wing intellectuals from the working class used to forge a career as something we now wistfully call public intellectuals.

With the exception of *Jews Without Money*, most of what Gold wrote remained unpublished or unperformed, or else appeared in the myriad small-press journals and newspapers surrounding the CPUSA. His writings were everywhere and nowhere, in a way, a fitting instantiation of the mid-20th-century literary left.

Ethel Rosenberg's Tragic Saga

Very likely Ethel Rosenberg read Gold's columns in the *Daily Worker*, which as a dedicated party member, she and Julius sold on the streets of the Lower East Side. After helping to lead a strike as a member of the Shipping Clerks' Union, she was active in the Worker's Alliance and the Unemployed Councils that had inspired Gold's play *The Honorable Pete*.

Ethel possessed a beautiful singing voice and by the mid-1930s was often singing at various picket lines and workers' meetings — again, part of an emerging left-wing culture nurtured within the amorphous boundaries of the Jewish Lower East Side that shaped Gold. She too escaped it by being admitted to the Schola Cantorium, the chorus of Carnegie Hall, and performing with the Clark Players, an amateur theater attached to the Clark Settlement House.

Born a generation after Gold, she shared the squalid living conditions of Mikey Gold; unlike Mikey, her relationship with her mother would prove fatal. In Gold's telling his mother, Katey, figures as the Ur-Jewish mother: defiant, protective, loving. While Tessie Greenglass doted on her sons, especially her youngest David, she ignored, almost scorned, Ethel. By all accounts she never heard Ethel sing or watched her act.

Thus, as with Gold, it was the communist Jewish culture of the immigrant working class that at first saved her and where she met her deep love, Julius.

Sebba's new biography shows the pull of the Cold War, and thus of the 1930s, on current consciousness. It seems we cannot stop fiddling with this unholy past of McCarthyist suppression of leftist activism.

Both books rely on previous biographers — for Chura, however, it was the unpublished work of Michael Folsom. Sebba's sanctioned biography is grounded in the deep psychological and political probings of Ilene Philipson's 1988 *Ethel Rosenberg: Beyond the Myths,* which sparked controversy when it appeared because the Rosenberg's sons, Michael and Robert Meeropol, rescinded permission to quote from or even paraphrase Ethel's letters.

Each book has been augmented by new material: Chura has interviewed Gold's sons, who gave him full access to their father's papers beyond those held in the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan.

Since Philipson's biography, the entire terrain of Rosenberg studies has expanded exponentially: two generations of Meeropols have written memoirs or made documentary films; the VENONA cables have been declassified, pushing the Meeropols to acknowledge that Julius was a spy, which Morton Sobell, the Rosenbergs' co-defendant, affirmed before his death.

Interviews that Ethel's younger brother, David Greenglass, gave to Sam Roberts, his biographer, as well as unsealed Grand Jury testimony by him definitively reveal that he lied about Ethel's involvement to save his wife and that his mother actively worked with the FBI to push Ethel into "confessing."

So it is a welcome addition to the literature of leftist women to read anew of Ethel's enormous commitments to her husband, her children and her principled position against naming names and for her freedom to associate as she pleased.

Sebba sees Ethel as an American Tragedy for both political and personal reasons:

• Politically, she was the victim of the Cold War hysteria about the Soviet Union's 1949 detonation of an A-bomb, the Chinese Communisty Party's revolution in 1949 and its Red Army's 1950 entrance into the Korean War and the general postwar panic that goes by the name McCarthyism, not to mention the cruel careerism of prosecutor Roy Cohn and the timidity of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Supreme Court all responding to their unconscious or overt sexism and anti-Semitism.

• Personally, her natal family all but abandoned her to death, while she was tormented by fears that she was an inadequate mother at a time when women were being pushed back into intensive domesticity following World War II.

Ethel's fate may have been sealed by her "dowdy clothes" and delinquent mothering in part because her case followed another sensational spy case involving a young Jewish woman, the 1949 trials of Judith Coplon, dubbed "whistle bait" by one reporter.

American Tragedies

Despite all the new material surrounding the case, however, Sebba offers almost nothing new and her interpretations of events seem slightly skewed by her approach to the saga through a rather conventional lens of 1950s domesticity.

Much of the information about Ethel's personal relationships — with her husband, her children, her damaged and damaging mother, her cellmates, her prison guards, her psychologists and psychiatrists — were unearthed by Philipson, though Sebba was able to interview her cellmate and her son's therapist.

Philipson's book was first published by the obscure imprint Franklin Watts, and reissued in 1993 by Rutgers University Press; it was reviewed widely because fascination with the Rosenbergs is enduring, and at the time little had been written expressly about Ethel. However, Sebba's publisher is St. Martin's Press, which has assured its wide reviews.

The publisher's press release stresses that "this is the first time Ethel's story has been told with the full use of the dramatic and tragic prison letters she exchanged with her husband, her lawyer and her psychotherapist over a three-year period, two of them in solitary confinement," including those published in 1953 by the Committee to Secure Justice for the Rosenbergs in Death House Letters as well as those held by her sons, implying that this is the definitive feminist investigation into Ethel's American tragedy. It is not.

Theodore Dreiser's 1925 novel *An American Tragedy* also took the story of a sensational New York trial as the basis for a deep investigation into working-class family dysfunction, intense desire to escape the degradations of poverty, and the misplaced dreams and desires of young people wishing for a new kind of life in the modern world.

Patrick Chura tells of Michael Gold's ambivalent relationship to Dreiser: his admiration for this committed writer's realism; his disdain for his anti-Semitism. It's not clear if Anne Sebba sees Dreiser's story of Clyde Griffiths, and his doomed pregnant girlfriend and his delusional desire for a beautiful girl

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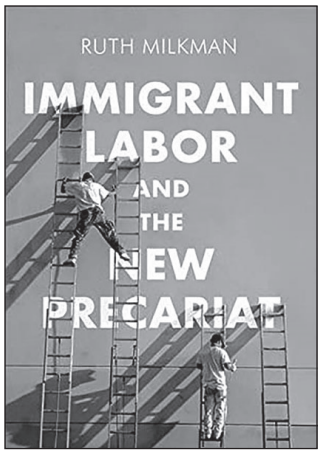
REVIEW

Reclaiming the Narrative:
Immigrant Workers and Precarity

By Leila Kawar

Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat
By Ruth Milkman
Polity Press, 2020, 200 pages, $22.95 paper



THE TERM "ESSENTIAL workers" has been broadly applied during the COVID-19 pandemic, designating not only healthcare providers but also frontline workers in the food, construction, and home-based care sectors. These are all occupations characterized by low-wage and insecure employment with little possibility of job promotion. Importantly, they are all also occupations sustained by immigrant labor.[1]

Indeed, as Ruth Milkman points out in I*mmigrant Labor and the New Precariat,* both the unauthorized "illegal aliens" who are the focus of contemporary political controversy and the larger population of foreign-born workers with legal status are concentrated in occupations and industries at the bottom of the labor market that are "poorly paid, physically demanding, menial, and often dangerous." (20)

In the 21st-century United States, the boundaries defining such immigrant-dominated "brown collar" jobs have come to be taken for granted by workers and employers alike.[2] Without explicitly mentioning the pandemic context, Milkman's book shines a timely light on this segment of the U.S. labor force — one that's been both officially as well as popularly designated in COVID-related measures as "essential" to the continuity of the country's economic and social functioning.[3]

Published in the heat of the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign, Milkman's book takes aim at what it identifies as an "immigrant threat narrative" that then-President Trump and his supporters relentlessly promoted. It is a narrative that portrays low-wage immigration as undermining the working and living standards of the U.S.-born working class.

In challenging this narrative, Milkman seeks to demonstrate that the line of causality in fact has operated in the opposite direction, insofar as it was the "three D's" of deregulation, deindustrialization, and de-unionization that degraded work in occupations previously filled by U.S.-born workers.

In this context, with non-college-educated U.S.-born workers being frustrated in their expectations of finding a good job due to circumstances largely beyond their control, immigration provides a scapegoat. This is the key takeaway from Milkman's analysis.

In building this counter-narrative on the relationship between labor degradation and immigrant workers, the book lays out a compelling account of post-1980s U.S. labor market changes through three key case studies drawn from the residential construction, building services, and meatpacking sectors. It then goes on to examine other low-wage brown-collar occupations, such as domestic work, personal care services, and back-of-the-house restaurant work.

