

Dianne Feeley on Bernie 2020 ♦ Martin Oppenheimer on Fascism

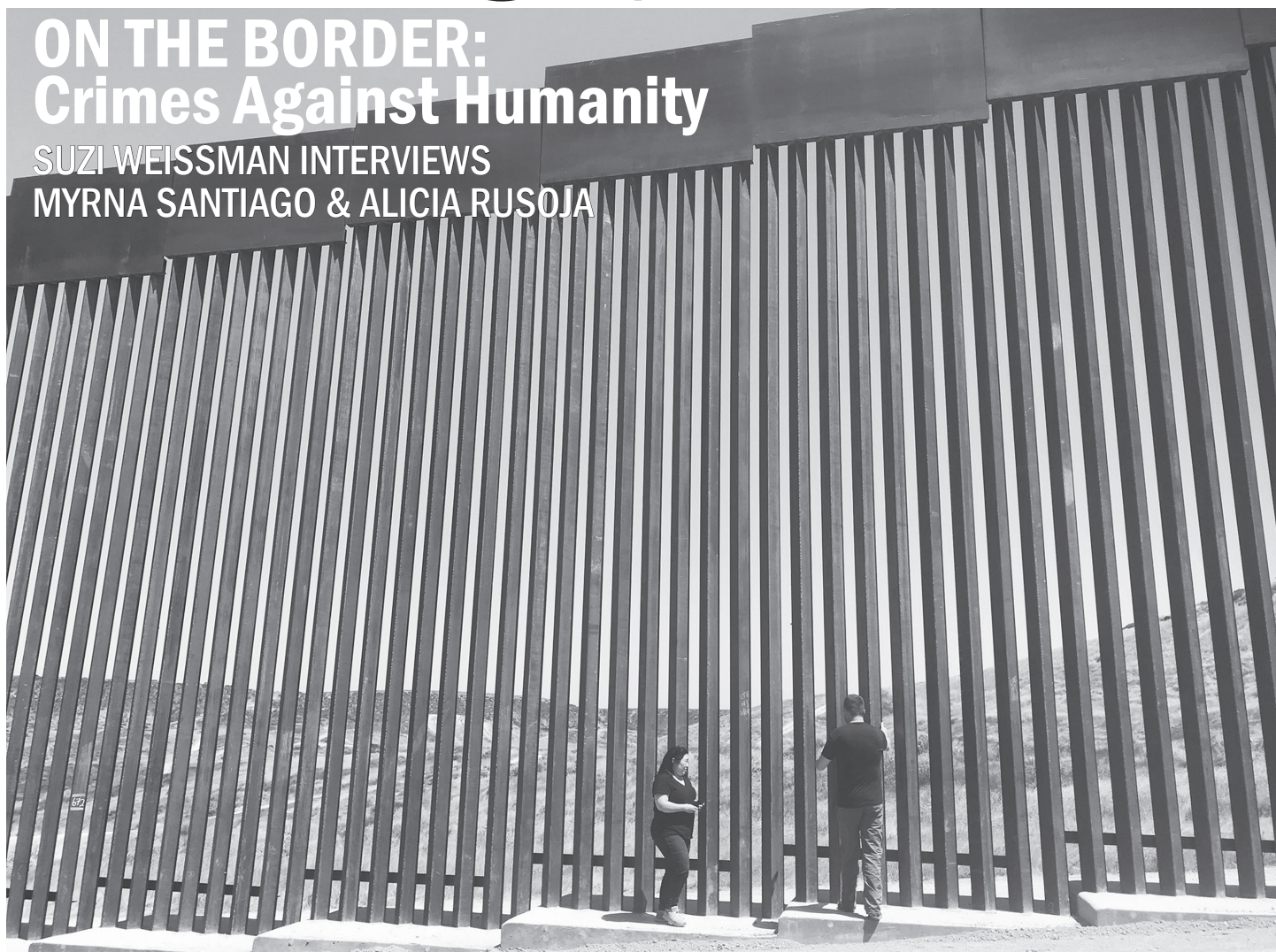
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AGAINST THE CURRENT

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL

ON THE BORDER: Crimes Against Humanity

SUZI WEISSMAN INTERVIEWS
MYRNA SANTIAGO & ALICIA RUSSOJA



Frameup & Struggle: The Central Park Five

♦ MALIK MIAH

Fifty Years of Campus Contested Terrain

♦ HOWARD BRICK

What's Behind Inequalities?

♦ KIM MOODY



A Letter from the Editors: Hope Is in the Streets

HONG KONG, SUDAN, ALGERIA, Puerto Rico — and more. These are part of a wave of democratic mobilizations challenging repressive, authoritarian systems. In a world that seems dominated by vicious reaction, these are signs of hope for a better future, even though in most cases the struggles' outcomes remain unclear, the political leadership vague at best, the internal contradictions often complex.

This isn't the place to produce a comprehensive list or detailed analysis, but rather we'll hit some of the leading examples — and discuss some features they have in common as well as their diverse qualities. (Note: We're not taking up the case of Palestine, which is discussed in depth in Bill V. Mullen's presentation in this issue.)

As this editorial is being drafted, the explosive eruption of popular anger and determination in Hong Kong is challenging the Chinese regime's intensifying assault on the rights of Hong Kong's population, which were supposed to be enshrined for 50 years following the 1997 transfer of the former British "crown colony" to Chinese sovereignty.

That Hong Kong is historically Chinese doesn't in any way negate the *legitimacy of its people's commitment to defending the rights* they were promised under the slippery formula of "one country, two systems." It's entirely predictable that the Chinese regime, fighting as it is for supremacy as a global capitalist power under Communist party dictatorship, would attribute Hong Kong's upheaval to United States manipulation — much as U.S. white supremacists called the American Civil Rights movement a product of Communist infiltration. But there's nothing about this crisis that's so hard to understand.

Contrary to the promise that Hong Kong voters would have expanded rights to elect their legislators and Chief Executive, candidates in the elections are tightly vetted by Beijing loyalist institutions, with elected representatives who refuse to recite the imposed loyalty oath to the Chinese state stripped of their office or imprisoned.

Everyone knows that the present crisis blew up when the unusually tone-deaf Chief Executive Carrie Lam, whether on Beijing's prompting or her own miscalculation, introduced a bill to allow extradition from Hong Kong to China's courts. In a context where some Hong Kong citizens have been notoriously "disappeared" to the mainland, and where the whole world knows that two or three million Chinese Uighurs are interned in "re-education" (slave-labor concentration) camps, this signaled to Hong Kong's people that here was the final choice — to revolt or roll over.

Less publicized is the fact that the pro-Beijing elites who control Hong Kong politics have also made housing and the cost of living unaffordable for much of the younger and working-class population, adding an economic dimension to the democratic political revolt.

Mass protests began as entirely peaceful and mainly middle-class mobilizations of tens, then hundreds of thousands of people. When the government made clear that it would simply ignore the popular will, angry young people began combating the police, ultimately occupying and trashing the legislative building, and attacking other symbols of power and Beijing's authority.

Militant tactics supposedly alienated part of the broader movement, but one needs to understand that for today's Hong Kong teenage youth or early twenty-somethings, the prospect is that as adults in 2047 they'll be under unmediated Chinese state rule — unless there's a mass democratic transformation in China by then — the equivalent of death. Beijing's tactics now include demanding that companies

doing business with the mainland fire employees for protest activity.

The uprising appears leaderless. We don't know much about the politics or whatever organized forces might be engaged, but their combative spirit and tactical creativity in desperate circumstances can only be admired. (For more detailed analysis see "Localism's Contradictions in Hong Kong" by Promise Li at <https://solidarity-us.org>.)

The Arab Uprising Revives

The insurgency called the "Arab Spring" has been widely dismissed for dead in the catastrophic Syrian civil war and the murderously repressive al-Sisi presidentialist dictatorship that hijacked Egypt's popular revolution. But in the past few months, when Algeria's sclerotic FLN (National Liberation Front) regime put forward the half-dead president Abdelaziz Bouteflika for a fifth(!) term, the population took to the streets and said enough was enough.

In what's called Algeria's "Smile" or "Hirak" revolution, between February and July 2019, a popular uprising that spread from the countryside, forced the army to back down and set the stage for a still uncertain political transition.

Then in Sudan, against all apparent odds, a general strike in Khartoum and major cities and ports forced out the 30-year dictator Omar el-Bashir. In a too familiar pattern, a self-appointed Transitional Military Council assumed power, promising "reforms" somewhere in the future. Meanwhile, the TMC set the militia (the "Rapid Support Forces" — formerly called the "Janjaweed" in the regime's genocidal Darfur massacres) on the civilian population with hundreds of fatalities.

The clear intent was to terrorize people into submission to whatever new order the TMC — supported by the Egyptian dictatorship and Saudi monarchy — would design. Incredibly, the population would have none of it. With trade unions and women's organizations playing leading roles, the struggle remained mobilized until the military was forced to accept a three-year "transitional government" that's supposed to result in democratic civilian rule. It's a controversial arrangement that's sharply divided the popular movement, particularly because women have been almost completely sidetracked. The Sudanese people need to remain on guard against the military's continued power. The risks are enormous.

As in the first Middle East and North African (MENA) uprisings of Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, there were multiple

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Witness to Humanitarian Disaster Talking to Those on the Border an interview

ON HER JACOBIN radio show in late July, Suzi Weissman interviewed Myrna Santiago and Alicia Rusoja, just back from the U.S.-Mexico border. Myrna Santiago is a professor teaching Latin American history and director of the Women & Gender Studies program at Saint Mary's College of California. Her research focuses on environmental history, and specifically the oil industry in Mexico. She's working on a history of the 1972 earthquake that destroyed Managua in Nicaragua.

Alicia Rusoja teaches immigrant rights and social justice at Saint Mary's. Her research focuses on the intergenerational literacy teaching and learning practices for Latino/a immigrants. This is an edited version of their discussion.

Suzi Weissman: Myrna Santiago and Alicia Rusoja are just back from a week at the border where they spent time talking to the migrants themselves, men, women and children, and also deported veterans and deported mothers of Dreamers in Tijuana. They sat in at an immigration court and talked to support groups. We're going to get their reflections. Myrna, given that you've been going back and forth now five different times in the last three years, can you tell us about the cruelty of the current policies?

Myrna Santiago: This White House has been implementing cruel policies, but they didn't start with the current occupant of the White House. President Obama still holds the title for Deporter-In-Chief. But the level of fearmongering that has been coming out of this White House — and what that has meant for migrants and for people on the border — is new.

Trump has increased the level of fear that immigrants experience — they come through treacherous terrain, they face organized crime in Mexico trying to take advantage of them, and then they don't know what will happen to them at the border or with the raids that may take place once they are in the country. It's truly unprecedented.

Migrants are coming because they realize that their options, whether in Honduras or Guatemala or El Salvador, are so much worse that they're willing to risk everything to get to the United States. When they get here, they meet a court system that is designed to make it not only humiliating but really impossible for them to get asylum.

SW: Maybe you could talk a little about U.S. foreign policy, and how it's implicated in that wave of immigration?

MS: For those who were around through all the horrible wars of the 1980s, we have to remember the role that Washington played in those wars and in maintaining a level of violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador as part of the Cold War.

In that period, the United States promoted an idea that the Cubans were coming through Nicaragua and the Sandinista government were their puppets. The Reagan administration talked about how Cuban communists would be on the border any day now, because all you had to do is come up through Mexico —

SW: And get to Hartinger, Texas — I'll never forget it.

MS: Absolutely, yes. What is happening today in many ways is a legacy of U.S. foreign policy in the 1980s. It is different for each of the three countries in the so-called Northern Triangle of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. But it is a legacy because countries that were utterly destroyed by war were left with easily available weapons of war.

In the case of El Salvador specifically, refugees had been coming to the United States for years as a result of the American government propping up a military dictatorship for 10 years. Many ended up in Los Angeles, in your backyard — and all these young kids that were coming into a hostile environment organized themselves into gangs to protect themselves in the LA neighborhoods where they lived.

When they got back to El Salvador, they found nothing for themselves. The country had been destroyed after ten years of a war that was paid for by the United States, and there were more weapons than you could ever want.

Drug organizations from Colombia to Mexico, then, found young men with good organization, willing to use these weapons to make Central America into a corridor for cocaine coming from Colombia to the United States.

And that turned the situation in El Salvador into a new kind of war — massive violence that then got exported to Honduras as the gangs got involved in

Honduras, and then to Guatemala, as they also started setting up outposts there.

It didn't get any better when Washington supported a coup in Honduras, in 2009 — in fact you got more *instability*. So that combination of factors created a situation: Where are people going to go to get away from the violence? One of the places they're going to go is the United States.

SW: Alicia, after a long trip, many of these migrants arrive in Tijuana and are told they can apply for asylum in the United States. And then, in the beginning we saw them separated from their families and detained — and others are now being forced to wait in Mexico. While you and Myrna were there a week ago, you had a chance to talk to a number of migrants, and to the staff as well at these severely underfunded shelters. What challenges do they face?

AR: We visited several shelters, some sheltered women and children, some others men and children. They were overcrowded. Some staff members were even taking people into their own homes because there was nowhere to go. Migrants were living in uncertainty.

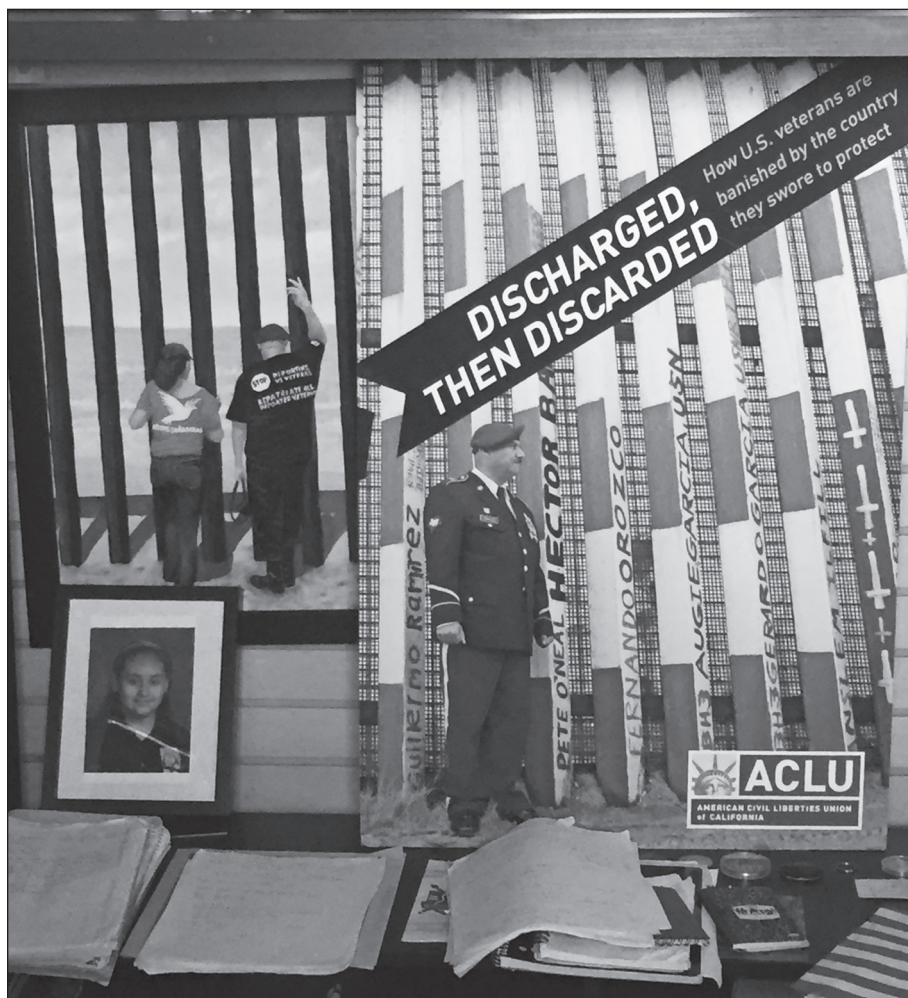
There was no clear pathway that they could follow to cross the border legally. They were living in underfunded conditions. The children were not able to go to school or receive any kind of educational support because they were in limbo.

The process for being seen by a judge was unclear. There were a lot of rumors and misinformation. The new system of "metering" contributes to this confusion.

Migrants have to put their names on a piece of paper that used to be managed by migrants themselves, but then the Mexican government began to manage it. This is an unofficial process — it's not like you go talk to immigration and they put your name on their list. No, you put it on a piece of paper, so a lot of abuse has been happening. We heard migrants are often asked to pay between \$700 and \$1000 to have their names moved up because the waits are so long.

Some people we met said "my number will come up maybe in October, or March next year." They're waiting too long. They're getting desperate, because, like Myrna said, they're running for their lives.

During this period, they're not able



One of the shelters displays information about those who have been deported to Mexico: the left side shows a woman (with wings on her t-shirt) looking across the border, where her children live; the right side has the image of a U.S. soldier who was subsequently deported, along with names of other veterans who served and were later deported.

Myrna Santiago

to work, they're not able to go to school — and they're willing to do anything to get their names moved up. That creates a dangerous situation with the potential for abuse.

SW: Before that, presumably they would have been held in detention centers on the U.S. side of the border, and in terrible conditions. But being forced to wait in Mexico and the corruption on the part of Mexican officials and others there, that are taking advantage of it — is this sort of like an unintended consequence of what Trump forced on Mexico?

AR: Well, I think Trump's policy is purposeful. Trump and the U.S. government have been trying to make it so physically and emotionally impossible for people to cross that they will self-deport. Even if their court date comes, they'll say "Fine, just send me back." But that's impossible if people fear for their lives. We saw this in court — people say "I cannot go back."

There was a time when people could just come, make their case, and wait for the decision in their case to go through the courts while they were with their family

members, wherever their family members were in the United States. But the whole idea of detaining people, basically putting them in prison while they wait for their cases, is a more recent practice.

And it's absolutely terrible. We know that part of why Trump is separating family members is because it is illegal for the government to hold children more than twenty days. And so they say, okay fine, we'll just separate them. We can put the kids in foster care, or send them off to a family they don't know, and further traumatize them, while we can keep their parents in prison.

Private prisons are making money off this humanitarian disaster. The people who are benefitting, who are on the board of these private prisons, are some of the people who actually designed the anti-immigrant law. So it's a pretty corrupt situation; it's very upsetting.

SW: Are either of you surprised that Trump was able to force this on AMLO — Andres Manuel Lopez-Obrador — in Mexico, whom people heralded as an exception to the far-right populists elected elsewhere? What kind of a compromise

has it been, do you know?

AR: The Lopez-Obrador government is defunding humanitarian shelters and sending the Mexican military to enforce immigration laws. When we were there, we spoke with community activists. So there were shelters and organizations that were providing services, and there were also organizations that were mobilizing and supporting the migrants in more political ways.

What we learned is that actually, the Mexican military has been hanging out on the border, in Tijuana by the border wall, and checking people's papers. They were asking anyone for their ID, to try to find people who are not Mexican citizens.

We heard from one organization that the military was actually trying to enter the shelter, saying "we want to enter just to see the conditions." Actually, they wanted to go in to ask for migrants' IDs and deport them. And that's a really dangerous thing.

SW: Is it any better on the Mexican side, waiting in shelters and being subjected to the corruption of bad actors?

MS: I suppose you would have to ask the migrants themselves. Probably the views would be all over the place. If you stay in Mexico — although most people have Mexican visas, because the Mexican government has been giving migrants visas that last 90 days while they figure out what their conditions are going to be — you're waiting for your number to come up.

The other option is to cross the border and have the Border Patrol pick you up. Even though they will put you in detention, maybe your case will be heard earlier than if you had to wait. Those are the kinds of choices that migrants have to make, that they have been making.

There are a number of categories of people who continue to be deported and whom we shouldn't forget.

I spoke to a woman who belongs to an organization known as the Dreamers' Moms. She is one of many women whose children are U.S. citizens; her kids are living here, but she has been deported to Mexico. Another group is veterans. These are American servicemen who are not U.S. citizens or who are undocumented.

Dreamers' Moms is conducting workshops for children in shelters in Tijuana. They're organizing art projects. The day that we were visiting, one mom told us about how they just held a workshop using puppets so that the kids could express themselves, to show how they're feeling and what's going on in their lives.

They have been developing a program to prepare children who are going to be separated from their parents when and if they cross the border. They want to be sure it will not come as a shock to the children when all of a sudden their parents go in one



The wall between the United States and Mexico at La Liberatad seems similar to walls that Israel has constructed in the West Bank.

Myrna Santiago

direction, and then they go in another.

SW: How are the immigration courts function?

AR: We had the opportunity to sit for many, many hours watching different cases. One that we observed was of a trans woman. When her case came up — like many other people that day — she did not have a lawyer. She was told by the judge, “it’s your fault you don’t have a lawyer. We gave you time to find a lawyer and so you’re going to have to represent yourself because you were irresponsible and didn’t find a lawyer.”

This woman said, “Well I tried everything, but every time I write my name down on this list” — again this issue of lists. There’s a list that someone runs within the detention center that is supposed to provide the migrants with support in filling out the paperwork and connecting them with *pro bono* lawyers.

But what we heard repeatedly, including in this case, is that the person writes their name down but is unable to find anyone to represent her before the judge.

Clearly this woman was having a really hard time. The judge kept saying to her, “You do not understand my questions, your answers are too long.” The judge stopped the hearing, walked away, and then came back about 10 minutes later.

While the hearing was in recess, the woman turned to others there, saying “I was just assaulted inside the detention center. My breasts are all purple. I’m completely beat up. I’ve gone twice to the hospital; I’m not being protected. All that happened

was that they moved me from one place to another, but I really want to press charges against the people who have been beating me.” She also noted that she was not able to take her psychiatric medication while in detention and had not been provided with any mental health support.

When the judge came back in the woman tried to explain, “The reasons why I’m having trouble with the questions and answers is because I’m in the middle of going through a really serious crisis. I was just beat up, I need support and protection.”

The judge just shut her down. When the detainee finally was able to say, “I was assaulted, please hear me out,” the judge responded, “I have no jurisdiction over this private detention center. If you have any issues or have been hurt in any way, you need to put in a report.”

The detainee said “I did put in a report, and it still has gone unheard. I need your help.” The judge said, “Again, I have no jurisdiction. All I can do is have you fill out a form saying that you’re running away from assault, especially because you’re trans. We can hear your case about the things that happened to you back in Nicaragua. But we’re not going to hear what’s happening to you right now.”

It was horrific to see this woman in an incredible amount of physical and emotional pain and being told no, we’re not going to hear it; shut up and that’s it.

These are the kind of conditions that people are living in. They’re running for their

lives, and then they’re being put in cages and being treated like animals.

SW: Myrna, I’m going to give you the last word. We’ve been listening to this byzantine, horrendous legal violence. What are your hopes for any different outcome, and what do you suggest that ordinary people should be doing to prevent this from happening?

MS: I think we need to denounce it — in every way shape or form, in every forum that is possible, in every conversation, in every classroom and workplace, any way that we can; to say that this is not acceptable.

This is not how you treat human beings who are in distress. And there are many reasons why they’re going to keep coming. Climate change is a big driver of migration, and the failure of monocrop agriculture is another.

We cannot allow this cruelty to be normalized. We have to continue the protests, writing op-ed articles or letters to the editor, writing to your congressperson, writing to the White House, continuing pressure to say that this is not normal, this is not acceptable, and that this has to stop. There’s no question about it. We have to take it all the way to the 2020 election and beyond. ■

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Talking Socialism in the 2020 Primaries: What Sanders' Campaign Opens

By Dianne Feeley

BERNIE SANDERS' CAMPAIGN of four years ago put socialism on the U.S. political agenda for the first time in generations. He's on the trail again, explaining what a "democratic socialist" vision means, beginning with building mass movements and supporting unions and union organizing.

Bernie distinguishes his vision from others running in the Democratic primary in several ways. First, *Sanders doesn't accept corporate funding.* Bernie has built a funding model based on small donations and continues to build that base. No one thought that could be done until he did it!

Second, *he organizes independently of the Democratic party's political machine* and welcomes the support of other independent organizations such as Labor for Bernie and DSA's committees.

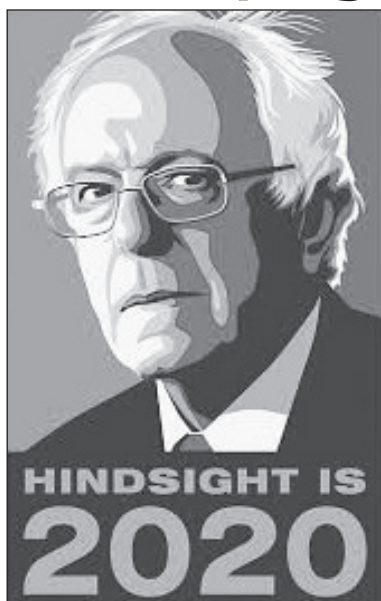
Third, *he outlines a platform focused on the needs of working people*, who have suffered from a growing inequality over the last quarter century. Unlike other politicians who endlessly identify "the middle class" as their audience, Bernie talks about the needs and desires of working-class people.

His campaign champions a \$15 an hour minimum wage and the right to belong to a union. In fact, he joins picket lines and encourages his supporters to do so.

His platform for racial justice outlines a comprehensive program to end discrimination in housing, education, health care, employment, an end to police violence and voter disenfranchisement. He calls for comprehensive immigration reform, dismantling deportation programs and detention centers, expansion of DACA and a path to citizenship. When asked what is the greatest problem facing the world, he says right up front: climate change.

Fourth, unlike any other candidate running, *Bernie has a history as a movement activist* since his college days when he was

Dianne Feeley is a retired auto worker active in Labor for Bernie in Detroit. This article is a personal viewpoint. Against the Current will present a spectrum of perspectives on the elections in our coming issues.



a member of the Young People's Socialist League. This enables us to have more confidence that he speaks with greater conviction that those who live their lives as politicians.

Fifth, he does not claim he will represent the interests of working people, rather

he maintains that without independent political organization, it is impossible to implement such the program he outlines. In a recent talk he pointed to the example of the Puerto Rican people in forcing the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló as the kind of action necessary to defeat Wall Street.

The Capitalist Party Straitjacket

Frankly, I come from the socialist tradition that identifies both the Democratic and Republican parties as controlled by different sections of the corporate elite. We have worked to build independent political parties, particularly the Labor Party founded in the 1990s, but also socialist campaigns and the Green Party.

I don't think either of the two "major" capitalist parties, even the Democratic party (which is seen as more open to initiating change), can be transformed into a tool controlled by those who vote for it. The party's funding and structures are controlled by corporate power.

But given the lock the two-party system maintains under a winner-take-all system, an independent third-party formation has been unable to gain a mass audience in the United States.

It's a century-old problem, underpinned by undemocratic election laws. These have

been reinforced by the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United vs. FEC*, allowing unlimited amounts from disclosed donors to be spent on elections as well as extensive use of gerrymandering made more precise with new technology. Clearly a break from the two-party system isn't imminent.

Sanders, who has run as an independent for years but stayed aloof from building a party, developed a strategy of running on the Democratic primary party ballot line while refusing corporate funding and remaining fairly independent of party structures. Since Vermont doesn't record party registration, Sanders is technically an Independent who receives the Democratic nomination. This novel tactic has attracted support from people committed to social change — but although useful in the short term, its potential is questionable.

While some folks were disappointed that in 2016 Bernie kept his pledge to support the Democratic Party candidate who won the primary, in fact he did what he promised to do. I don't think he would have been allowed to run in the Democratic primary if he hadn't. That's the compromise he made.

Bernie's Campaign This Time

Some thought that for his second run Bernie would move to the "center," but interestingly enough he is staking out a fuller social democratic program. His highlighting the need for an economic bill of rights has opened up an important discussion.

He's pointing out that political democracy without economic democracy doesn't offer much more than the possible right to vote. While that right is important, particularly for those who have been disenfranchised, by itself it doesn't offer much security in one's life or for one's family.

What Bernie's campaign does, particularly for the socialist left, is to *provide us with a larger platform on which to outline our own socialist vision of society.* He points to the reality of a battle between working people and the corporations. He supports and defends the unions and programs (starting with Medicare for all) that decommodify what people need for their lives.