Here, as Milkman acknowledges, the relationship between labor market conditions and immigration was somewhat more complicated.

Yet in these occupations as well, it was not immigration that was the driver of change; rather, demographic changes created greater demand for these services at the same time that civil rights policies expanded employment possibilities for African-American and other U.S.-born workers of color previously confined to these jobs.

Wake-Up Call to Progressives

Milkman devotes space to elaborating the singularly explicit restrictionism of Trump immigration era policies. Along similar lines, other immigration policy analysts positioned on the left and center-left of the political spectrum have likewise noted the unprecedented zeal with which the Trump Administration targeted both family-based and irregular immigration.

According to one such policy commentary, "No administration in modern U.S. history has placed such a high priority on immigration policy or had an almost exclusive focus on restricting flows, legal and unauthorized alike, and further maximizing enforcement. This marks a major departure in how immigration is discussed and administered in the United States, pushing the issue into conversations and communities where it previously received scant attention."[4]

Yet in distinction from center-left immigration policy commentary, Milkman suggests that the Trump era should be viewed as a wake-up call to U.S. progressives on immigration policy issues. She offers an especially critical assessment of labor's record in recent years, arguing that most union leaders did little to challenge the wave of Trump era deportations and other anti-immigrant policies, even as these created acute fear and insecurity for immigrant communities and led to a marked decline in immigrant worker activism compared to the 1990s and 2000s.

Similarly, while acknowledging that worker centers and a few local unions did seek to challenge Trump-era policies to some degree, Milkman views these as essentially damage control tactics rather than the sort of proactive approach needed to power an immigrant labor movement over the long-term.

If policies enacted during a single presidential term were able to do so much damage, such that cohesion among the various strands of the immigrant labor movement deteriorated in a relatively short space of time, then this for Milkman is evidence that existing progressive immigration initiatives have been missing a key ingredient.

She suggests that this key ingredient is a compelling policy narrative that not only explicitly addresses working class Americans tempted by the countervailing "immigrant threat narrative," but also takes as a core concern the rapid growth of precarity at the bottom of the labor market that impacts all workers, immigrant or U.S.-born alike.

Moreover, she suggests that there may be a political opening for such a narrative to take hold because Trump administration officials and other like-minded proponents of the "immigrant threat narrative" are riding a wave of working-class frustration but are not addressing its actual causes.

As should be clear from the above

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description, Milkman's book is an instance of politically-engaged academic writing. Drawing on its author's expertise as a distinguished sociologist who serves as the Academic Director of the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat* develops an account of policymaking that is informed by the latest scholarship in such interdisciplinary social science fields as labor studies and migration studies.

At the same time, it styles its sociological analysis as the conceptual and empirical foundation for addressing a concrete political and policymaking challenge for progressives that its author has diagnosed.

Milkman explains the growth of a sizable immigrant precariat as resulting from neoliberal labor degradation, relying on a mix of existing scholarship and journalistic sources to support this explanation empirically.

As regards its desired political intervention, this analysis works to elaborate a progressive counter-narrative on immigration, i.e. a story with the intellectual and affective potency to redirect the voting public's anger away from scapegoated immigrant workers and towards, in Milkman's words, "the employers who deliberately outsourced or degraded formerly well-paid blue-collar jobs and the business interests promoting public policies that widen inequality." (160)

Towards a More Progressive Policy?

To what extent does this social and political analysis maintain its relevance now that Donald Trump and his provocateur senior advisor on immigration, Stephen Miller, no longer occupy the White House?

Unlike some pro-immigration Trump critics, Milkman takes care to acknowledge that the "immigrant threat narrative" that she identifies as underlying the Trump administration's record on immigration both preceded and extends beyond any single political actor and his supporters.

Indeed, she devotes space to criticizing not only labor leaders who were "missing in action" from efforts to defend immigrant workers but also self-identified liberals who were seduced by the narrative that Trump wielded with such apparent success.

Hillary Clinton is one of those who, in Milkman's view, "faltered" in this respect by making public comments that suggested taking a harder line on irregular migration was a political necessity. And self-identified progressives John Judis and Andrea Nagle are likewise criticized for having ventured down the path of calling for restrictive immigration policies in a bid to win back working-class voters. (165-66)

Milkman's conceptualization of the "immigrant threat narrative" as a set of ideas that cuts across political parties is one of the book's strong points, giving its analysis a relevance beyond the immediate context in which it was written.

Indeed, as shown by the disheartening tenor of recent immigration policy rhetoric offered by European centrist and center-left political figures, the seduction of the immigrant threat narrative for self-identified liberals remains far from depleted.[5]

"The United States is not the only country in which the ongoing economic-precarity-faced-migrant worker has been a topic of policy debate. Across the globe, from Europe to Canada to Malaysia, the pandemic has highlighted the shortcomings in a system that already left migrant workers isolated and vulnerable, while also exposing the economically-sustaining role of these low-wage workers."

We might then ask whether the prescriptive portion of Milkman's analysis shows signs of gaining traction among the U.S. progressives who are the core intended audience for her book. To what extent have progressive commentators and politicians embraced the task of building a cohesive immigrant labor movement and developed messaging that wins over the hearts and minds of working-class voters?

Following Trump's electoral defeat, Milkman has joined other progressive scholars and public officials endeavoring to proactively shape the Biden Administration's approach to immigration policy.[6] These efforts have included calls for expanding legal channels for immigration, as well as proposals centered on some form of rolling legalization for irregular migrants.

Beyond these concrete immigration policy reform proposals, Milkman and others have called on labor leaders to devote themselves to educating U.S. workers about the challenge of depleted labor protections that they share with immigrant workers.[7]

Yet it remains an open question whether a White House and Congress under Democratic Party control will expend political capital with the deftness necessary to advance this progressive vision on immigrant worker issues.

Certainly, the Biden administration has adopted a new tone, issuing guidance that federal agencies should use the term "undocumented non-citizen" rather than "illegal alien."[8] Moreover, there are some early signs that the administration intends to craft executive orders and legislative proposals to advance policies aiming to benefit low-wage immigrant workers.

To give one concrete example, bargaining for home care workers, an immigrant-dominated occupational sector, was hardwired into the expanded Medicaid coverage provisions of the American Jobs Plan unveiled in March 2021 as part of the Biden administration's initial $2 trillion infrastructure package.[9]

Likewise, an April 2021 Biden administration executive order mandating a $15 minimum wage for federal contractors built on proposals developed in prior progressive campaigns, most notably SEIU's "Fight for Fifteen" that successfully mobilized immigrants and other low-wage workers in the fast-food sector.[10]

Finally, at the top of the U.S. labor movement's current legislative wish-list, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act includes a provision that would prevent an employer from using its employee's immigration status against them when determining the terms of their employment.[11]

Of course, with a Senate filled by a minority party intent on using every instrument available to preserve the status quo on labor issues, a compelling public narrative is unlikely to be enough in the short term to secure passage of the PRO Act and other pro-labor legislation.

What about plans to reform the job conditions experienced by low-wage foreign workers entering the United States on temporary or seasonal work visas?

Currently, employers may legally obtain low-wage, flexible foreign labor through the H-2A visa program for farmworkers and H-2B visa program for work in seasonal jobs such as in landscaping, forestry, and food processing. Although not among the sectoral case studies discussed in Milkman's book, these so-called "guest workers" are clearly part of policy discussions addressing the contemporary immigrant-dominated precariat.

U.S. employer demand for temporary work visas has grown over the past decade, in part because guest workers have come to be viewed as a substitute for an undocumented labor force in relative decline over the same period, and a growing industry of intermediaries is helping employers locate, recruit, and transport low-wage workers from migrant countries of origin.[12]

Particularly for H-2A migrant workers employed in farm labor, the pandemic has brought increased public attention both to the daily vulnerabilities they encounter on the job[13] and to the resulting health risks for surrounding communities.[14]

Moreover, as the result of pandemic-related travel restrictions, industry sectors particularly reliant on H-2A migrant labor, such as wheat production, have been forced

to scramble to fill positions.[15]

Yet even as the pandemic has demonstrated the structural dependence of the U.S. food supply chain on low-wage migrant labor, progressives have not yet been able to set forth a clear agenda for guest worker policy reforms.