That vision gives power to some of his smaller proposals. For example, Bernie and

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Making the Master Race Great Again By Steven Carr

THROUGH MUCH OF July, Donald Trump and his supporters have targeted four progressive congresswomen of color — Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, and Massachusetts Rep. Ayanna Pressley — with repeated calls to “send them back” to the “totally broken and crime infested places from which they came.”

As a U.S. citizen, I believe someone who so dislikes both democratic governance and being president to *all* Americans should be the person who needs to go.

Or, as presidential candidate Kamala Harris put it, he “needs to go back from where he came from and leave that office.” But as director of the only academic center in Indiana devoted exclusively to the study of the Holocaust and genocide, I view such statements — and the Republican Party’s desultory response to them — with alarm.

How Does It Begin?

State-sponsored persecution, targeting, and eventual genocide inevitably all rest upon mounds of careless, impromptu, and what at the time appeared as harmless remarks that preceded action.

Forcible relocation and deportation of Jews in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia began in September 1941. Yet Adolf Hitler’s authorization for such measures did not take these countries by surprise, suddenly springing full-formed from the forehead of Nazi ideology.

Rather, these dramatic measures came about as a result of smaller and incremental previous measures and statements. They gradually justified dehumanizing friends, neighbors and even family members who had, until the Nazis came to power, lived peacefully alongside other community members as full-fledged citizens.

The preceding incremental measures and pronouncements almost always bear a larger worldview, shaped through its own haphazard accumulations of the incrementally odious. Well before 1941, the German Reichstag unanimously passed the Nuremberg Race Laws in September 1935.

Steven Carr is director of the Institute for Holocaust & Genocide Studies at Purdue University Fort Wayne, Indiana.



The master race on display.

These laws effectively stripped German citizens of their citizenship on the basis of racial ideology. They prohibited German Jews, who less than 10 years earlier were full-fledged citizens, from marrying or having sexual relations with other Germans. They defined as Jewish or “mongrel” anyone who had one out of four Jewish grandparents. Even if someone had converted to Christianity but had two Jewish grandparents, the German state still targeted that person as Jew and alien.

The noxious analogue to Trump’s comments comes not from the Nuremberg Race Laws, but from the language that both preceded and enabled this legislation. The 1920 Nazi Party platform made “German blood” a requirement for citizenship.

Jews who previously held citizenship, along with other “non-citizens,” would live in Germany only as foreigners. Attendees at later Nazi rallies regularly chanted “Jews Out!” A German toy manufacturer even capitalized on its popularity, selling a Monopoly-like board game under the German title “Juden Raus.”

Trump and his supporters have not yet called for stripping American citizens of their citizenship because they dare to criticize his presidency, which some see as a metonym for the homeland. But that should provide little comfort to those concerned

with what the Israeli journalist Amira Hass called the “master race ideology” permeating this administration.

As Hass noted in 2005 with regard to the Palestinian Occupied Territories, this ideology divides “the world into superior and inferior races” and denies “the principle of equality among human beings.”¹ While Hass called upon modern Israeli society to reject the perpetuation of this ideology amid its treatment of Palestinians, the explanatory power of this ideology applies equally well to other circumstances and times.

One only has to consider the current treatment of immigrants and refugees worldwide, many of whom are women and children. At the U.S. southern border, Border Patrol agents have separated children from their parents, put boys and girls into cages, and denied even toddlers held in detention basic sanitary conditions and necessities.

While some have deplored overly simplistic comparisons between detention facilities and concentration camps, let us not overlook a larger point. Nazis have no corner on master race master narratives, which appear to be alive and well today.

While comparisons between past and present always run the risk of trivializing important historical distinctions, the refusal to make any historical comparison also runs the risk of tone-deaf hypocrisy.

True, no one has carted off Omar, Ocasio-Cortez, Tlaib, or Pressley to Dachau-like detention centers because of their political beliefs. But then, how else could one justify letting children sit in their own feces and at the same time call upon anyone of color who dares to criticize such policies to go back to where they came from?

The master race ideology is alive and well in 2019 — ready to spring forward at a moment's notice — capable of deeming even a child as subhuman Other.

As I was writing this essay, the deadliest mass shooting in the United States for 2019 took place in El Paso, Texas. On Saturday, August 3, police took Patrick Wood Crusius into custody. Wood, a 21-year-old white male, killed 22 people and injured 24 others at a Walmart store.

Many of the victims were either Mexican or Mexican-American. Shortly before the shootings took place, a white nationalist manifesto attributed to Crusius appeared on 8chan, a now defunct message board many considered a haven for white supremacism.

While predictable debates have ensued over whether the manifesto took its cue from Trump's anti-immigrant vitriol, the manifesto reveals some fundamental things about how master race master narratives work.

First, those who draw from its ideolog-

ical well end up making remarkably consistent utterances across both time and space that reinforce and bolster the same message. Without any conscious coordination of this messaging, even if eventual actions to come out of this speech radically diverge, the utterers need not ever meet or strategize to keep playing on Team White Nationalist.

Deranged mass murderer or President of the United States: who made the following statements? "The Democrat party will own America and they know it. They have already begun the transition by pandering heavily to the Hispanic voting bloc in the 1st Democratic Debate. They intend to use open borders, free healthcare for illegals, citizenship and more to enact a political coup by importing and then legalizing millions of new voters."

Or this: "Democrats are the problem. They don't care about crime and want illegal immigrants, no matter how bad they may be, to pour into and infest our Country [sic], like MS-13. They can't win on their terrible policies, so they view them as potential voters!" The first comes from the manifesto attributed to Crusius. The second comes from a tweet Trump issued in June 2018.²

Both of these passages also reveal a second remarkably consistent and powerful attribute of the master race ideology. Its adherents almost always never see them-

selves as the masters. Rather, master race ideologies work to seize the high ground of the aggrieved and long-suffering victim.

The master race is both precarious and contingent, its manifest destiny just out of reach. It almost always is beset by invasion and infestation, the pandering and scheming of powerful elites, and ungrateful non-white *arrivistes* who now have the audacity to badmouth the beleaguered homeland whose generosity once took them or their parents in.

Such auto-victimization of the master race ideology is never complete, since the existential threats to its order always lurk just beyond the border, and its struggle to restore what is owed requires eternal and incessant vigilance.

Dehumanizing Their Target

While current iterations of master race ideology do not inevitably lead to future holocausts and genocide, genocides occurring since the Nazi Holocaust inevitably have drawn from master race ideologies. Such ideologies are not coy. They almost always speak first in less and less measured tongues of dehumanization.

Extremist Hutu media repeatedly referred to ethnic Tutsis as cockroaches in the months leading up to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The Khmer Rouge spoke of their political opponents as cancer and infections before murdering one million Cambodian citizens between 1975 and 1979.³

And in Burma, national leaders have repeatedly denied citizenship to ethnic Rohingya Muslims. Even though the vast majority have lived in Burma for generations, the government claims they originate from Bangladesh and therefore have no legitimate claim to citizenship in Myanmar, the military dictatorship's name for Burma.

According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, an estimated 700,000 have fled to Bangladesh since August 2017 where they live in overcrowded detention camps, uprooted from their homeland and stripped of their citizenship. In December 2018, the Museum found "compelling evidence that genocide had been committed against the Rohingya."⁴

Trump and his apologists have of course doubled down upon invocations of their master race ideology, also known as Make America Great Again, trying to shift attention to the alleged antisemitism of Omar and others. There are legitimate differences of opinion concerning what constitutes antisemitism or legitimate criticism of Israel, or how the American Jewish community figures within foreign policy toward Israel.

However, if what you want is to confront antisemitism, then even tolerating a master race ideology is a morally bereft way to do so. There are better ways to confront, rather than dehumanize, elected representatives who also happen to be women of color.

If the problem truly is about using an antisemitic trope, then exchanging that for a racist one doesn't merely tolerate master race ideology. The exchange makes it great again. ■

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Thirty Years Later: The Central Park Five Frameup

By Malik Miah

When They See Us

four-part mini-series

created, co-written and directed by Ava DuVernay,
premiered on Netflix, May 31, 2019.

WHEN THEY SEE US is a powerful film by Ava DuVernay (director of *Selma* and *13th*). It brilliantly dramatizes outrageous events that began 30 years ago in New York City.

The miniseries was hard to watch because the frameup victims' suffering and humanity, and the disrespect and manipulation by the police and prosecutor, were vividly shown. This was not just a reflection of "normal" racism in New York City at the time but structural racial injustice that is common across the country.

DuVernay's dramatization of the frameup made sure the viewer was not simply seeing an injustice in a clinical manner, as many documentaries tend to do.

The Rape and Frameup

On April 19, 1989 a white woman jogger (then 28) was brutally raped in Central Park. Her name, Trisha Melli, was not revealed until she wrote a memoir (*I am the Central Park Jogger*) in 2003. She never remembered anything about her attack.

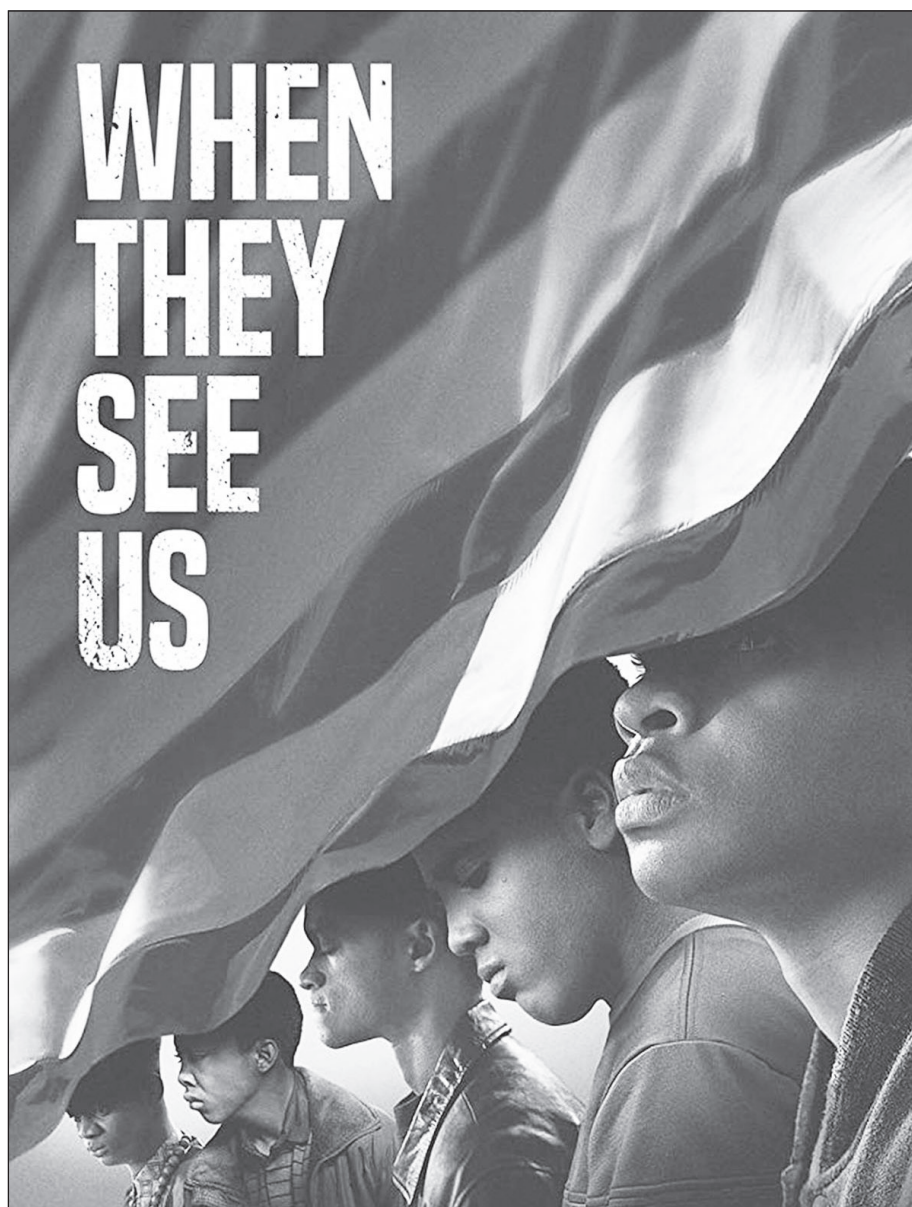
The city was on edge as 911 calls came in reporting that some 30-40 teenagers were roaming Central Park harassing people — white, Black and Latino. The cops started a roundup of Black and Latino youth. The body of the unconscious white jogger was found much later.

The five (initially six) became known as the "Central Park Five." The teenagers — Kevin Richardson, Antron McCray, Yusef Salaam, Korey Wise, and Raymond Santana — were dragged into the police station and interrogated without their parents or legal counsel.

"This is about the criminal justice system," DuVernay told *Democracy Now!* "Each part of the series, or the four-part film, as I call it, is designed to take you deeper and deeper, to make you further acquainted with different aspects of the system as it stands today."

The film effectively depicts how the

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Public hysteria, whipped up by politicians and the media, criminalized Black and Brown youth. *When They See Us* dramatizes the pain and suffering the Central Park Five endured, but also how they supported each other despite the frameup.

cops and prosecutor framed the Black and Brown teenagers from working-class families. The intimidation and fear are intense. The description of these five youths could have been that of minority teenagers from Oakland, Houston or Cleveland.

New York was and is a city run by the

Democratic party establishment, including then mayor Ed Koch, who began his career with a crusading liberal image, then reinvented himself as a law-and-order hawk.

As is typical of cops everywhere, the youth were pressured to admit to crimes they did not commit. Only those who think

the cops and prosecutors are “public servants” and don’t lie could believe otherwise.

The film shows the police and prosecutor did not look for others. They had the “criminals,” even though they knew of a serial assaulter in the area. DNA was excluded that would have shown that the five did not rape or assault the jogger.

Public hysteria was whipped up by the politicians and media who demanded quick arrests and prosecution. Not surprisingly, four were prosecuted as juveniles and received 5-15 years (serving seven years). Korse, who was 16 years old, was tried as an adult and sentenced to 15 years at the notorious Rikers Island prison, serving 13 years.