The industry-friendly Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which would offer a path to citizenship for some undocumented farmworkers, has been criticized by progressive commentators for provisions that arguably preserve and expand an exploitative system of labor contracting which allows workers to be deported and blacklisted for protesting their unsafe working conditions.[16]

Further undermining organizing initiatives in this immigrant-reliant sector, the growing and packing industry scored a victory with the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning a 1970s California regulation on the grounds that allowing labor representatives to meet with farm workers at work sites unlawfully intrudes on their employers' property rights.[17]

A Global Issue

The United States is not the only country in which the ongoing economic-precarity-faced-migrant worker has been a topic of policy debate.

Across the globe, from Europe to Canada to Malaysia, the pandemic has highlighted the shortcomings in a system that already left migrant workers isolated and vulnerable, while also exposing the economically-sustaining role of these low-wage workers.[18]

An aspect of Milkman's analysis that deserves explicit mention is that it is focused on the U.S. policy context. One place where this is evident is in the chapter she titles "The Eclipse of the New Deal," which details how processes of deindustrialization, de-unionization and deregulation in the 1970s and 1980s radically restructured the construction, building services and meat-packing industries and argues that the rise in immigrant "brown-collar" jobs in these sectors was a consequence of this labor market transformation. (62-103)

Yet a linear causal story about the rise of "brown-collar" jobs in these industries may be specific to the U.S. context. In Europe, where the social welfare state was arguably much more developed, policy decisions were made as early as the late-1950s to import temporary foreign labor to fill racialized low-wage jobs in these industries.[19]

Milkman's focus on U.S. policy is also visible in her claim that structural changes in migrant-sending countries were substantially less important than the success of business interests in degrading labor conditions in formerly-unionized industries, which created unprecedented U.S. demand for precarious low-wage foreign workers.

This is a debatable claim, which seems to underplay the role of shifts in the international political economy in propelling the surge in low-wage migrant workers who entered the labor markets of developed economies through largely irregular channels starting in the 1980s.[20]

Of course, if Milkman's sociological analysis at times appears rather stylized, then it is because the book's underlying aim is to develop a narrative for policy action. On the one hand, this is a strength of the book as a work of progressive scholarship intended for a public audience.

On the other hand, we might reflect on whether a narrow domestic policy focus might have the unintended disadvantage of discouraging the creative coalition-building *across borders* that could strengthen an immigrant worker movement in the long-term.

Indeed, some of the most exciting migrant-led campaigns in recent years have embraced calls for "undoing border imperialism," which not only speak to the experience of immiserated working-class Americans but also aim to build solidarity with decolonial and anti-racist movements across the globe.[21]

Building a movement with the capacity to change the status quo on immigration policy requires that progressives expand their political horizons. Pulling together the labor and immigrant rights strands of this movement, as Milkman's book aims to do, is certainly a promising first step in this direction. ■

Notes

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Reflections — *cont. from page 33*

far above his class as a template for understanding Ethel's terrible plight.

It is worth remembering, though, that the amazing George Stevens movie *A Place in the Sun* with Elizabeth Taylor, Shelley Winters and Montgomery Clift — George Stevens, the same director who had filmed the liberation of Dachau as a Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army, as Jean-Luc Godard reminds us in *L'Histoire(s) du Cinéma* — was released in July 1951, a few months after Ethel was sentenced to death and entered solitary confinement in the Death House at Sing Sing, where Dreiser had done research for his novel.

Clearly, in America, unlike Louis Napoleon's France in Karl Marx's famous phrase, tragedy repeats itself not as farce but as even greater tragedy. Change the World. ■

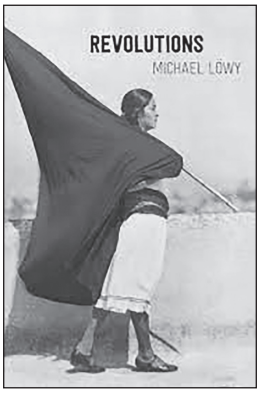
REVIEW

Inspiration Against Defeat?

Envisioning a World to Win

Matthew Garrett

Revolutions
Edited by Michael Löwy
Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020,
540 pages, $40 hardback.



EVERY READER SHOULD buy this book immediately, or rush to the library to find it. But they should do so in a spirit of unsparing scrutiny. Our revolutionary genealogies sustain us, above all in dark times, but the passion for changing the world is rightly paired with the cold eye of evaluation.

One risk in uncritically embracing the iconographies and image-repertoires of the past is that they can short-circuit true historical understanding, and therefore foreclose clear political thinking. The reappearance of *Revolutions* raises difficult questions for a revolutionary reader today.

First, one has to say that in reissuing Michael Löwy's wonderful gathering of archival photographs and essays, originally published in French in 2000, Haymarket Books has once again done a great service both to the left and to anyone interested in history.

The book comprises a general essay on the photographic history of revolution, and individual chapters on the Paris Commune (Gilbert Achcar), the 1905 Russian Revolution (Achcar), the October Revolution (Rebecca Houzel and Enzo Traverso), the Hungarian Revolution (Löwy), the German Revolution (Traverso), the Mexican Revolution (Bernard Oudin), the Chinese Revolutions of 1911 and 1949 (Pierre Rousset), the Spanish Civil War (Achcar again), and the Cuban Revolution (Janette Habel), as well as a concluding essay and updated 2020 postscript by Löwy and a useful general bibliography.

It is a treasure trove and necessary book: an aesthetically beautiful collection of text and image, an exhilarating immersion in the revolutionary 20th century, a rich reflection on the status of the photographic image as a historical source, yet — not least — a discomfiting irritant for would-be revolutionaries in the churning yet oddly static situation of the contemporary Global North.

The unease is real, and it provokes some concern. What exactly did Haymarket think they were doing in republishing this text in 2020? Is *Revolutions* an antiquarian exercise? Surely not for the comrades at Haymarket, to say nothing of Löwy and his authors, all of whom share unquestionably leftist commitments.

Yet one has to say — with regret — that these days almost everyone, even many of the revolutionaries, in the advanced (senile) capitalist countries seems to agree in practice that revolution is permanently off the table. One can disagree (as I do) with this seeming consensus, yet also recognize our situational limits.

Looking Back and Ahead

On the left, a new social democracy has flowered during the post-Occupy decade under various labels. Thrillingly for many of us, the words "socialist" and "communist" circulate more or less freely once again (not only as slurs from the right), but the price of legitimacy seems to have been amputation of class struggle as strategy or even recognizable fact of social life.

The gravity of the Democratic Party and its international ilk has been admirably resisted by a vibrant and crucial, if politically ineffectual, set of extra-parliamentary movements. Among these we might include (among others): the brilliance of the Movement for Black Lives, which has been accompanied by an increase in the police murder of Black citizens and metastasizing of anti-Black racisms across the United States; the French *gilets jaune*s, now draining toward the bottom of the nationalist Macron-Le Pen-Zemmour sink; and Extinction Rebellion, boldly stating the obvious without any discernible effect on UK carbon emissions.

In the United States, emblematically, the troglodyte petty bourgeoisie has emerged from the darkness of "the heartland" into the glare of the national spectacle, but theirs is of course no revolution at all (January 6 notwithstanding), merely a vision of the radiant future as a whites-only shopping mall: more of the silent-majority same, with enhanced viciousness.

The year 2020, in short, was both an intensification of the post-History year 2000 and an alien context for a book on revolution. In his brief postscript to the new edition, Löwy cites the Arab Spring, the Democratic Confederation of Northern Syria, the leftist governments of Latin America, the Indignados and Yellow Vests, the youth climate protest, and the Movement for Black Lives as indicators that, as he puts it elsewhere in the book, "[h]istory is a long way from ending." (519)

All these are, he notes, exceptionally fragile, but he also closes with a rather wistful note on the United States: "Black, brown, and white united in a popular rebellion without precedent since the 1960s. Is this the sign of a coming revolution, or just the latest expression of the subaltern's rage against the system? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind…" (532)

It's a funny way to end this particular book, at this time, made indeed even more surprising by its author's generational wisdom, which one might have thought would preclude the sentimental reference to '68. (Activists in the movements, anyway, might prefer a citation of Kendrick or H.E.R. to Dylan.) Absent here is historical perspective on the conjuncture; even BLM is taken to be a second performance of the 1960s.

But just like Michael Löwy's revolutionary blues, I'm afraid the joke is on us: there's nobody even here to bluff. A revolutionary constituency must be assembled. To do so, the glimmers of History we might identify in our 21st century will need to be painstakingly analyzed and then compared, with real rigor, against the revolutionary balance sheet of the past.

One can identify with Löwy's own political position — as I myself more or less do — and also fear that his evocative lines risk mystifying our own history. Dissevered from the pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will is — as Gramsci taught — stupidity.

That pessimism must be applied to the past itself. Doing so is one way in which we constitute history as an object of understanding and intervention: the way we generate one long narrative from long-gone events, linking them up (in a "moment of danger," as Löwy's much-admired revolutionary thinker Walter Benjamin put it) to illuminate our present.

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If revolution mattered in 1871, 1917, 1949 and the rest, it is because it matters now, in the particular conditions within which those struggles — defeats and victories alike, which as often as not dialectically shift their valences — have come to bear on (to pressure, to shape, to set limits upon) subsequent history. This is not shallow presentism, but rather, as Benjamin insisted, the signature of historical materialism.

Another way to put this is to say that 1917 was not complete in 1917, or 1989; our task is, in part, to understand better than the actors themselves what their actions have meant, and can mean, for the ongoing struggle for freedom. Löwy himself has always taught this lesson.

Revolutions gestures toward instruction in this regard, but its accent is on the formal problem of representing revolution — in particular, the dialectical tension between text and photographic image. Before turning to that essential question, it is worth dwelling on a preliminary matter: what, precisely, unites the ten historical events chronicled in this book?

Given the extensive and often excruciating arguments within Marxism about the question of revolution, the relation between bourgeois and proletarian revolutions (including, significantly, the controversy over the validity or applicability of the notion of "bourgeois revolution"), and the troubled sequels to these events, some rationale for the portfolio is wanted but lacking.

The watchword of this volume is Trotsky's: "the most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historical events" (*History of the Russian Revolution,* quoted on page 16). But even a devoted reader of Trotsky should notice two points that bear on this book.

First,, the masses are *always* pressuring and determining events, and this view is axiomatic to a conflictual, class-struggle based account of history. What's at stake, then, is a cleaving of Trotsky's own language, which inherits a pre-Marxist notion of "event" (the kind of episode that makes it into the history books, say) and sews it onto a Marxist narrative of socio-political upheaval.

That concern points directly to a second: namely, that Trotsky's rough-and-ready category of revolution elides the Marxist distinction between political and social revolution, and therefore seems to confuse our thinking more than help it. Are Zapata's adventures analogous to the collective effervescence of the Paris Commune? Are the political lessons of Lenin's strategic genius concretely related to the united front of the Spanish Civil War?

The history is internally contradictory, to say the least, and the book does not effectively suggest ways for the uninitiated comrade to find the way through a rather dangerous political labyrinth.

Representing History: Text and Image

What it fails to deliver in social history, *Revolutions* gives in its form of representation. This is its real achievement, and it also promises a lot for today's revolutionary readers. Above all, *Revolutions* invites scrutiny by creating challenges to its own use. It is not a book for simple reading.

Each section begins with an essay, which is followed by a chronology of events; the photographic images, with minimal captioning, arrive last. Because the essays refer, constantly and without specific citational tags, to the images, the reader is compelled to flip back and forth — and is often frustrated by a certain productive misdirection in the path from text to image. But by this point the reader has already become split into multiple modalities of engagement.

Almost everyone will begin by flipping through the pictures, skimming the essays, perhaps reviewing the chronologies of better-known episodes (and dwelling on those less familiar).

The effect is double. On the one hand both the reader and the historical materials are fractured: the reader broken down into those different functions (looking, reading, relooking, rereading, skipping and skimming), the history parceled out analytically.

On the other hand, the book encourages higher-level syntheses at every turn. Repeating the movement from text to image (and back again), the reader weaves a fresh experience of both the pressure of events and personalities (sometimes overblown, as in the rather great-man account supplied here of the Mexican Revolution), and the structural causes and consequences of revolutions overall.

Contingency is the watchword, as in Enzo Traverso's annotation of the German 1918: "All revolutions shake the totality of society powerfully: the old has disappeared, while the new has yet to take a clear form because it is still being constructed. Visions of the future diverge, conflicts grow, confrontations continue." (210)

But of course the open-endedness of this passage's language ("shake," "disappeared," "yet to take," "still being," "continue") is itself dialectically expressive of a synthetic process ("totality of society," "clear form," "constructed"). The minuscule and the magisterial, the episode and the totality, flash together into historical focus — and then recede from view, only to reemerge elsewhere.

The effect is happily disorienting: blocking rote recognition while reanimating the total history within which this revolutionary sequence can be made meaningful for us. Another way to put this is to say, paradoxically, that *Revolutions* makes us meaningful for them: for comrades past (including the ones from whom we may wish to maintain some political distance).

Sacrifice and Loss

Insofar as the reader is activated by this material, the sacrifice and horrific loss registered in these images — the "body politic" of the people here is all too often the literal corpse: several heads of young men in China in 1911, murdered for cutting their braids; piles of bodies in Cádiz in 1933; seemingly endless executions in Germany in 1919; hanged bodies in Hungary in the same year — is reanimated within a new field of possibility and potential.

Yet this is a complicated process of identification, commitment, and historical imagination. It is particularly difficult in our period. As Traverso has argued eloquently elsewhere, the disastrous 20th century effected a major transformation of the archetypical figure of history: from comrade or partisan to victim.

Against this sea-change, and within the tradition Traverso names (following a thought of Benjamin's) "left melancholy," our defeated comrades constitute the vanquished. Such a tradition sees "tragedies and lost battles of the past as a burden and a debt, which are also a promise of redemption."*

I would emend Traverso's religious language to state, in a rather more ruthlessly materialist tone, that the dead cannot be redeemed (dead is, as Eric Hobsbawm once bitterly reminded an interviewer, dead), but the living can remake the world.

Isn't that task of renovation in fact the very obligation of the revolutionary? Activation (or not) of the reader is, therefore, one measure of the book's potential for success.

In this regard, the book's enthusiasm for the revolutionary activity of the masses is elating; often the reader is swept into the streets, into the fleeting — and also patently distorted — bodily sensation of world-historical freedom. Again and again it is brief, vertiginous, extraordinary:

"It was," we are told of the Hungarian Revolution of 1919, "a real revolution — that, for the first time, allowed poor children to know the delight of swimming in Lake Balaton — and it was a real war." (170)

How are we to understand the relation between the miracle of the poor child at last swimming in the lake and the unfolding of a revolution? What kind of historical meaning can be made of the former which, far from a trivial delight, seems to be a certain

*Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, xv. In Traverso's synthetic account, the political uptake of the Holocaust, the Gulag, and the memory of slavery displaced, respectively, the memories of antifascism, revolution, and anticolonialism (11 and passim). Traverso's brand-new study, *Revolution: An Intellectual History* (London: Verso, 2021) promises a brilliant new synthesis.

Petrograd Soviet, March 1917. The working class begins to exercise its power.

fulcrum of human history in microcosm? And how does the revolution block, rather than enable, our available styles of representation, of giving form to history?

Can Revolution Be Represented?

"Revolution" is, in this regard, a dilemma rather than a political or historiographical concept, divided between the shock of embodiment and the demand for theoretical abstraction. On the one hand, the word expresses (or displaces) the flood of sheer experience, a collective shudder through which Marx's "poetry of the future" is enacted, impossibly, in the insistent present.

In this aspect, "revolution" also names the fading or disappearance of the individuated person, and the animation of the collective subject. The Big Men loom over many of the chapters in *Revolutions* not because the book is in thrall to a retrograde vision of history, but because these men were avatars of collectivity, supplying a site of identification and collective self-representation.

One awful lesson of the period 1871-1989 is that the spectacular image of that avatar all too readily usurps the place of what had been its referent. A shorthand for this obscenity is "Stalin," but saying so only falsely circumscribes the catastrophe. That, too, is a crucial inheritance for we who assume the burden and the debt of history.

If "revolution" thus careens us toward the body and its sensorium, it also, on the other hand, identifies phenomena that are the very opposite of "experience" in any of its aspects. What photograph can depict the seizure of means of production, or the expropriation of the expropriators? (After all, isn't the impossibility and undesirability of such a thing what spurred Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky toward their greatest experiments in revolutionary abstraction?)

These are not discrete events any more than the proletariat is a mere conglomeration of individual workers, and they are neither depicted nor very much discussed in *Revolutions*. The poetry of the future will not be photographed; it is not an image, but a making, and this is why it is hard to represent and why the dialectic of text and image in *Revolutions* has to work so hard to sustain itself.