The Truth Comes Out

The actual rapist was a serial assaulter, Matias Reyes. He was a convicted murderer and confessed in 2001 after the state’s statute of limitations for sexual crimes had expired. His DNA matched the evidence collected in 1989.

In 2002 the New York County District Attorney vacated the charges and convictions of the Central Park Five. The next year the exonerated victims, now adults, sued the city of New York for malicious prosecution.

The city refused to settle the civil suit for a decade, believing it could win. The new mayor, Bill de Blasio, settled the case in 2014 for \$41 million. The Five also sued New York State and settled for \$3.9 million in 2016.

Linda Fairstein, the prosecutor who was chief of the sex crimes unit of Manhattan’s District Attorney’s office — and became famous as the role model of the long running television show “Law and Order Special Victims Unit” — wrote of the series in an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* (June 10) that the film was “so full of distortions and falsehoods as to be an outright fabrication.”

Further, “DuVernay’s miniseries wrongly portrays them as totally innocent — and defames me in the process.” She continued:

“Mr. Reyes’s confession, DNA match and claim that he acted alone required that the rape charges against the five be vacated. I agreed with that decision, and still do. But the other charges, for crimes against other victims, should not have been vacated. Nothing Mr. Reyes said exonerated these five of those attacks. And there was certainly more than enough evidence to support those convictions of first-degree assault, robbery, riot and other charges.”

That was Fairstein’s aim: blame the Five for every crime committed in Central Park that night. In her and the cops’ view, “these are bad people.”

Fairstein came under intense pressure after the Netflix series was streamed. Her mystery book publisher dropped her, and

protests forced Fairstein to resign from the board of trustees at Vassar College and a philanthropic organization.

Donald Trump, then a real estate developer, paid \$85,000 for full-page ads in four newspapers calling for their executions even before they were tried.

When the actual person responsible for the rape eventually confessed, Trump never apologized. Instead he attacked the city for reaching a financial settlement. He said, after the series was shown, that they are not innocent, echoing Fairstein.

Black and Brown Lives Don’t Matter

The four Black and one Latino youth were seen the same way by the cops, Fairstein, Trump and most conservatives, and more than a few liberals. Every little error in a Black or Brown person’s life is amplified to justify arrest, conviction and death.

The same smear campaign continues today. Trump, for example, always goes after people of color (like the four minority Congresswomen — Reps. Ilhan Omar (MN), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY), Ayanna Pressley (MA) and Rashida Tlaib (MI) — whom he calls “un-American”).

The “other” is a frequent target of bigots. After the white supremacist terror attacks in Gilroy, California, and El Paso, Texas (a city more than 85% Latino), the language of the terrorist was straight out of the white nationalists playbook echoed by Donald Trump. Ironically enough, both states were carved from Mexican territory.

The Texas shooter drove 600 miles from Dallas to carry out his killings against Hispanic so-called “invaders.”

The brutal truth in this system is that Black and Brown lives don’t matter. Brown people are an “infestation” and not human. Black people are killed, then demonized to justify their death.

Eric Garner was choked to death on Staten Island in 2014 by New York City cop Daniel Pantaleo, who never was convicted. After five years on a desk job, he was fired only this August! The only person sent to prison was the Black man who videoed the murder.

Garner’s life as a Black man did not matter. On the street selling “loosie” single cigarettes illegally, he was considered less than human. Sandra Bland was stopped for not putting on her turn signal, then died under suspicious circumstances in the Walker County, Texas jail because she didn’t make bail.

The Key Lesson

The central lesson from the 30 year-long battle of the Central Park Five is that only maximum fightback by the people can bring some justice. The role of supportive lawyers like the Innocence Project and progressive

Public Defenders is also important.

Many hundreds of other detained people still rot in Rikers Island because they can’t afford bonds. The bail system puts the poor and minority people behind bars. Few are ever convicted of alleged crimes.

The fact that the rich can hire expensive lawyers shows the hypocrisy and double standards of criminal justice.

When They See Us is so powerful because of DuVernay’s profound direction and writing. The viewer sees the brutality of the system from the ground up and then the impact on the five in prison. It shows how strong and determined they were and are. Today most of them continue the fight for prison reform.

Previously, in 2012, the acclaimed director Ken Burns along with Sarah Burns and David McMahon released a documentary, *Central Park Five* (shown on PBS). It included interviews with the Five telling how they felt and reacted to their arrest.

A key point the documentary revealed is that the cops were ready to release them — until the homicide division decided with the prosecutor, after the raped jogger was found, to charge them without firm evidence.

While the Burns’ documentary did a good job of showing the frameup, it is less powerful than DuVernay’s film because it does not focus on the cruelty of the prosecutors and police toward these youth.

Fairstein, for instance, continued her crime-book writing career and serving on boards. There was no backlash after the Burns documentary that exposed the prosecution and cops’ role in the false charges.

The public’s heroes became those who were responsible for the frameups. The brutally raped jogger, an investment banker who could not remember what happened, became a tool of the prosecution.

The documentary did a good job of following the Central Park Five victims in jail, on parole, and eventually when the actual rapist confesses.

When They See Us gives the side of the frameup victims and of Black and Brown everyday people, who suffer racism that few whites experience or understand. DuVernay made the important point when she said her film is really about the structural racism that permeates American society. The white nationalist presidency of Donald Trump proves her point.

The dramatization and documentary should be seen together. Both need to be shown in high schools and colleges to stimulate discussion about racism as it exists. ■

(For those interested in what the Five are doing today, there are interesting summaries in the *New York Times* (May 30, 2019) and *Good Housekeeping* (June 27, 2019).

Algerian Feminism Organizes: Before the Revolution

Margaux Wartelle interviews Wissem Zizi

ON MARCH 8th, during the third act of the Algerian uprising, Wissem Zizi and her comrades unfurled a huge banner: "Abrogation du code de la famille" ("Repeal the Family Code") — a message applauded by some, though not well understood by everyone.¹ "We've still got work to do," sighed the founder of the Collectif libre et indépendant des femmes de Béjaïa (Bijayah), in Smaller Kabylia.

At 25 years old, Wissem Zizi is a militant with the Parti socialiste des travailleurs (PST; a Trotskyist organization) and participates in the Collectif des Femmes d'Aokas, in her parents' village, 30 kilometers from Béjaïa. This interview, conducted by Margaux Wartelle, appeared in the July-August issue of the Marseille-based CQFD, which describes itself as a monthly journal of critique and social experimentation. The interview has been edited by ATC.

Margaux Wartelle: You've just taken part in two days of national meetings organized by women's collectives. What came out of it?

Wissem Zizi: The meeting was held on the border of Bijayah's wilayah [an administrative region, in this case Kabylia]. There were 17 collectives, from across the country, the majority of which were created after March 8, 2019. There were, of course, women from Algiers, Oran and Constantine.

New collectives from the south — Ouargla, Ghardaïa, Tamanrasset — were meant to come, but it wasn't possible, due to logistical issues. This is a pity, since the women of the south have for a long time remained invisible, and these collectives embody a real change.

The idea was, above all, to meet, to make links. We tried to identify our points of agreement, but it was complicated, since it was rather a mixed bag [there were women of the right, of the left, different generations, women who are militants in France, LGBT collectives who work underground].

When we say we want an egalitarian society, we all need to agree. Some don't want to dissociate religion from the state, for example, and not everyone speaks about



"Equality, equality between brothers and sisters" reads the lead banner in the March 8 demonstration.

the precarity of women.

MW: And what did you achieve?

WZ: This time, the militants of the left won a little (laughs).

We have managed to write a shared declaration, which will serve as a basis for a future manifesto. Seventeen collectives have signed, and three want to join us. The struggle against precarious work and the repealing of the Family Code are included in the declaration.

MW: How do you see the evolution of the movement of contestation on the question of women's rights?

WZ: From February 22nd women have gone out to the streets. Since the March 8th actions there have been specifically feminist demands. Every Friday in Algiers women organize our own bloc within the demonstration, with our own slogans. We have, however, been attacked.

On television, some people say that feminism has never existed in Algeria, that women are manipulated by outside sources, that we want to break with tradition. As if feminists weren't really Algerians!

There have even been rape threats. Fortunately, things quietened, particularly because all the collectives have united against these forms of violence.

MW: Have the political parties grasped these questions?

WZ: Some seized on them, but not necessarily in the right way. For instance, a new

collective that was created, *La société civile*, which includes especially people from *Front des forces socialistes* (FFS), the *Rassemblement actions jeunesse* (RAJ), but also some Islamists. These are very different people, who might start a meeting with a prayer, then refuse to do a minute of silence for Kamel Eddine Fekhar, a militant who died from a hunger strike,² although the RAJ held a rally in tribute to him.

On the question of women, they say "Yes" to equality, but with all their internal contradictions, I don't quite see what that is about. There is nothing concrete.

More generally, amongst parties that claim to be democrats, everyone calls for a revolution first, thinking that it's only after that the question of equality between men and women will arise.

We say: "We have to organize right now!" Now that the elections are cancelled, if there's a National Conference or a Constituent Assembly, we want women to affirm our issues. Above all we want to be represented — and not by men.³

MW: What does your feminist struggle mean?

WZ: When we talk about an egalitarian society, we need to know what we are talking about. Legally, there is equal pay; however, men hold the most important positions. Here, the right to abortion does not exist, and the mere fact of speaking about it exposes us to prison.

After that, of course, there is the question of the woman's position in a capitalist system: she suffers precariousness and discrimination in domestic work, which is unpaid. I have a Marxist perspective, far from the more bourgeois positions that exist here, too.

For example, concerning the debate on inheritance: I am obviously for greater equality between men and women, but it is not an end in itself — inheritance concerns relatively few people in Algeria. Concerning the question of the Family Code, or violence, laws must be changed, but so must mentalities.

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Jewish Voice for Peace

Palestine and the Left: The Imperative for Action

By Bill V. Mullen

WELCOME, COMRADES. AT the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) 2017 National Convention, delegates voted to endorse the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement for Palestinian rights.

BDS, as it is commonly known, is an international human-rights-based campaign calling for the return of stolen Arab lands, refugees' right of return to their homeland (specified under United Nations Resolution 194), for equal rights for Arab Palestinians living in Israel and the Occupied Territories, and the removal of the Apartheid Wall that runs across the West Bank.

The BDS vote represented a significant step forward for DSA in its support for Palestinian human rights. It also represented a significant step forward for the growing socialist movement in the United States.

Since the 2017 vote, Palestinian politics have further entered the political mainstream, with the elections of Michigan representative Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian-American woman elected to Congress; Representative Ilhan Omar from Minnesota, a vocal advocate for Palestinian rights; and Democratic Socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from New York, who has said that reduction of U.S. aid to Israel should be "on the table" for Congress.

At the same time, U.S. support for Israel has deepened as a means of maintain-

ing state stranglehold on regional power. President Donald Trump's move of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has emboldened Israel and its supporters to dismiss past and present Palestinian claims to indigenous homeland.

Jared Kushner, meanwhile, has offered a \$50 billion real estate package to the Palestinians, an offer Palestinian novelist Susan Abulhawa has compared to North American colonists' gifting of smallpox-laden blankets to American Indians.

Meanwhile in Palestine itself, a moribund Palestinian Authority continues to lose power and authority, ceding its dormant will to popular resistance, like the recent Great Return March, which concluded with thousands of Palestinians marching from Gaza to the Israeli border, nearly 100 murdered in cold blood by the Israeli military.

The massacres have brought fresh attention both to the ruthless nature of Israel's settler-colonial state, and the indomitable will of Palestinians to resist, resist, resist.

Contested Hegemony

Clear from this opening sketch is that what might be called the popular "hegemony" on Palestine is up for grabs. Even a stalwart Zionist mouthpiece like *The New York Times* has had to admit into its pages writers like Michelle Alexander who have used their op-ed voice to advocate for Palestinian rights. ("Time to Break the Silence on Palestine," January 19, 2019)

Yet what must be said about this moment of contested hegemony is this: it exists BECAUSE of the long work the international Left, the Palestinian Left, and the U.S. Left have done to create it.

Indeed, recent events like the rise and success of the BDS movement are tribute to the historical fact that the international

Left has ALWAYS been the strongest critics of Zionism, most stalwart advocates for Palestinian national self-determination, and general proponents of the Palestinian cause.

From the Black Panther Party of the 1960s, to the Black for Palestine Movement of 2015 (www.blackforpalestine.com), the Left project, broadly imagined, and the project for Palestinian self-determination have been co-constitutive.

In this context, I want to offer something like a 10-point program for how the U.S. Left, broadly conceived, might use its organizational and political capacities in this moment to advance Palestinian freedom, as well as its own role and influence in U.S. politics.

There are two mutually constituting goals of this presentation. One is to open discussion about specific tactics and strategies that have been used, or yet might be used, to build stronger Left support for the Palestinian freedom struggle.

The second, equally important, is to preserve, define and differentiate the role and responsibility of the Left from what might be called a liberal approach to the question of Palestine. Indeed, one of my arguments is that a creative, imaginative and politically principled approach to Palestine is critical to the continued definition, and success, of Socialism as a project in the United States, as well a key source for articulating a Socialist politics from below.

An Alternative to Liberalism

1) Palestine provides an important opportunity to break liberals from the Democratic Party and win them to Socialism. If we look at the Socialist renaissance in the United States, we can see how clearly it conforms to the rise of Palestinian human right politics. The first Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chap-

Bill V. Mullen presented this talk at the Socialism2019 conference in Chicago this July. A professor of English and American Studies at Purdue University, his most recent book is James Baldwin: Living in Fire (Pluto Press, 2019). He is a member of the Organizing Collective for the United States Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel and is currently a member of DSA. The author retains full right to this text including its republication in its present or expanded form.

ters in the United States were formed in the early 2000s; there are now more than 250 nationally, which include many self-described Socialists.

The International Socialist Organization, the largest revolutionary socialist group in the U.S. until its collapse earlier this year, was in the period of the early 2000s the strongest advocate on the Left for Palestinian self-determination, publishing important articles in both its newspaper, *Socialist Worker*, and in books like the 2002 Haymarket books title *The Struggle for Palestine*.

After the 2005 BDS call from Palestinian Civil Society, college-age activists especially began to include support for BDS in their repertoire of radical activism. Many of those people are those “under 30s” who now say in polls both that more support should be given to Palestinian self-determination and less to Israel’s Occupation, and who prefer socialism to capitalism.

This is no accident. Along with an education in Palestinian self-emancipation has come for this new socialist generation exceptionally critical insight into the dark marriage of the Democratic and Republican parties in providing aid, and political support, to Israel.

Bernie Sanders’ 2016 Presidential campaign began, tentatively, to open a window in the Democratic Party for a critical perspective on Palestine, for example, in his appointment of Cornel West to the Democratic National Committee platform committee. But he has not gone anywhere near far enough to differentiate himself from the Democratic Party on Palestine.

Sanders has not yet endorsed BDS, has repeatedly voted for U.S. military aid to Israel, and continues to insist he is “100 percent pro-Israel” even while offering tepid criticism of Israeli state violence.

Socialists must offer a clear alternative to both Sanders and the Democratic Party on Palestine. That alternative should include a demand for an end for all U.S. aid to Israel, unequivocal support for the BDS movement, the complete decolonization of historic Palestine, and a requirement that any candidates running for public office reject any funding from pro-Zionist groups like AIPAC.

Platforms like these will draw people out of the orbit especially of the Democratic Party. Interestingly, it is shades of these positions that candidates like Ilhan Omar (who supports BDS) and AOC (who has said aid to Israel should be “on the table”) have begun to endorse, all the more reason for the Left to differentiate its stances while



House demolition in the West Bank.

Citizen.co.za

pulling voters (and non-voters) further in our direction. If we wait for the Democratic Party to lead us out of the Occupation, we will wait forever, and Palestinians will continue to die.

2) *Palestine offers a critical building block for a Left analysis of U.S. imperialism.* Liberal analysis of Palestine repeatedly occludes the centrality of U.S. support for Israel as a “watchdog” in the Middle East and its wider status as a western imperial hegemon. In this context, it is critically important that the Left approach the question of Palestine via historical analysis of Israel’s formation as a proxy for western interests.

This includes U.S. military, economic and political aid since 1947, especially in the wake of the “Six-Day War” of 1967; Israel’s own military history of imperialism (the 1956 Suez invasion, support for South African apartheid); and finally, Israel’s occupation as placeholder for U.S. oil and strategic interests.

Indeed, any renaissance of a robust anti-imperialist politics in the United States can only be led by a strong Left that makes explicit how the liberation of Palestine would be a major blow against 70 years of post-World War II western empire. This is certainly the framework Leftists have available for study in the histories of the First and Second Intifadas, and the work of Palestinian Marxist groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Popular education classes using Palestinian writing on anti-imperialism — see for example the work of Gassan Kanafani (e.g. at Marxists.org, report on 1936-1939 popular revolt) — would also help bolster the Left’s capacity to articulate a forceful anti-imperialism with Palestine at the center.

Such an analysis would also help differentiate the Socialist Left from the Democratic Party, which continues to administer the

world’s largest military empire in its role as history’s second most enthusiastic capitalist party.

Against War and Building Solidarity

3) *Palestine is crucial to building a newer, stronger antiwar movement.* U.S. threats against Iran, Israel’s primary official enemy today outside of Palestinians themselves, must be linked by the Left to the monstrous pro-war machine which underpins the U.S.-Israel political alliance. U.S.-Israel’s heavily financed suppression of Palestinians provides weight and ballast for military-style attacks by states on internal Muslim populations (see China and the Uighurs) as well as for aggressive state violence, like the Saudi bombing of Yemen.

Then, too, there is Israel’s own Dr. Strangelove status as a nuclear power; the fifth largest military in the world occupying stolen land and oppressed people, all while functioning as one of the largest manufacturers and distributord of military weapons in the world (both the United States and Israel are in the top ten in this category).

As I speak, Israel is dropping bombs within Syria. Israel’s last two wars against Gaza in 2008-09 and 2013 claimed more than 3300 Palestinians lives, most of them civilians, more than 700 of them children. Israel also encouraged the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Indeed, Israel’s heavily militarized state has become a model for new ethnonationalist regimes armed to the teeth — like Modi’s India — which in 2017 was the largest purchaser of arms from Israel.

A new antiwar movement can be built, must be built, by the Left, but should be articulated in part in relationship to the planetary military muscle exercised both in the name of Israel’s international standing and its domestic war against Palestinians.

4) *Palestine offers a chance to form new broad Left solidarities with native, indigenous groups.* In mid-September 201, the Palestinian Youth Movement, a self-described transnational, independent grassroots movement, sent a delegation of Palestinian young people to North Dakota to participate in Standing Rock protests. In a statement about the decision, PYM wrote:

“We found that it was necessary to show support and true joint-struggle solidarity in this time of native resilience. As indigenous people, we know what it is like to face settler colonialism, genocide, displacement, relocation, and environmental destruction to our own homeland. In addition, violence against both Native people and the environment is something that

affects us all; water is a source of life, we all depend on water for our survival. Therefore, we must continue to stand together with our Indigenous siblings in the fight against corporate greed and the settler colonial state. This matter affects us all, after all, water is life.”

PYM’s allusion to indigenous land and water rights implicitly referenced the seizure and dispossession of Palestinian land by Israel, and the siphoning of precious irrigation waters by construction projects like the Apartheid Wall. Red Nation, a U.S.-based indigenous collective, has repeatedly pronounced support for the BDS movement against Israel, and at its 2018 Native Liberation Conference featured a large banner commemorating the Nakba (the 1947-49 Palestinian catastrophe).

The Left’s support for indigenous land rights, water rights, and right to self-determination is essential. Indigenous self-determination movements like Red Nation are also an essential, critical part of the building of a broad U.S. Left. Palestinian liberation demands an inclusive, pro-indigenous, anti-colonial movement that respects and centers native lives, from the U.S.-Mexico border to the apartheid wall.

Such a politics can also lead to an anti-apartheid socialist-ecology of Israel’s occupation, underscoring that the most imperiled indigenous occupied place on earth today is Gaza, which because of restricted clean water access, according to the United Nations, will be potentially uninhabitable by next year.

5) *Palestine can build and rebuild coalition with Black Lives Matter.* If the health of Black radicalism is an index to the health of the broader U.S. Left, as my comrade Shaun Harkin once convinced me, then Black-Palestinian solidarity might be considered its own index. At least twice in the post 1967-period, immediately after the Six Day War, and after the 2014 invasion of Gaza and occupation of Ferguson, Missouri in the wake of Michael Brown’s shooting, Black-Palestinian solidarity emerged as a critical theme for Left organizing and orientation.

In the first instance it was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Black Panther Party that called for joint solidarity with Palestinian self-determination movements as part of a wider Third World coalition-building.

After the Ferguson uprising of 2014, attended by Palestinian activists and watched by others from home, more than 1000 leading African-American activists and intellectuals signed their names to “Black for Palestine,” a scathing statement of solidarity co-authored by Kristian Davis Bailey (now employed at Palestine Legal here in Chicago) and Khoury Peterson-Smith, a long-time Palestine solidarity activist.

Support for the BBD Movement against soon, in turn, became part of the Movement for Black Lives Platform. We must not underestimate the importance of this solidarity to the Left. For example, the synergy of Black and Palestinian activism in 2015 informed the resolution brought to the DSA in 2017 to support BDS, the resolution itself citing the DSA’s endorsement of the Movement for Black Lives Matter platform and BDS’s own status as an “inclusive, anti-racist” movement as arguments for endorsement.

DSA itself is an example of an organization which can and should continue to concentrate efforts on advancing understanding of Black-Palestine solidarity through workshops, reading groups and public advocacy.

Gender and Ecology Struggles

6) *A healthy socialist Left must stand against Israeli pinkwashing.* The term pinkwashing, denoting what scholar Jasbir Puar called in 2010 Israel’s “Gay Propaganda War,” refers to Israel’s efforts to promote itself as the “only” gay-friendly state in an Arab Middle East atavistically opposed to queer modernity. Israel’s “war” fronts have included hosting the 2006 “World Pride” and sponsoring “Out in Israel” events in the United States.

Israeli pinkwashing provides the Left an opportunity to support a queer politics of liberation as part of Palestinian national self-determination struggle. Again it is significant, and not accidental, to note the triangulated growth in the United States of queer, Palestinian and socialist politics especially since the second intifada.

Where the LGBTQ movement has gone Left it has gone to Palestine — see Sarah Schulman’s book *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*, or read trans Communist activist Leslie Feinberg’s writing on the subject. The Left also has a responsibility to speak truth about the actual conditions of gay and lesbian life in occupied Palestine to dispel western discourse both homophobic and Islamophobic.

Same-sex acts were decriminalized in the Jordanian-controlled West Bank in the 1950s and remain so today. The criminalization of homosexuality in Gaza, often pointed to by western and Israel sources to demonize ‘backward’ Arab states, derives from the British Mandate Criminal Code Ordinance, No. 74 set in 1936 during British colonial rule. The Palestinian Authority has not legislated either for or against homosexuality.

The task for the Left is to set out a pro-queer anti-apartheid politics that links the decolonization of Palestine to a wider imperative for gay modernization and human rights. Neither is possible under Israel’s settler-colonial occupation.

7) *Palestine is a key to understanding revolution and counterrevolution in the Middle East.*

It is possible to understand the Arab Spring of 2011 as a regional intifada. In each of the main revolutionary countries — Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt — support for Palestinian liberation was a concurrent political demand within broader claims for expansion of democratic rights.

Similarly, the crushing of the Egyptian revolution in particular brought a thunderous retrenchment, near impossibility of public political criticism of Israel — Netanyahu and Egyptian presidentialist-dictator Al-Sisi are not only allies but authoritarians of the same feather) or support for Palestinian autonomy.

This Gordian knot is important for the Left to understand, explicate and untangle. Palestinians among populations across the Middle East have arguably paid one of the heaviest costs for the collapse of Arab nationalism and rise of authoritarian regimes, including Assad in Syria. Stateless, and largely without international representation, every repression of democratic uprising in the Middle East is a setback for the possibility of Palestinian self-determination.

This explains the avid entanglements of the U.S., Saudi Egyptian and Israeli states as “brokers” of power in the region. Arguments for the return of revolutionary democracy in the Middle East — as witnessed by recent widespread protests in Algeria, Tunisia and Sudan — should be articulated by the Left as efforts to undo the entire 20th century history that created Mandate Palestine, Israel, and U.S. wars in the region from the Persian Gulf to Iraq.

Put another way, Palestine remains a symbol and totem of another historical possibility for the outcome of popular democratic struggles itself unrealizable without the end of U.S.-backed Israeli settler colonial rule.

Palestine and International Socialism

8) *Next to the fight against environmental catastrophe, the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment Sanctions Movement is the most important and significant global social movement of our time.* The Left must be front and center in the movement.

Since 2013 in the United States alone, there have been more than 250 successful BDS initiatives. Internationally, BDS victory has taken the form of successful campaigns against the security behemoth G4S, support for BDS from the African National Congress, the National Union of Teachers in the U.K., the union of students in Ireland, and the Ontario division of Canada’s largest teachers’ unions.

There are two arenas where the Socialist Left can and should attempt to help lead BDS work. The first is university campuses. Since 2013, dozens of campus government bodies have voted for their university

administrations to divest from corporations complicit in the Israeli occupation and military.

Campus BDS movements now often align queer, African-American, Latinx, Muslim, indigeneous and Jewish radicals in alliance. Palestine has become for today's college generation what the Vietnam War was to a 1960s generation, a platform for explaining and protesting U.S. imperialism and defending national liberation struggles. A first step for Socialists looking to organize on campus is to join or help form an SJP chapter.

The second arena is the workplace. During the South African anti-apartheid movement which provided the model for the Palestinian BDS movement, the role of trade unions (especially COSATU, the Coalition of South African Trade Unions) was paramount. We need a full-throated campaign led by the Left to bring BDS politics into every trade union contract discussion, every union campaign for social justice, every fight for workers internationalism.

One important potential site for this organizing is teacher unions. As noted above, teachers' unions internationally have helped lead workplace support for BDS. The General Union of Palestinian Teachers is one of the original signatories to the 2004 call for BDS from Palestinian civil society. We need to imagine the next American teachers' strike as flying a BDS flag.

The U.N.-protected right to education for Palestinians should be placed beside the right of U.S. students, in much the way the Black Lives Matter movement set violent policing and racial profiling as common targets for Black-Palestinian solidarity. Teacher union campaigns for BDS can also lead to the necessary next step of developing Palestinian-centered curricula and lesson-plans for K-12 education.

9) *Palestine is a gateway to a Socialist campaign for abolishing borders.* Donald Trump famously modeled his dystopic border wall on the Apartheid Wall in Israel.

Israel's hypersecurity state, its enclosure of Palestinians in Gaza's open-air prison, and its vanguard experiments in policing and surveillance have made it a global model and touchstone for efforts in the United States and Europe especially to segregate, quarantine, refuse to admit and to deport Muslim and other dissident populations: see the Gaza-like concentration camps now operating along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Israel's obsession with border-protection, boundaries and impenetrability has indeed become a template for a variety of ethnonationalist states rapidly throwing up barbed wire, and other border fences formerly unmarked, to deter arrival of new migrants and immigrants. According to *USA Today*, since the start of Europe's migrant "crisis" in 2015 at least 800 miles of fence have

PROTECT PALESTINIAN CHILDREN JAILED BY ISRAELI MILITARY

SUPPORT H.R. 2407



HR2407 is called the "No Way to Treat a Child" bill to cut off U.S. funding that subsidizes imprisonment of Palestinian children.

been erected by Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia and Slovenia. (*USA Today*, May 24, 2018)

In this respect, the diaspora of five million Palestinians into the world after the Nakba and creation of Israel, the swollen plight of Palestinian refugees in camps both within and outside the 1948 borders, are tragic anticipations of the massive exodus of Syrian, North African, Central American and other Middle East refugees displaced by western imperialism, violence and neoliberalism.

10) *Palestine and Israel's Occupation can help us explain and fight the new far right.* After his election in Brazil, neo-fascist Jair Bolsonaro was quick to praise Israel and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Hungary's Viktor Orban has deemed Israel a true friend, and neo-fascist Rodrigo Duterte was the first Philippines Prime Minister ever to visit Israel after his election. In each instance, Israel's ethnonationalist state received sanction for what Dave Renton has called "new authoritarian" forms of government.