Needless to say, the seizure of the means of production is not photographed — but neither is the revolutionary swimming child. Thus the reader surfaces from their immersion in *Revolutions* with an intuition: that a preliminary task for today's would-be revolutionaries, or for those of us concerned to actualize "revolution" afresh in our inhospitable situation, is to maintain the tension between experience and politics, to see the two poles as both preconditions for and solvents upon the struggle for freedom.

Deluded by the fiction of experience as the test of meaning, the revolution finds itself misrecognizing tear gas, police batons, ruthless reprisals, and year-zero manias as achievements rather than indices of weakness. Hallucinating on the strong medicine of proximity to state power, the revolution wheels into its opposite, and the barricade morphs into an abattoir.

The melodramatic quality of such oscillations is itself an artifact of the 20th century as it is given by this necessary and challenging book. Whether or not it can be made meaningful is up to us. ■

Haitian Migrants Brutalized — *continued from page 14*

then vaccinated, and relocated to communities around the country.

Army veterans who served in Afghanistan are organizing for the Afghans they worked with to be evacuated and settled in the United States, along with their families. Few Haitians and other asylum seekers and refugees are given that same pathway. Historically Black migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum have been treated worse than their non-Black counterparts.

Speaking Out

With Haiti in deep political and economic trouble, the United States and United Nations have provided little aid. Most of these Haitians left after the massive earlier 2010 earthquake, in which a quarter of a million people died.

Those now deported to Haiti have few opportunities. Many hold papers from other Latin American countries and are planning to leave. Some lived and worked in Brazil, Chile and other countries suffering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and deepening economic problems.

The immigrant rights movement is pressuring the Biden administration to follow the law and stop the deportations and police brutality at the border.

African Americans are the most outspoken. Black *Wall Street Times* editor Nehemiah Frank explained that this opinion is so strong because "Black Americans share a common bond with all Black people in the African diaspora that is composed of North and South America and the West Indies."

It is more than identity and solidarity. It 's a recognition that the type of police brutality against Black people is common — as the Black Lives Matter movement showed last year. What's happened to Haitians at the Texas border, unfortunately, is not unusual. ■

Reflections — *cont. from page 13*

country's people. So, it's clear that sanctions can punish ordinary citizens rather than a regime.

However, I don't believe there is an either/or solution to the issue of governmental power in Nicaragua. I believe we should denounce the United States whenever and wherever it interferes in the affairs of a sovereign nation at the same time as we must call out the state terrorism orchestrated by the Ortega/Murillo regime.

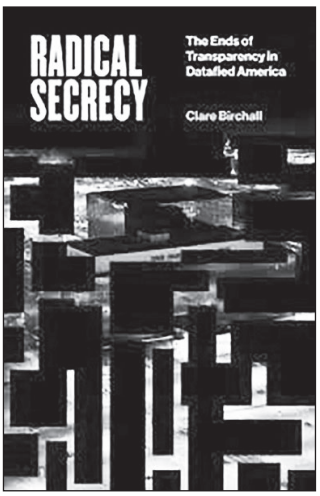
These include Ortega's extra-military thugs, the fact that all governmental branches including the judiciary are controlled by him, the murders, torture, kidnappings, imprisonment without trials or access to legal defense, the complete electoral takeover and passage of arbitrary statutes used to justify such atrocities. We need to look to the country's own civic organizations for leadership regarding how we, on the outside, may best help the Nicaraguan people achieve peace and equality. ■

REVIEW

Sharing and Surveilling

By Peter Solenberger

Radical Secrecy:
The Ends of Transparency in Datified America
By Clare Birchall
University of Minnesota Press, 2021, 244 pages, $25.00



CLARE BIRCHALL'S *RADICAL Secrecy: The Ends of Transparency in Datified America* is an interrogation of the meaning of secrecy and transparency in the digital era. The title plays with the phrase "radical transparency," promoted by liberal consultants to business, government and education.

The book examines the hidden ends of transparency under neoliberal capitalism, and proposes "radical secrecy" as a way to interrupt the uses and abuses of information by corporations and governments. It envisions a post-capitalist, post-secret future that would combine a still-necessary right to opacity with the possibility of a new politics of openness.

The book is not explicitly Marxist or even political, in the conventional sense of advocating a program and strategy for social transformation. But it rejects the unequal distribution of power underlying the covert collection of data by corporations and governments, liberal or conservative. Its logic is not just to reform surveillance capitalism and the surveillance state, but to do away with them.

Birchall's critique is radical, and her conclusions lead beyond capitalism to a world free of the inequalities, oppressions and deceptions of this one. Her journey is interesting, even if the route is not one I would choose.

Knowledge and Data Go Pop

Birchall's first book was *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip* (https://bit.ly/3khDALCY). In the preface she describes Knowledge Goes Pop as "a kind of 'self-help' book for the contemporary zeitgeist — characterized, I'd argue, by the making of decisions on the basis of knowledge that cannot be decided."

The title refers to popular knowledge but also to popping the pretense of official, "legitimate" knowledge when it proves to be untrue, incomplete, misleading or deceptive, serving unacknowledged interests and powers. When the pretense of official knowledge is popped, popular knowledge fills the void, for better or for worse.

Political action requires examining official knowledge and popular knowledge to decide what's true, false and undecidable about each. It also requires examining one's own knowledge the same way. In the Marxist tradition, "ruthless criticism of all that exists."

Birchall looks at two forms of popular knowledge, conspiracy theory and gossip. She uses case studies from the time she was writing, including conspiracy theories around the events of 9/11 and gossip about "weapons of mass destruction" used to justify the imperial war against Iraq in 2003.

Her method could be used to examine official and popular knowledge today, for example, with regard to the 2020 U.S. elections or the COVID-19 pandemic.

Official knowledge says that Joe Biden beat Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election by a popular vote of 81.3 million to 74.2 million and an Electoral College vote of 306 to 232. The Democrats and Republicans each hold 50 Senate seats, with the Republicans having outpolled the Democrats in the popular vote for Senate by 39.8 million to 38 million.

The Democrats have a 222 to 213 advantage over the Republicans in the House of Representatives, having outpolled the Republicans in the popular vote for the House by 77.5 million to 72.8 million. The Republicans hold 27 of 50 governorships, having outpolled the Democrats in the popular vote for governor by 10.7 million to 9 million.

Popular knowledge in the Republican Party says that the Republicans won the 2020 elections. Even Trump won. This seems irrational to Democrats, but the U.S. electoral system is so unstable that a shift of 25,000 votes in Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin could have swung the election to Trump.

The Republicans did far better than projected at all levels and seem likely to take back at least one house of Congress in 2022. From that standpoint the Democrats' certainty about their victory seems irrational.

Lest we get too cocky, however, those of us certain of our position outside the two-party system should also ask ourselves why independents continue to do so poorly. The election numbers can be determined, but their interpretation has an element of uncertainty, even for Marxists.

Official knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic says "Follow the science." But the science has been all over the place in the past eighteen months and continues to change.

As I write, an August 3 article in *The New York Times*, a fount of official knowledge, sympathetically described the state of popular knowledge as: "An evolving virus and 18 months of ever-changing pandemic messaging have left Americans angry, exhausted and skeptical of public health advice."

Birchall doesn't endorse conspiracy theories, gossip or other popular knowledge as preferable to official knowledge. Rather, she argues that all knowledge, official and popular, must be verified or falsified, again and again. The concluding words of her book are:

"It is in this realm of the undecidable that we have to make responsible decisions. In response, therefore, to accusations of relativism, it is not the case that there is no knowledge, or alternatively, that all knowledge is valid. (Knowledge will be posited just as meaning is communicated, and events do take place.) But it is the case that a certain restance [unknown remainder] — unique each time — will ensure that the future, even when it apparently 'arrives,' will always be yet 'to come.' This means that the question of what knowledge is will need to be asked, again and again, for we will not, and should not, always be able to recognize it."

From the list of publications on Birchall's King's College London website (https://bit.ly.3nHaiLM), she shifted the focus of her work from knowledge to data with a 2011 paper "'There's been too much secrecy in this city': The False Choice between Secrecy and Transparency in U.S. Politics" in *Cultural Politics* volume 7, issue 1.

Birchall played with the shift in the title of a 2013 lecture: "Data Goes Pop: Transparency as Neoliberal Tool" (https://bit.ly/3EuDgAj). Her publications since then deal mostly with the issues she takes up in *Radical Secrecy*.

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The book incorporates portions of some of her earlier publications, including a short book *Shareveillance: The Dangers of Openly Sharing and Covertly Collecting Data* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Troubling the Vectors

In the preface to *Radical Secrecy* Birchall explains her purpose and locates the book in place and time.

"This book troubles the vectors of secrecy and transparency to make room for more equitable distributions of power. I completed it just before the impact of Covid-19 started to reveal itself in the UK, where I live. It is now October 2020 as I write this preface, and the intervening period has made me think about the concerns of this book in new ways. In the early days of the pandemic…(t)here was a small chance that high levels of state intervention seen in otherwise capitalist democracies would survive the crisis and normalize socialist solutions and wealth redistribution. That now seems like wishful thinking." (ix)

Nearly a year later the situation is even clearer. The governments will not choose a rational and humane solution to the problems exposed by the pandemic. Neoliberal capitalism is still with us. The working class will have to impose solutions from below.

The Introduction to *Radical Secrecy*, "Transparent Times, Secret Agency, and Data Subjects," charts the journey on which the book will take the reader. The following gives a taste of Birchall's approach:

"(S)ecrecy and transparency are, in and of themselves, politics...They are gateways and barriers, forms of mediation, which determine in uneven ways (depending on various axes of social difference) what share we have in information and data. This in turn shapes our ability and agency to determine the scope of the political itself — which questions, actions, and debates are deemed properly political. More than this, secrecy and transparency, not always in ways we might expect, curtail or enable our ability to work collectively on issues we may care about…They are prime vectors of contemporary subjectivity, operating at macro and micro levels at once, across individual and collective identities." (9)

Transparency and Secrecy

Chapter 1, "The Changing Fortunes of Secrecy and Openness," traces how transparency has acquired a positive value from the Enlightenment through today, and how secrecy has acquired a negative value.

Transparency is seen as necessary for democracy, clean government, honest business, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and good mental health. Secrecy is seen as a necessary evil in some circumstances, particularly national security, business secrets, and personal privacy, but always suspect.

Chapter 2, "Information Imaginaries," describes how the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump viewed transparency and secrecy. The information imaginary of the Bush administration was shaped by 9/11, the "war on terror," the invasion of Afghanistan, and the 2003 war against Iraq. As a matter of national security the government had to protect military secrets and engage in secret surveillance of enemies and potential enemies.

"Political action requires examining official knowledge and popular knowledge to decide what's true, false and undecidable about each."

The information imaginary of the Obama administration was transparency. The government would be open about what it was doing and would share data with citizens and business through Data.gov and other open data initiatives. Government officials would be forthcoming and would honor the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Edward Snowden's revelations in 2013 and the ferocity of the Obama administration's pursuit of whistleblowers showed that the change was more rhetorical than real.

The information imaginary of the Trump administration was "post-truth." Trump could write whatever he wanted on Twitter, the government apparatus was to back him up, and official information would be released only as it served Trump's narrative. Naturally leaks multiplied, as government officials rejected Trump's Twitter transparency and self-serving official secrecy.

Chapter 3, "Opaque Openness: The Problem with/of Transparency," investigates transparency in theory and in practice. It explores the ways in which transparency can serve ends that are far from transparent — capitalist profit-making and government surveillance. Birchall lists seven questions to ask to determine whether a transparency model serves the rulers or the ruled:

"1. Does this model of transparency (mis) read social problems as information problems?

2. Does this model of transparency offer data as a proxy for accountability?

3. Is this model of transparency being mobilized in the service of desires that cannot be openly advocated?

4. Does this model of transparency facilitate a political response rather than a contribution to the flow of communicative capitalism?

5. Is this model of transparency the one that will best serve the interests of politics understood as an arena of dissensus and agonism?

6. Will this model of transparency enable the formation of subjectivities that have meaningful political agency or will it simply make inequitable structures and distributions more efficient?

7. Does this model promote an engagement with the state that collectivizes rather than individualizes human experience?"

She concludes the chapter with a discussion of WikiLeaks, suggesting that what was most radical about it was not what it revealed, but that it showed a model for transparency beyond government control.

Shareveillance and Appropriating Secrecy

Chapter 4, "Shareveillance: Open and Covert Government Data Practices," as Birchall explains in the introduction, proposes the term "shareveillance" for "the antipolitical settlement produced by covert data surveillance on the one hand and open government data transparency initiatives on the other." (12)

In 2021 this seems dated, since the settlement was characteristic of the Obama administration and not the post-truth Trump administration. It may be returning under Joe Biden, but it's too early to tell.

I was particularly intrigued by Birchall's deconstruction of the term "to share" in the digital context. On the internet people "share" their thoughts, photos, friends, likes, and dislikes with other people — and with Facebook, Google and other technology companies. As they browse and buy they "share" their interests, fears, purchases, credit and finances.

Via AirBnB, Uber, DoorDash, etc., they "share" their homes and cars. And the collectors of this information "share" it back as targeted advertising and programming.

As Snowden's revelations showed, people also involuntarily "share" with government agencies the metadata of their online activity — who they communicate with, how often, how long — and their data too, if an agency decides that the metadata suggests something of interest.

Birchall rejects this form of sharing and declares her intention to interrupt it:

"The shareveillant subject is thus rendered politically impotent from (at least) two not necessarily distinct directions. In the face of state and commercial data surveillance, the subject's choices (whether that be with whom to communicate, what to circulate, or what to buy) are compulsorily shared to contribute to an evolving algorithm to optimize advertising, say, or governmentality, to make them more efficient, targeted, precise…

"Of course, it is one thing to diagnose a condition and quite another to prescribe a remedy. If one accepts that shareveillance is a political settlement not conducive to radical equality, and that a more equitable distribution is something to strive for, how might shareveillance be interrupted?" (114)

Chapter 5, "Aesthetics of the Secret," suspends the book's attempt to transform transparency and begins an attempt to appropriate secrecy:

"I will now turn to the secret more fully. This may only be a tactical, temporary turn before a radical, meaningful, equitable form of transparency can take hold, but it is one that might allow some respite from the demands and discourses of shareveillance. Such a turn, however, is far from simple. By definition, secrets are that which resist representation and dissolve under the glare, however minimal or tentative, of revelation. Who better to seek help from, then, than artists who have long tasked themselves with representing the unrepresentable?" (119)

Birchall explores particularly the work of Trevor Pagan and Jill Magid "because of the way it so clearly invites onlookers to experience the limits of secrecy." (120) Their work plays with images of the security state, for example, an artistically indistinct nighttime image of a secret military base.

Chapter 6, "Secrets of the Left: A Right to Opacity," explores ways in which the left could use secrecy to thwart shareveillance. These include 1) clandestine or semi-clandestine organization, 2) encryption, relaying and other methods of digital secrecy, 3) demanding the right to opacity and to control one's own data and interactions with data, and 4) secrecy as commons, of which she writes:

"A politics based not on privacy but opacity would not be a permanent and wholesale rejection of or retreat from the idea and practice of sharing (data, for our concerns). Opacity in this context would only ever be desirable if it allowed space to develop, paradoxically, a community-forming openness — relationality — that is based on the principle of the commons rather than its shareveillant manifestation." (166)

Toward Postsecrecy

The Conclusion, "Toward Postsecrecy," reviews the journey on which the book has taken the reader:

"Throughout this book, I have tried to challenge the meanings and values ascribed to secrecy and transparency in order to reappraise their political potential, to think through what part they might play in a more progressive political settlement than the one offered by many (neo)liberal democracies in general and the United States in particular today. As part of this process, I reversed the current consensus that positions secrecy on the one hand as suspect and transparency on the other as progressive…

"While tactical uses of secrecy and opacity might be necessary to interrupt and challenge shareveillance, the ultimate aim is not a political and cultural setting in which secrecy reigns and transparency is discredited. Rather, the goal is an equitable settlement in which a right to opacity is respected and in which radical forms of transparency, an openness to what openness means, supersede the neoliberal incarnation we are offered today." (175-176)

Birchall is an academic and, playing with the common etymological root of to share and to shear or cut, ends her book "by summarizing what it is that academics can do to 'cut well:' deciding when, where, and how to share, and when to be guided by an ethic of openness and when to affirm a right to opacity even in the act of research and analysis." (192)

I found the book difficult in part due to its academic style, with too many end-noted references to other authors for my taste, and in part because it invokes the thought of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Rancière and other postmodern philosophers to explore matters I think better addressed by Marxism and political economy. For example, she writes:

"I will extend existing commentaries on the distributive qualities of sharing by drawing on Jacques Rancière's notion of the 'distribution of the sensible'; a settlement that determines what is visible, audible, sayable, and knowable, and what share or role we each have within it." (83)

I'd have preferred more direct language. But Birchall develops her philosophical ideas fully and is obviously sincere in her desire to share well in her research and teaching.