At the grassroots level, where fascism is also trying to make a comeback, support for Israel's repressive regime often conjoins antisemitic Christian Zionism to Islamophobia. Neo-Nazi white nationalist and antisemite Richard Spencer openly praised Israel's 2018 "nation-state" law declaring Israel a Jewish state and its Arab inhabitants second-class citizens. Israel, Spencer noted, was "showing a path forward for Europeans."

Spencer has also pointed to Israel's ethnonationalist state as the model for a state he would like to build, a fascist state. The Left has abundant responsibility in this moment to lead the fight against fascism by both denouncing antisemitism and supporting Palestinian liberation, while calling for the dismantling of Israeli apartheid.

In other words critiques of Israel's ethnonationalist Occupation must be one part

of our explanatory framework for denouncing the sweep of far-right movements across the world, including in the U.S. Or, as Ali Abunimah of *Electronic Intifada* puts it, if you are for the fight against fascism you cannot ignore the battle for justice in Palestine.

Fredric Jameson once quipped that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Israel's capitalist settler-colonial regime in Palestine is an argument to imagine the end of both. As Adam Hanieh has documented, Israel's Occupation is a paragon of neoliberal extraction, heavily financed by European, U.S. and Gulf capital.

Effects of Israel's capitalization and monetization of the Occupation, especially since the 1993 Oslo accord, include increased exploitation of itinerant migrant labor (especially from South Asia); increased precarity and unemployment for Palestinian workers; and ramped up discipline against part-time Palestinian laborers who must cross through a heavy security apparatus in order to work.

Occupation neoliberalism has indeed become another model for hypercapitalist development tethered to massive exploitation of internal populations (see China, Brazil, India et al.) It is for this reason that the Socialist Left must point to the Arab working classes of the Middle East as a critical lever for change.

To return to the Arab Spring, worker protests against bread prices and austerity in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt then, and Algeria, Tunisia and Sudan now, carry with them the hopes of a Palestinian working class that's now being choked to death by capitalist and colonial Occupation. Our call for a workers' international to resist capitalism must include the often forgotten toilers of Palestine.

Left solidarity with the end of capitalist settler-colonialism in Palestine is a critical link in our fight for working-class emancipation everywhere. To repeat an old saying, as relevant to Palestine as anywhere else, an injury to one is an injury to all. ■

The Crisis of British Politics

Suzi Weissman interviews Daniel Finn

SUZI WEISSMAN INTERVIEWED Daniel Finn, deputy editor of New Left Review for Jacobin Radio last July. Finn has written for the London Review of Books as well as Jacobin. His book, One Man's Terrorist: A Political History of the IRA, will be published by Verso Books this November.

Suzi Weissman: On July 10 the British Ambassador to the United States, Kim Darroch, resigned after his secret diplomatic cable messages about Donald Trump were leaked to a British tabloid and Trump reacted with intense criticism. The immediate cause for his resignation was that apparently Boris Johnson, then the far-right leading candidate to be prime minister, made clear that he had to step down. Can you explain Johnson's motivation?

Daniel Finn: It was quite a revealing moment because this wasn't the first time that people from the permanent government, if you like, in Britain — senior civil servants, ambassadors, diplomats and others in charge of managing the state on a day-to-day basis — have been openly at odds with the leadership of the Conservative party.

The Brexit crisis really brought that to a head. A number of people who have recently retired from top levels of the civil service, and therefore have the freedom to speak more freely in public, are trashing Theresa May and trashing Boris Johnson. A former head of MI6 — the foreign intelligence service in Britain — came out openly and said that the leading candidates for the Conservative party leadership don't have the requisite skills.

So it's not surprising that you would see people from the Foreign Office and the diplomatic corps taking a similar line. The majority of people who aren't infatuated with Boris Johnson see him as a political lightweight and an opportunist.

He is an intelligent man who's put on a sort of persona of being a bumbling, clumsy souse, but that's an act. He is highly educated, but in terms of basic political skill and conviction, has been consistently self-serving. His handling of the Brexit crisis illustrates that perfectly.

In the spring of 2016 Johnson almost flipped a coin to decide which position he would take in the Brexit referendum campaign. He wrote two columns for the *Daily Telegraph*: one arguing the case for remaining

in the European Union, and one arguing the case for leaving. He decided which would be more advantageous for his political career, which would help him ascend to the leadership of the Conservative party, and decided to go for Leave.

After the Leave vote in the Brexit referendum surprisingly won, he was appointed foreign minister by incoming Prime Minister Theresa May. That was to ensure he would bear some responsibility for the Brexit negotiations. But his handling of the post was utterly flippant. Britain didn't have a lot of goodwill from the other European states going into the talks process, but they squandered whatever good will they had through the actions of people like Johnson.

So this act of sacking the Ambassador Darroch is in that vein. Trump, at the moment, is about the only political ally whom Johnson can count on. After all Johnson has antagonized people in Europe and various other parts of the world.

Johnson and Trump are political bedfellows in many ways: they share a common rightwing and racist outlook. Of course they have a different political style, but the basic prejudices and the style of trolling people are quite similar.

There's another similarity between the two. Johnson got his leg up in politics from World Live Entertainment. For Trump, it was being on "The Apprentice." Johnson was a panelist on various topical comedy shows. He was built up as a lovable rogue: the Tory who could crack jokes. And he leveraged that to launch a campaign to become mayor of London. But while mayor he did very little of substance, good, bad or indifferent. He used that post as a launch pad for his career in national politics.

So he's spent his whole time going around finding good opportunities — posing in a Hi-Viz jacket at the opening of some building or other, cultivating friendships with bankers, property owners and people who could fund his political ambitions at a later stage — before he went into politics. At every stage, Johnson has been seen as a bit of a joke, which has led people to underestimate him.

Having played a crucial role in one of the seminal political events in Britain since 1945, Johnson also was pivotal in making a mess

of the negotiation process following the Brexit referendum. So now, when we have already passed the deadline, Johnson is the one entrusted by the membership of the Conservative party to manage the final step.

The deadline was meant to be several months ago, but having negotiated a deal, Theresa May couldn't get her deal through the House of Commons. She went back to German Prime Minister Angela Merkel and French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron and the other representatives of the European Union and asked for an extension. So now the deadline is the 31st of October.

As one of the senior EU negotiators said at the time: don't waste this time, we're giving you a few extra months. Use it profitably, use it productively.

What's happened since then? It's been April, May, June, and all that's happened is that Theresa May tried to get her deal through again and again. It failed, she resigned, and then the charade of a Tory leadership contest, where the people who are making this decision are a tiny, tiny fraction of the British population. And these are the people who have some extremely rightwing and racist views.

It's a remarkable imbalance! Over the last few years there's been talk about so-called leftwing extremists joining the British Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. There's been all kinds of stories, lurid stories, holding them under the microscope, and presenting them as some kind of sinister threat to British democracy. Meanwhile the Tory membership is composed of people who are completely out of step with the majority British opinion.

Opinion polls reveal that the Tory membership holds profoundly rightist views. They see Muslims and Islam as a threat to the British way of life, whatever that might be. They have all kinds of reactionary opinions on social, economic and cultural issues. And they're gravitating towards Johnson because he shares those views, or at least he's willing to pander to people who share those views.

There's also a sense among the Tories that he's their greatest political asset. They think he's the guy who can work a bit of populist magic: he's got the gift of gab, he's got charisma, and he's got media gravitas so he can dig them out of their hole.



Readying the Boris blimp for a demonstration against his sleaze. Like Trump, Boris Johnson's racism is a defining characteristic.

Now, there's good reason to think a lot of the shine has been rubbed off of Johnson in the last few years, compared with when he was mayor of London. Then he had good personal relations for a politician, because he really hadn't done anything at a national level that would antagonize people or make them think ill of him in any particular way.

But since then Johnson's gone into national politics and done things that polarize public opinion. His reputation has been tarnished. The skill set that you need to be the prime minister, especially in a moment of crisis like this, requires a bit of savvy, a bit of political analysis, the ability to build coalitions and win people over. He's demonstrated very little of that in his career to date.

SW: How does Jeremy Corbyn's quest for an electoral victory for Labour fit into this picture? How do the politics of Brexit affect Corbyn and Labour's chances?

DF: It's a very difficult issue for Corbyn to navigate because Brexit splits the Labour Party's electoral base, going back to the last two general elections: in 2015, the year before the Brexit referendum, and in 2017, the year afterward. In both Labour's electoral base split roughly 2-to-1 between people who voted Remain and people who voted

Leave.

While the greater number of Labour voters support Remain, and would prefer to stay in the EU, in 2015 Leave got 30% of their vote and within two years that increased to 40%. If you antagonize people at either end of the spectrum it's going to be difficult for the Labour Party to win an election. That's one factor behind their policy and Brexit.

There is also a wider consideration: What is the most desirable outcome from this process? Labour did campaign for a Remain vote back in 2016. Corbyn campaigned on the slogan "Remain and Reform." The idea was that the EU is deeply flawed. He was very critical of many aspects of the EU, in particular over the recent treatment of Greece, but felt it was better to stay in the EU and try to change it. At the least, leaving under the leadership of people like Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Nigel Farage wasn't likely to advance any progressive cause.

That was the argument that Corbyn and other Labour politicians made — but it wasn't successful. The Remain camp, as a whole, was unsuccessful.

The passage of the referendum created

a completely different political context. It wasn't a credible or democratic position to turn around and say "we should ignore the result." People did say, in defiance of political reality, "Oh, this referendum wasn't legally binding, it was just advisory." Strictly speaking that is true; the British constitution doesn't have any place for referendums. In theory the House of Commons could have said the day after the referendum, "Oh, that didn't work out the way we were planning, let's just forget about it."

But that was never going to happen. All the major parties, with the exception of the SNP, had agreed to hold this referendum, and agreed that the result would be binding. They didn't require any special conditions like a supermajority or a quorum. So it wasn't a credible position for the Labour party, after June 2016, to say we're going to ignore this.

The position that Corbyn developed — and which was agreed by others in the party who weren't his ideological co-thinkers by any means — is that we accept the referendum results. However we will not give a blank check to Theresa May and the Conservatives. It doesn't mean that they have the freedom to negotiate any kind of

Brexit deal they want. We're going to hold their feet to the fire; we're going to insist that we don't want a Brexit deal which results in a deep economic recession.

We don't want the opportunity for a bonfire on social rights, which is what some of the more rightwing Tory Brexiters were openly calling for. We don't want it to be used as an opportunity for the hard-nationalist right to smuggle in all kinds of quite reactionary ideas.

That was the position Labour took. And it did match public opinion. During the 2017 election a slight majority who had voted Remain the previous year said that they thought that the referendum results should be accepted.

What has become difficult for Labour in the last six months or so is that position has become more and more difficult to hold. As a result of Theresa May and the Conservatives' botched handling of the negotiations, the idea of a Brexit deal that wouldn't be calamitous is no longer possible. The so-called "Soft Brexit," that might not have a harmful effect on everyday life, seems to have disappeared as the Tory right wing refused to accept Theresa May's deal.

Nigel Farage's new party, the so-called Brexit party, wouldn't even accept that, saying, "This is still a betrayal of the 2016 referendum, we'll settle for nothing less than the hardest possible Brexit deal, or even what's known as No Deal Brexit." Basically that means leaving without any sort of formal agreement. While the Leave camp has moved to a hardened position, the Remain camp has polarized in the other direction. It's more and more difficult for Corbyn to steer a middle path.

SW: *The Brexit discussion, as you're indicating, has put Jeremy Corbyn in a difficult situation as he tries to bridge the various positions. But I want to move into the second way that Corbyn's chances for winning the next election have been nearly derailed — and that's by the smear campaign that paints him and his followers as anti-Semitic. There's been a media frenzy about this. It seems that the whole of the British establishment, including the mainstream media and even the liberal Guardian, have been trying to use anti-Semitism to bring Corbyn down. How has this campaign played out, and how has the electorate been affected by it?*

DF: The whole controversy of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party is best seen as a symptom of the general hostility towards Corbyn's leadership. It includes the rightwing faction of the Labour Party, which is out of step with the membership but which still has a strong position in the parliamentary Labour Party at Westminster and in the wider media. The great bulk of media outlets and media commentators in Britain are aligned either with the Conservatives or the right wing of Labour.

Public sector broadcasters — in theory they're meant to be neutral and nonpartisan — but really, their understanding of what it means to be nonpartisan is to have the consensus position, by which I mean the opinion of the Tories and the Labour right. Ever since Corbyn became the Labour Party leader in 2015 all those elements have been casting around for whatever lines they could use to attack him.

There was a brief pause after the last general election because Labour did surprisingly well. It was their best performance since the early days of Tony Blair, and they had a big increase in their vote. It really took the media by surprise. There were a few weeks of journalists saying "Oh, we're going to have to go back to the drawing board and rethink some of our assumptions about Corbyn and the movement behind him."

But once that period of paying lip service was over, they redoubled their hostility to Corbyn. Now that he was seen to be an effective political leader, now that he had the potential to win an election and become prime minister, it was all the more important to oppose him.

Previous lines that have been tried out over the years — from calling him a stooge of Vladimir Putin, a supporter of the IRA to calling him a misogynist. They had a fairly short shelf life although they'd be revived in a year or two. But this accusation of anti-Semitism has been most persistent.

One of the traps that people have fallen into is that when Labour MPs who support Jeremy Corbyn are asked "Do you accept that the Labour party has a problem with anti-Semitism?" The nature of this problem is not stated.

Is this a major problem or a minor problem? Is it on the margins or is it something that pervades the whole party? Is it something that is tolerated, encouraged and abetted by the leadership, or is it something that they actually discourage and try to root out?

Every objective examination of the evidence shows that the prevalence of anti-Semitic views in the Labour party is small and marginal. It's less common than it is in British society as a whole; it's less common than in any of the other major parties.

The Labour leadership has also made very significant efforts to revamp its disciplinary process to deal with some genuine cases of anti-Semitism. But that hasn't reduced the controversy at all because for the most strident critics it has never really been about concerns of anti-Semitism.