Yet *Radical Secrecy* skimps on specifics. How could a more equitable settlement be achieved? How could the experiments she describes be scaled up to the whole society and the whole world? What force could do this?

More locally, how could left academics, constrained by funding and bureaucracy, shape their research and teaching to make them part of a more equitable settlement?

Marxist analysis could provide an approach to answering the first questions, although not for Birchall, it seems. From references in *Radical Secrecy* and from her other writings, I think she could write a fine "handbook for interrupters" on how to restructure universities.

Not everything can be done in one book. In *Radical Secrecy* Birchall defines issues I expect she will pursue in future contributions. ■

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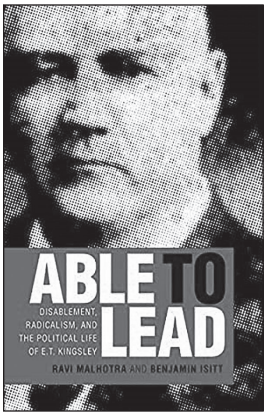
REVIEW

A Labor Warrior Enabled

By Giselle Gerolami

Able to Lead:
Disablement, Radicalism, and the Political Life of E.T. Kingsley
By Ravi Malhotra and Benjamin Isitt
University of Chicago Press, 2021,
320 pages, $34.95 paperback.



ABLE TO LEAD: Disablement, Radicalism, and the Political Life of E.T. Kingsley examines the life of a unique and remarkable radical socialist political figure and writer.

Kingsley has largely been overlooked even though he was politically active through such notable historical events as the Winnipeg General strike and the First World War. While there is a dearth of information on his personal life, his political life is fairly well documented.

The lack of scholarship on Kingsley prompted the journey of this book: a decade-long collaboration between Ravi Malhotra, a legal scholar specializing in disability rights law, and Isitt, a historian, each bringing their own expertise to the project. The book is organized chronologically, following Kingsley's life from his disablement in a railway accident in 1890, which resulted in a double amputation, through to his death in 1929.

An interdisciplinary approach is adopted where history is seen through the lens of critical disability studies. As such, the reader learns not only about Kingsley's political trajectory, but the ways in which his disablement shaped that trajectory and affected the course of his life.

Kingsley was born in 1856 in Pomfret, New York and moved frequently between New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Montana. By the time he took a job as a brakeman for the National Pacific Railroad Company in 1889 in Montana, he was married with two sons.

In 1890, at the time of his accident, brakes and couplers were manually operated, a very dangerous practice that resulted in thousands of accidents in that year alone. In Kingsley's case there was a defective drawbar and, due to darkness, he did not see the gap, fell and was run over.

Not initially expected to survive his injuries, he ended up with a double amputation. During a long convalescence, he spent his time reading Marx.

Giselle Gerolami is a member of Solidarity and has served on its Gendered Violence Commission since 2013.

He sued the railway for $85,000, a considerable sum, equivalent to $2 million today. The results of the litigation are unknown, although settlements at the time were typically small, around $5000.

The rise in industrial accidents in the late 1800s led to increased litigation although employers found that it was still cheaper to kill or maim workers than to protect them. The limitations of tort litigation would eventually lead to the workers' compensation systems we know today in North America.

The Life of a Radical

Unable to work and newly radicalized, Kingsley embarked on a political career. His personal financial situation remained tenuous for the rest of his life.

Estranged from his wife and sons, he moved to San Francisco and became involved with Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labor Party. He ran for city council in 1894 and the House of Representatives in 1896 and 1898. He also ran in San Jose in 1898.

It was during this time that his legendary oratorical skills would become known and he would be sought out as a speaker and sent on speaking tours in both the United States and later in Canada.

Kingsley was greatly influenced by De Leon's "impossibilism," rejecting the idea of reforms or "palliative measures" as detracting from the ultimate goal of workers taking power from the ruling class. Union activity was not viewed favorably — only political campaigns through propaganda were valued. Issues such as women's suffrage, immigrants' rights and indigenous rights were considered irrelevant distractions.

The authors consider the derision in existing literature towards Kingsley's impossibilism to be unwarranted. His pronouncements have been taken too literally, missing his irony, humor and sarcasm:

"What scholars have interpreted as a lack of depth in Kingsley's political analysis represents, in our opinion, a misreading of speeches and writings never intended to be taken literally, resulting in the erroneous portrayal of Kingsley as an intellectual clown of the early Canadian left — when in fact he was arguably its most serious thinker, as was widely acknowledged inside and outside the party at the time."

Kingsley was often at odds with others in the SLP who favored a more moderate approach. By 1900, he had a falling out with other SLP members over political issues and allegations of improprieties over party funds. There was an attempt to expel him, and tensions between him and De Leon.

Meanwhile Eugene Debs' Socialist Party was growing rapidly. After a speaking tour of Washington State, Kingsley joined with other ex-SLPers to form the Revolutionary Socialist League of Seattle in 1901.

In March of 1902, Kingsley was invited on a speaking tour of British Columbia by Nanaimo socialists. After coming to British Columbia, he lived there for the rest of his life, first in Nanaimo and later in Vancouver.

By 1902, several socialist formations coalesced into the Socialist Party of British Columbia. SPBC and later the Socialist Party of Canada would be Kingsley's political home through the end of the First World War.

A Clarion for Socialism

Kingsley ran a fish market in Nanaimo to support himself and his political activities in the province. In Vancouver, he ran a printing press for similar purposes. In 1903 he became managing editor of the *Western Clarion.*

Between 1903 and 1912, he was at various times editor, publisher and editorial writer there. The *Western Clarion* became the leading publication of the socialist left in British Columbia in those years.

In 1904, the SPBC broadened into the Socialist Party of Canada with affiliates in Winnipeg and Toronto. Kingsley was an organizer, gave speeches and did speaking tours including a tour of Eastern Canada in 1908.

He ran for office five times, three at the provincial level in B.C. and twice at the federal level. He was never elected, but the SPC was consistently represented by one to three members in the provincial legislature.

In 1907, some 60-plus members who were "pragmatists" split off to form the Social Democratic Party of Canada. Kingsley had a falling out with the SPC in 1914 when he took an anti-German stance and was perceived as having abandoned internationalism.

This event essentially ended his position in the party and in the *Western Clarion.* Although the SPC was already in decline at this

point, labor was on the offensive and pushing for One Big Union, and this culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.

After 1914, Kingsley had an editorial role at the *B.C. Federationist* which, in 1916, produced his sixty-page pamphlet *The Genesis and Evolution of Slavery.* He became involved with the Federated Labor Party of British Columbia (FLP) becoming first vice-president and later president.

He also played a role in the short-lived paper *Labor Star* where he published Lenin's "A Letter to American Workingmen." Socialists and the left in general at the time were greatly inspired by the Russian Revolution and many visited Russia.

There was debate about whether or not to affiliate formally with Russian communists, a question that was not only about politics but also about autonomy.

The Workers' Party of Canada, which would later be renamed the Communist Party, was formed in 1921. Division on affiliation played a big role in the demise of the SPC. While revolutionaries went to the CP, the electorally minded went to the FLP (which merged with labor parties to form the Independent Labor Party in 1926, affiliated with the Canadian Labor Party).

Living with Disablement and Repression

Although Kingsley never spoke of his disablement, it clearly affected his life choices. He always chose to live in an urban setting close to where he worked.

By 1908, he had replaced his wooden legs with more advanced prosthetics. He was able to walk with a cane and many were not aware of his disablement.

Given the stigma at the time around the issue of disability, his silence is perhaps not surprising. More surprising is his silence on safety issues. Whether or not that is related to his one-plank impossibilist approach is not clear. The *Western Clarion* did cover industrial accidents with sarcastic notes about how capitalists never seemed to get injured.

During the war, Kingsley came under scrutiny by the Canadian state. In 1914, the War Measures Act required "enemy aliens" to register and by the end of the war, 80,000 had registered — and 9,000 were interned.

Ernest Chambers was chosen to head the Office of the Chief Press Censor in 1915. While socialist propaganda was not generally censored, authorities were monitoring for anti-conscription sentiment, which resulted in *Western Clarion* being banned in 1918. In 1919, the houses and offices of socialists were raided by police.

In 1920, the newly formed Royal Canadian Mounted Police began opening files on radicals. Kingsley was file 15 and Chambers declared him to be "an out-and-out red Bolshevik Socialist of pronounced literary capacity and unquestionably one of the most dangerous men in Canada."

In 1926, Kingsley ran as an independent labor candidate in Vancouver without the backing of any party or organization. The authors assess that:

"Kingsley's low level of support in 1926 more likely reflected his diminished profile within the Vancouver electorate as well as his political isolation from the working-class parties of the day. During his previous candidacies in the United States and Canada, Kingsley was the leading figure in the Socialist Labor Party and Socialist Party of Canada; by 1926, no working-class party would identify with him. It is puzzling that [he] chose to stand for office in this context, but this is yet another mystery in his atypical political life."

After his 1926 run, he retired politically before passing away in 1929. While he appeared to have been forgotten at the time of his death, he was commemorated as a fictional character in A.M. Stephen's 1929 novel *The Gleaming Archway.*

Able to Lead paints a vivid picture of a fascinating political figure whose oratory one would have liked to have experienced first-hand. The inclusion of cartoons and fliers from that time is a nice touch.

The limitations of this book are entirely related to the lack of documented information. The authors were extremely thorough in combing through all available references to Kingsley. We are left to wonder about Kingsley's thoughts and feelings about his disablement, but that will likely never be known.

Kingsley cannot easily be pigeonholed into the categories with which we are now most familiar — he was neither a social democrat nor a communist. It is unfortunate that his brand of socialism has been overlooked for so long. ■

The Assault on Rashida Tlaib — *continued from page 15*

derail any substantive discussion. Talk about a double standard.

Outside those grotesque scenes in Congress, however, it's a pleasure to report that Rashida Tlaib has a significant support system. JVP Action, the political action arm of Jewish Voice for Peace, has issued an appeal thanking Rashida and the other "No" voters on the Iron Dome (https://act.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/a/thank-you-for-voting-no). JVP members in the Detroit area, including her home district, are stepping forward, as are other pro-Palestinian activists.

These events are taking place against a backdrop that reveals the Biden administration's policy to be as morally bankrupt and reactionary as many of us knew it would be. In an article titled "Washington's Three Gifts to Naftali Bennett," Edo Konrad of the online +972 Israeli magazine (September 26, 2021) sums it up.

In addition to the Iron Dome appropriation, Konrad cites the appointment of Thomas Nides as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel. Nides, formerly a managing director and vice-president at Morgan Stanley, is a strong supporter not only of Israeli "security," but of the so-called Abrahamic Accords which entrench Israel's alliance with the most reactionary and anti-democratic Gulf Arab oil kingdoms.

Wrapping it all in a neat package was Biden's UN General Assembly speech, making clear that Washington's support on paper for a "two-state solution" (i.e. the corpse thereof) will remain just that, with no action planned — in other words, a dead letter.

A threshold was indeed crossed in Congress: The vicious attacks on Rashida Tlaib, and even more the silent complicity of the House of Representatives "leadership," say everything we need know about their pretensions. ■

crisis of government legitimacy. They are continuations of what we called in our previous editorial (*ATC* 214) "the long J6 riot." First, the gerrymandered Texas legislature rammed through the long-delayed voter suppression bill that makes the voting process more onerous for Black and brown and poor voters and allows blatant intimidation by partisan thugs called "poll watchers" at the ballot box.

Texas Democratic legislators had fled the state to deny the governor's special session a quorum, but their intense lobbying efforts in Washington DC failed to elicit serious action from the Congressional Democratic leadership, which is consumed by the tangle over social infrastructure legislation (a topic for another discussion in itself).

Republican right-wingers were further emboldened by a white-supremacist 6-3 majority Supreme Court ruling that upheld a voter-suppression Arizona law. As the Court majority signals its intent to leave the Voting Rights Act a hollow shell, other assaults will follow. For example, the gerrymandered Michigan legislature is employing a petition drive to empower itself to enact, against popular opposition, restrictions on voting that (due to an arcane procedural rule) can't be vetoed by the governor.

Mainstream media have belatedly awakened to the scale of the menace. The editorial pages of *The New York Times* and *Washington Post,* the CNN and MSNBC commentariat, and other outlets are now consumed with "the attack on our democracy." They seem to be hoping that the Department of Justice or Congressional investigations will turn it back, while Robert Kagan places his hopes in the dwindling bands of "traditional conservatives." Lots of luck with any of those forces.

Then, just as Hurricane Ida left the eastern USA soaked and flooded, in a lightning offensive Christian-fundamentalists seized Texas, outlawed abortion and deputized their army to be vigilante bounty-hunting terrorists, an innovation that the Supreme Court majority said was too "novel" to be halted without further litigation. Consequently of course, this atrocity too is metastasizing to other states.

The Texas law is not only the most blatantly unconstitutional statute, both in its substance and its implementation, ever passed by a state legislature in modern U.S. history. More than that, it is deliberately and intentionally unconstitutional, as every single Texas legislator knows. And so does everyone from first-year law students to the Supreme Court, which is why its 5-4 ruling allowing the law to take effect was described by Justice Sotomayor as "stunning." Judicial INSANITY!

The Texas atrocity has spurred strong popular outrage, shown by pro-choice mobilizations on October 2 when tens of thousands of people rallied and marched in over 500 cities. Support networks are emerging to assist women who need to go out of state for abortion services. Other forms of defiance will develop as more and more people grasp the reality that women's rights, like African-American civil and voting rights, can be rolled back if not constantly defended.

In public opinion, abortion rights are more widely supported today than in 1973 when *Roe v. Wade* was decided. That makes the present Court ruling an even more outrageous overreach. Pending further litigation over the Texas law and its replicators in other states, it's important to note Chief Justice Roberts' vote with the minority, not because he's pro-choice but, we suspect, because Roberts may be fearing the monster he's helped to create. It might destroy the sacred legitimacy of the Court itself — as it should.

Rules? What Rules?

Challenging the legitimacy of the Court is exactly what the leadership of the Democratic Party should be saying, then overriding the filibuster on voting rights and reproductive freedom. Don't hold your breath — the neoliberal Democratic leadership plays by rules that no longer exist, which means playing to lose. In its own way, expecting a different result is also — insanity!

In the wake of all this, what then is the mounting price of insanity? In essence, what used to be rules of U.S. bourgeois politics are vanishing in the midst of escalating crises. The right wing is aggressive, emboldened and unconstrained by rationality, science, public opinion or even considerations of the longer-term health of the political system itself, let alone the survival of humanity.

We have to face the reality of our condition in a system careening out of what, until recently, was considered normality. There is no escape now from the new COVID-19 wave — thanks to the Florida and Texas governors and their fellow Republican crazies in other state houses.

The U.S. Constitution itself is hollowed out with no meaningful "equal protection under law," reproductive rights for women or voting rights that the Texas Christian-fundamentalist zealots or other state legislatures are bound to respect. You may have a right to carry a semi-automatic loaded rifle into a Texas polling place to terrorize Black and Latino voters, but not to have your school board protect your kids from unmasked and unvaccinated super-spreaders.

The coronavirus plays by its own rules, making up new ones with each mutation. Meanwhile Hurricane Ida, the California Caldor fire, and a dozen other disasters including spreading wildfires in Arctic forests from Alaska to Siberia, have shown that they don't play by old rules either. The environmental catastrophe makes up its own rules as it goes along.

That's a bit like the right wing running amok — except that the forces of nature are a lot stronger, more permanent and even deadlier.

Who will meet the challenge? We fully recognize that today's small and fractured radical left is not capable of doing so on our own. Whether the zombie-like remnant of "moderate" or establishment Republicans, or "enlightened elites" of corporate capital, will wake up to their political order's drive toward self-destruction, is an open question, and current signs are hardly encouraging.

There is, however, an important role for left and socialist activism. This isn't a moment for despair in the face of the social, political and natural emergencies confronting our society and our world, but a time to help build movements that will create their own new rules, not play by those of a dying order. The October 2 mobilizations for reproductive justice must be just a beginning. The fight not only to restore sanity but for democracy, social justice and survival must be won by insurgent movements, or not at all. ■

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