SW: *So this is really about criticism of Israel, which they're trying to equate with anti-Semitism? Is this really about Corbyn's foreign policy agenda? Are critics worried that he won't be a toady to Washington?*

DF: Yes, that's the main reason for the hostilities. It's not the domestic economic program. Labour has a social democratic economic program, which would make a real difference in people's lives if the party came into office. It's not revolutionary by any means, it's certainly not a program to abolish capitalism.

But it's Corbyn's foreign policy that the elites really dislike and find threatening. Frankly nobody has ever been this close to power in Britain who has such a consistent track record of opposing the foreign policy consensus in relation to Latin America and the Middle East.

If you look at Labour's program, Corbyn has had to compromise. Formerly he called for withdrawal from NATO, for Britain's nuclear arsenal to be scrapped — that's not part of the party program. But even within those limits there's still quite a bit of freedom of maneuver for a prime minister, especially when it comes to an international crisis. It depends on the leader's basic beliefs and instincts.

Since Corbyn became leader the traditional British Labour stance — especially but not just under Blair — of subservience to Washington has been scrapped. Corbyn has been consistently critical of Trump's would-be coup in Venezuela and war threats against Iran. In particular, he's been very critical of Britain's support for, and participation in, the Saudi war on Yemen.

Much of the British foreign policy consensus, like the American foreign policy consensus, relies on people not challenging it. It's so brittle and indefensible when held up to the scrutiny of daylight that it's best just left unsaid, unspoken. Everyone agrees as long as we don't talk about it; it's like the elephant in the room.

When you have U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar confronting Elliot Abrams on the Foreign Policy Committee, asking, "Why should we listen to you when you're responsible for genocide in Central America?" the reaction is as if she'd suddenly started cursing and swearing. But once you challenge someone like Abrams, the whole house of cards comes tumbling down. We've seen a similar story with Corbyn.

Dislike of Corbyn's outlook on Israel is a proxy for the dislike of his wider foreign policy. And those who tend to be question the uncritical alliance with Israel don't stop there. They tend to be critical of dodgy alliances across the board. They tend to be critical of the alliance with Saudi Arabia, for example.

SW: *I'm sorry we've run out of time, but I want to thank you so much for your analysis. We will be looking for your article in the New Left Review 118, "Cross Currents: Corbyn, Labour, and the Brexit Crisis." ■*

American '68ers, the Left Academy and the Backlash Contested Terrains on Campus

By Howard Brick

WRITING IN 1942, the conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) remarked that capitalism was doomed to decay — not by means of economic breakdown, he said, but rather under assault from a variety of social, cultural and political forces. Among those, he highlighted the temper of modern intellectual life, which he believed encourages relentless criticism and thereby erodes the authority of wealth and power — or as he put it more elegantly, “rubs off all the glamour of super-empirical sanction from every species of classwise rights.”¹

It would have been hard for New Leftists in the 1960s, looking back across the experience of academic life through the Cold War and Red Scare of the 1950s, to give much credence to Schumpeter’s conviction that postwar intellectuals made up a subversive force. Instead, the complicity of academic institutions with the bulwarks of wealth and power seemed more to the point.

Yet not long after the turbulent year of 1968, the corporate lawyer Lewis F. Powell Jr., soon to be elevated to the Supreme Court, wrote a confidential report for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce echoing Schumpeter’s perspective: “One of the bewildering paradoxes of our time is the extent to which the enterprise system tolerates, if not participates in its own destruction.” Indeed, of that “attack on the American free enterprise system,” Powell argued, “there is reason to believe that the campus is the single most dynamic source.”²

Usually, we have good reason to discount such right-wing alarms. Consider, for instance, the 2018 Council of Economic Advisers’ report putting Bernie Sanders in the same basket of socialist agitators as Marx, Lenin, and Mao.

Yet there was something to Powell’s view. Not least among the consequences of the Left’s “1968” was the radicalization of students and younger scholars aiming to transform academic disciplines and create new ones — that is, to reconstruct the university by revolutionizing the production of knowledge. From the campus-rocking campaigns by students of color for Black, Chicano, and third-world studies to the formation of “radical caucuses” in many fields of the humanities and social sciences — to be followed shortly afterwards by the bottom-up building of Women’s Studies — the seeds of a new “Left Academy” sprouted 50 years ago, principally in the years from 1967 to 1969.

Although these academic movements, like so many other initiatives of the late 1960s, failed to turn their most far-reaching ambitions into institutional facts, they proved impressively productive in intellectual innovations. Far too easy to mock

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as a matter of “marching on the English Department” rather than the Winter Palace, the radical academy born of '68 turned elements of today’s knowledge base significantly leftward — an enduring achievement that has elicited a renewed right-wing backlash now seeking to re-conquer university life. As of yet, the now half-century-old current of left-leaning critical scholarship has shown a fair degree of strength and determination to withstand the attack.

A Heritage of Left Education

The history of left-wing alternative education in the United States is long, dating from children’s primers fashioned by Abolitionists and the schooling built into Fourierist and other utopian 19th-century colonies. Socialists and Communists ventured onto the turf of the “higher learning” (Thorstein Veblen’s term for university scholarship) by establishing the Rand School of Social Science and Popular Front institutes such as the Jefferson School of Social Science. These served in part to shelter persecuted left-wing scholars: the radical economist Scott Nearing, dismissed from the University of Pennsylvania, taught at the Rand School in the 1920s, and alleged Communists sacked from City College of New York in the early 1940s found refuge at Jefferson.

In addition, nonpartisan training centers such as Brookwood Labor College and Highlander Folk School actually seeded social movements with skilled organizers. Highlander’s Septima Clark (1898-1987) devised neighbor-taught adult literacy classes that directly inspired the “freedom schools” erected to promote voter registration during Mississippi Summer in 1964. Following the Vietnam War teach-ins of 1965, a dozen or so self-styled “free universities” sprouted by 1966.

Left Entry to the Academy

The campaigns of 1967-1969 represented a new stage in the history of left-wing scholarship, one that carried a daring ambition: they aimed not to foster alternative education by seceding from the mainstream institutions but rather to reconstruct teaching, learning, and research right at the heart of the system, building a new dissenting academy within established colleges and universities.

This move, which I call Left Entry, comprised three main dimensions: 1) Black Studies/Chicano Studies (as those fields were known at the time), 2) the “radical caucuses” in the disciplines, and 3) the slightly later establishment of Women’s Studies. Taken together these initiatives, now 50 years old, have played a significant role in reshaping U.S. higher education in the decades since, despite a great deal of conservative resistance and what appears now to be a mounting counter-attack.



A coalition among students of color led the Third World Liberation Front at Berkeley in early 1969, campaigning for a College of Ethnic Studies, as year-long strike for Black and ethnic studies continued at San Francisco State College. From left, activists Charles Brown, of the Afro-American Students Union; Ysidro Macias, of the Mexican-American Student Confederation; LaNada Means, of the Native American Student Union; and Stan Kadani, of the Asian American Political Alliance, walk down Bancroft Way. Chicano Studies Program Records, Ethnic Studies Library, UC Berkeley, CS ARC 2009/1, Carton 1, Folder 14

Eruption on Campus

Early in March 1968, a five-day building occupation at Howard University in Washington, D. C. became one of the first student protests that “demanded a role in the definition and production of scholarly knowledge,” according to historian Martha Biondi.³ Just before this moment, standard civil rights demands were still very much on the table: students at the historically Black South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, S.C. sought to desegregate a bowling alley and other shops in the town when their protest meeting was attacked by state police, leaving three dead and dozens injured.

Outrage over the Orangeburg massacre stirred students at Howard, already embroiled with conservative administrators over harsh discipline meted out to antiwar protesters, to take over a university assembly and demand Howard’s transformation into “a new Black University” offering African-American studies, a “black awareness institute,” and greater student and faculty autonomy.⁴ Similar initiatives struck many other historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) both before and after Martin Luther King’s assassination in April.

Meanwhile, Black students at predominantly white institutions such as Wellesley College soon raised demands for more Black admissions and appointments of Black faculty. Calls for a new Black Studies program were part of the May student strike at Columbia University. An even more explosive student strike, stretching through much of the 1968-69 academic year at San Francisco State College, put independent Black Studies and “ethnic studies” departments (the latter understood in multi-racial or “third world” terms) at the forefront, to be followed by upheavals at Berkeley (January through March 1969), Harvard University (April 1969) and the University of Michigan’s Black Action Movement (Winter 1970).

The first Department of Mexican American Studies was established at California State College in Los Angeles, and after the April 1969 formation of the Chicano student group MEChA, demands proliferated for Chicano Studies departments, programs, and research centers.

In part, these campaigns concerned the content of teaching and learning but, at least at first, those matters implied a further challenge to the nature of scholarly authority and even the character and social purpose of knowledge as such. That challenge had origins in the practice of egalitarian, participatory education that accompanied social-movement organizing from Highlander to Mississippi Summer.

Compounding those experiences, a new radical literature on schooling neared its peak at this time both within the United States and abroad. The Brazilian Paulo Freire offered his insurgent, anti-hierarchical, and anti-colonial model of education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in 1968 and quickly brought to the United States in English translation by 1970.⁵

At Yale University, where faculty members wondered whether Black studies was “intellectually defensible” as a scholarly field, Black Student Alliance leader (and later a respected historian) Armstead Robinson asked why they could not grant “the possibility that there are things worth teaching of which even most academicians may be unaware.”⁶ At San Francisco State, strikers had called for open admissions and programs controlled by students and faculty of color; these terms alone, they believed, provided the basic conditions needed to educate young people who could return to their communities ready to foster social change there.

Here was a militant program of what would be called today, in blander terms and with far lesser ambition, “community engagement.” At the time, however, imagining new means to



Historians Marilyn Young (left) and Howard Zinn (center), both active in the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, as part of an affinity group protesting the Vietnam War, Washington, D.C., May 1, 1971. To the immediate right of Zinn and behind are Daniel Ellsberg and Noam Chomsky.

create knowledge and act on it arose from the dynamics of collective action. As students and young faculty confronted university administrations and police repression they imagined a new world both within and beyond the campus.

In all three sectors of the 1967-69 academic left turn, groups of activist intellectuals consciously wedded their incubation of critical ideas with their experience of political organizing. In the following years, scholarly initiatives on the left frequently took the form of “collectives” hammering out declarations of principle, protest actions, and publishing ventures in intensive group collaboration.⁷

At Yale, Robinson regarded Black Studies as “the cutting edge of a revolution in American education,” one that aimed to uproot the white supremacy running through “western” culture. At Berkeley, where the Third World Liberation Front initiated a tumultuous student strike, the sociologist Andrew Billingsley said that Black Studies, like the program he helped build there, “provides us with an opportunity to dream of things that never were and to ask why not.”⁸

Genesis of the Radical Caucuses

Radical caucuses in the disciplines had a different lineage, which ran through a combination of the antiwar movement and the maturation of early New Leftists — often “graduates” of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who were 5-10 years older than the undergraduates flooding into that organization as it was about to burst apart.

Starting in the summer and fall of 1967, veteran SDSers such as Richard Rothstein, Alan Haber and Heather Booth contributed to a *Radicals in the Professions Newsletter* that reported on an array of initiatives: how to act “as a musician and a radical;” teachers developing “counter-curricula” in U.S. history, on Vietnam, and in mathematics; and meetings by left-wing graduate students targeting the conservative leaderships of the academic professional societies.⁹

Karen Sacks led a contingent of graduate students from the University of Michigan to the American Anthropological Association meeting, convening an informal session there

regarding “radicals in anthropology” attended by two hundred. Literary scholar Paul Lauter reported on “Faculty Action against the war”; another report noted the formation of a Caucus for a New Political Science, claiming at the annual convention that the discipline had “become a servant of the government” and demanding a full day of convention panels devoted to Vietnam.¹⁰

The organization of these radical caucuses usually stemmed from agitation by young scholars pushing the academic professional societies to denounce the war. By spring 1968, a broad-based New University Conference (NUC) was created, which in turn promoted caucus organization in other disciplines.¹¹

At the same time, the *Radicals in the Professions Newsletter*, taken over by the incipient Weatherman circle in Ann Arbor, became *Something Else!*, declaring that “often ‘career’ demands conflict with ‘cadre’ needs of the movement” and that making one’s career “relevant” to the movement was a “misplaced sense of priorities.”¹² Notwithstanding that sort of hyper-militancy (and anti-intellectualism) the NUC persisted in its aim to build what might be called a Left Academy.

Among the most prominent organizations to emerge from 1967 to 1969 were the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS) and the Union of Radical Political Economics (URPE), along with the Sociology Liberation Movement and radical caucuses in English, history, psychiatry, American Studies, geography and more. When the professional association of physicists, the American Physical Society, rejected a proposal to declare its opposition to the Vietnam War, dissidents in January 1969 formed Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, renamed Science for the People at the end of that year.¹³

Looking on as this scholarly protest percolated was the director of Pantheon Books, André Schiffrin (1935-2013), a French-born, anti-Stalinist socialist who was active both in early SDS and the antiwar movement. Schiffrin rallied a number of left-wing academics to prepare “antitextbooks,” a series that began with Theodore Roszak’s *The Dissenting*

Academy (1968). The very name given to the series signaled a general assault on the idea that a field's knowledge could be summed up in single-voiced, consensual and disinterested way, as standard textbooks assumed.

All the dissenting caucuses challenged the notion of "objectivity" that prevailed at the time: first, the academic establishment's claims to political neutrality veiled its affiliation (and service) to oppressive power in the society at large, and second, by affirming an oppositional political commitment and pursuing the cause of human liberation, radical scholars could produce more valid insights into social reality. The antitextbooks ranged from a volume on American history, *Towards a New Past* (1968) edited by Barton Bernstein, and *America's Asia* (1971) by CCAS activists Edward Friedman and Mark Selden to *Reinventing Anthropology* (1972), edited by Dell Hymes.¹⁴

The last of these was characteristic of the series. Its motive stemmed from outrage over the U.S. war in Vietnam and the complicity of scholars with U.S. Cold War policy in general: "The threat of the [subordination] of anthropology to the aims of counterinsurgency is permanent in a country devoted to a posture in the world in which Vietnam shows us only the extreme of a continuum," a situation that called for "a thoroughgoing analysis of the relation of the United States to the rest of the world as essentially colonial or imperial."¹⁵

Hymes was a specialist in Native American languages who identified with the left since he distributed copies of the independent Marxist journal *Monthly Review* as a Reed College student in the early 1950s. He hoped the "ethos of anthropology [would] move from a liberal humanism, defending the powerless, to a socialist humanism, confronting the powerful and seeking to transform the structure of power."¹⁶

Such a reorientation, he suggested, entailed certain theoretical and methodological changes in anthropological practice, namely restoring a keen sense of history not only to account for the historical embeddedness of the discipline (and the ties to modern imperialism it must resist) but also in the understanding of "culture" as ever-changing modes of life linked to world-wide social relations, rather than as static and isolated ways of life "discovered" among so-called "primitive" peoples. For elder leftists such as Hymes and Eric Wolf, who allied with the radical caucus, such views clearly emerged from a heritage of historical materialism.

Hymes' volume was reissued several times as late as 1999. "There is genuine indication that anthropology is being reinvented," he claimed, "and that the next generation will see its transformation."¹⁷ Most young anthropologists today, I venture, would agree that the discipline has changed dramatically, embracing a critique of imperialism, a more historical view of culture, and a greater degree of self-consciousness regarding the power relations between scholars and their research "subjects." Moreover, in most leading universities, anthropologists would rank among the most "radical" or left-leaning faculty members.

Ironically, the same cannot be said of Economics, the discipline which paradoxically gave rise to the most enduring radical caucus, the still-active Union of Radical Political Economics, and what might be considered the most successful of counter-textbooks. Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich, and Thomas E. Weisskopf's *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society* was published in three editions from 1972

to 1986 by none other than the textbook publisher Prentice-Hall.¹⁸ It was, in other words, the textbook as antitextbook.

Feminist Resurgence

Women's Studies took a somewhat different course from the other two currents in the late-'60s academic turn — neither as confrontational and sudden as the initiation of Black and Chicano Studies nor directly tied to the radical caucuses, though clearly indebted to both Old Left and New Left lineages.

Early signs of a new women's history appeared in the writing by Eleanor Flexner (*Century of Struggle*, 1959) and Gerda Lerner (*The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 1967), and poet Eve Merriam (*After Nora Slammed the Door*, 1964), all of whom had taught women's history at the Communist Party's Jefferson School in the early 1950s. All began as extra-academic writers, though Lerner, aged 48, earned a university appointment in 1968 and thereafter served as an elder mentor to younger feminist historians.¹⁹

The train of Old Left women's historians intersected with a line emerging later among New Left activists, from Casey Hayden and Mary King's 1965 internal critique of SDS, "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo," to the Women's Liberation circles germinating in 1967-68, followed by such influential, still non-academic work in radical feminist theory such as *Notes from the First, Second, and Third Years* (1968-71).²⁰

Closer to the academy, disciplinary critiques began appearing from 1968 on, such as Naomi Weisstein's "'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' as Scientific Law: Psychology Constructs the Female" (1968), Sally Slocum's "Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology" (1971), Linda Gordon's "Review of Sexism in American Historical Writing" (1972), and Arlie Hochschild's "A Review of Sex Role Research" (1973).²¹

The academic professional associations established Commissions on the Status of Women after 1968, and women's caucuses analogous to the '68er radical caucuses began growing in those societies in the years 1969-1972. Based on surveys conducted by Betty Ch'maj, the earliest American Studies courses concerning women (across several different departments) appeared from late 1969 through 1971, many of them explicitly feminist from the start, before Women's Studies programs emerged — one of the earliest at Ch'maj's home institution Cal State Sacramento in 1972-73.²²

Uneven Trajectories, Enduring Legacies

In none of the three arms of the academic left turn did success follow smoothly. In Black Studies, fierce conflicts among students, different faculty factions, and administrators ensued at San Francisco State and at Harvard, roiling these pioneer programs for years after founding.²³ Women's Studies developed at many places in *ad hoc* fashion, which helped sustain the field's insurgent demeanor.

At the University of Michigan, for instance, the program's large introductory course was created by a collective of graduate student women led by Gayle Rubin, whose theoretical essays percolated for years as foundational documents nation-wide. When college administrators moved in 1980 to stipulate that all the core courses be taught by full-time faculty, campus protest and a large sit-in at college offices rebutted this attempt to sideline the grad student founders, which they and their supporters charged would "domesticate" women's

studies.²⁴

Nonetheless, across the country, Women's Studies followed a clear trajectory: from a handful of women's studies courses circa 1970, numbers rose to 20,000 courses offered and some 350 women's studies programs established — reaching more than 500 programs nationwide by the late 1980s. No doubt, “institutionalizing” the field rubbed off a good deal of the activist spirit that spawned it.

Indeed, some of the early founders had warned against losing the original connection to social-movement organizing.²⁵ The proliferation of “theory” of a postmodern or post-structuralist vein in the 1980s and 1990s drew a common critique from both the center and the left of the field's growing academic insularity.

Yet the penchant to dissent did not evaporate. At Michigan again, the very sign of academic achievement in 2006 — the reorganization of Women's Studies as a department rather than program — was challenged by some affiliated faculty members on the grounds that keeping the more informal “program” status “would reflect Women's Studies’ continuing resistance to institutional conformity as well as its role as critic within the University.”²⁶ And despite right-wing attacks that these programs engaged in ideological indoctrination, the program at University of California-Santa Barbara has boldly assumed the name Feminist Studies.

Likewise, various descendants of the late 1960s Black Studies — Afro- or African-American Studies, often combined with African or Africana Studies to emphasize a “diasporic,” antiracist and anticolonial perspective — have become mainstays of liberal arts curricula across the country. Argument, controversy and change have never been absent from the field, particularly over the claims of Afrocentric ideology or in demands to incorporate Black feminism.

The recent rise of Black Lives Matter echoed through the academy to challenge the gross underrepresentation of Black students and faculty on major campuses, denials of tenure to faculty of color, and racist campus environments. Still these programs or departments exist at over 300 American campuses.

Similarly, Chicano Studies has persisted and embedded itself on campus — by now, often expanded and diversified in the form of Latina/o or Latinx studies — while struggles continue over inadequate recruitment of Latinx faculty and students. The number of distinct fields under the general rubric of Ethnic Studies has grown to include Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and at some institutions Arab American studies.

Sniping from Left and Right

While sniping at the supposed evils of “identity politics” keeps coming from all sides left and right, the prevailing mood (though always with injurious exceptions) tends more toward collaboration and ally-ship rather than exclusivist separation. As Martha Biondi has argued persuasively, Black Studies from the start was always more internationalist than nationalist in orientation. “Proponents of Black studies did not conceptualize it as an insular area of inquiry only of interest to black people,” Biondi writes, “but as the opening salvo in major changes in the American academy.”²⁷

The long-range impact of the original radical caucuses is considerably harder to assess. Having started in March 1968,

in two years’ time the New University Conference claimed 2,000 dues-paying members and chapters on 60 campuses — but by summer 1972, when its members counted only about 300, it was ready to disband.²⁸

Many of the disciplinary caucuses folded before long or morphed into new forms. Initially, the term “radical” carried the imprint of a generic New Left disposition. A more decidedly Marxist revival followed thereafter through the 1970s (kick-started by literary theorist Fredric Jameson organizing the Marxist Literary Group in 1969).²⁹ By the early 1980s, these trends would be surveyed by Bertell Ollman and his collaborators in three volumes called *The Left Academy*.³⁰

Politically motivated dismissals of left-wing scholars aroused protests in the first decade, but by the 1980s veterans of the ‘68er left turn gained the security of tenure. The right-wing attack on “tenured radicals” began immediately, as did left-wing recriminations about the academic insularity that leeched political commitment from the work of comfortable professors, most notably Russell Jacoby’s 1987 polemic, *The Last Intellectuals*.³¹ Although more social-democratic than ultra-left, Jacoby’s argument carried some of the anti-academic bias that had earlier marked *Something Else*!

The rightward trend of U.S. politics undoubtedly served to demobilize, disorient or deradicalize any number of left intellectuals descended from the 1960s, but nothing quite like the massive intellectual retreat or repression of the early Cold War years occurred — aside from limited, extreme cases of renegacy such as that of the red-baiting former red David Horowitz.³²

The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars dissolved in 1979, while its *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* continued publishing, adopting the more formal journal name *Critical Asian Studies* in 2001. URPE survives though its brand of radical political economics remains more or less sequestered, most notably at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, while most Economics departments and business schools remain largely untouched by the history of Left Entry.

In other fields, such as Sociology, the long-ago demise of the Sociology Liberation Movement has been followed by the proliferation of specialty caucuses, officially recognized by discipline, that provide homes for left-leaning scholarship on matters of class, comparative and historical sociology, world-systems analysis, and the like. In English and Comparative Literature very lively circles of feminist, anti-colonial (or “postcolonial”), Marxist and radical post-Marxist discourse persist.

In fact, while the overall tone of left-leaning academic circles has moderated as intellectuals aged, professionalized, and grew distant from the founding days of mass action, the survival of radical currents in scholarship has been assured by the entry of successive generations of activists stirred by each episode of insurgent action at large, from Central America solidarity and anti-apartheid agitation of the 1980s, the rise of queer protest from ACT-UP on, campaigns for reproductive rights, the alter-globalization movement, to the Occupy surge of 2011, and the Black campaign against police killings.³³

Where We Stand Today

There is no question that the university system remains a massive institution structurally wedded to bourgeois society, given its role as a credentialing (and thus stratifying) operation

and the constitutive ties of its research and training apparatus to government and business wealth. Yet in what historian James Livingston calls the “pilot disciplines” of the humanities and some of the social sciences, the intellectual left has won something more than a toehold.³⁴

It is difficult to assess exactly what impact radical ideas have at large in today’s social life, but they have borne great influence in shaping several academic provinces. Historical scholarship, especially regarding the United States, has been reinvented and turned away from its modern origins in nation-building. Perspectives once marginal, such as the critical history of Reconstruction and its overthrow pioneered by W. E. B. Du Bois, are now central.³⁵ The new field of Science, Technology and Society (STS) has institutionalized the idea, which drove Science for the People, that scientific knowledge is socially, historically embedded.³⁶

In the social sciences, notwithstanding the ascendancy of pro-market “rational choice” orientations of Economics and much of Political Science, the concepts once distinctive to the left of exploitation, domination, conflict, hegemony and resistance now preoccupy significant numbers of researchers and learners.

Whether or not the latter concerns carry with them explicit political commitments or translate into insurgent action, such critical dispositions render the social status quo far less a matter taken for granted, as “second nature” to us, than it was in prior generations of academic institutions.

Treating society as second nature had always been the function of “ideology” in the Marxian sense. We have yet to see whether such intellectual attempts at dislodging the givenness of our social and political conditions matter much, but we may suspect that many of the leaders of the new American left in organs such as *Jacobin* and in the recent Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) surge have been radicalized both by events and by ideas encountered within the academy.

The Mounting Reaction

It has always been easy to mock Lewis Powell’s conservative alarm at the ascendancy of left-wing academics. Historian David Hollinger aptly quoted journalist Joe Queeny: “The left gets Harvard, Oberlin, Twila Tharp’s dance company, and Madison, Wisconsin. The right gets NASDAQ, Boeing, General Motors, Apple, McDonnell Douglas, Washington D.C., Citicorp, Texas, Coca-Cola, General Electric, Japan, and outer space.”³⁷

Yet the drumbeat of anti-academic attacks kept mounting. *Frontpage*, a publication of David Horowitz’s Freedom Center (founded 1988), has harried radical faculty for years and encouraged students to charge their teachers with left-wing “indoctrination.” The Leadership Institute, founded in 1979 to train young conservative activists, established Campus Watch in 2012, a website dedicated to targeting supposed “liberal bias” in higher education and alleged denial of “free speech” rights to conservatives.

Harassment reached a new extreme with the debut of Professor Watchlist in 2016, intended to identify professors who “discriminate against conservative students, promote anti-American values and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom.”



Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump made hay with repeated denunciations of “political correctness,” and a year later, Attorney General Jeff Sessions brought the fanatic Horowitz style to the mainstream stage

by declaring at Georgetown University Law School, “Freedom of thought and speech on the American campus are under attack. The American university was once the center of academic freedom — a place of robust debate, a forum for the competition of ideas. But it is transforming into an echo chamber of political correctness and homogeneous thought, a shelter for fragile egos.”³⁸

Sessions’ remarks were followed by Trump’s executive order that universities receiving federal funds must guarantee free speech rights (to the right) in order to

defend “American values that have been under siege” by liberal academics.³⁹ Aside from such cheap rhetoric, it now appears that practical measures will be brought to bear, signaled for instance by Department of Education investigations of Middle Eastern Studies departments accused of anti-Semitic bias in sponsoring events including sharp criticism of Israeli policy.⁴⁰

Conservative complaints about subversive influences in higher education, however, are nothing new, given a history including dismissal of dissenting faculty in the 1890s, administrative discipline of left-wing students in the 1930s, and Red Scare firing and blacklisting of suspected Communist instructors in the 1940s and 1950s.

Right Colonization

Just as left-wing intellectual life took a new turn in the late 1960s, which I have called Left Entry, there is something new about the conservative attack today. In what appears to be a campaign of conservative revanche, following the Powell Memorandum, reaction to the new Left Academy now takes the form of colonizing campuses with richly endowed, ideologically driven and specially administered centers or institutes pushing right-wing ideas.

From the 1970s on, along with the expansion of right-wing think tanks and media, business donations promoted establishment of “economic literacy” and “entrepreneurship” programs on college campuses, particularly at small regional public universities and Christian colleges. Wal-Mart’s family owners threw themselves into college-based public relations starting in the mid 1980s and by 1990, their prime propaganda vehicle Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) had 40,000 student members on more than 150 campuses.⁴¹

Carrying greater academic prestige and ultimately more financial clout, the free-market economist James Buchanan won the backing of the Scaife Foundation to develop his “public choice” theory aimed at gutting government regulation. At the same time, Cornell University alum John M. Olin, outraged by the 1969 Black studies insurgency at his alma mater, began showering hundreds of millions of dollars on building free-market “Law and Economics” programs on campus, seeding the Federalist Society, and subsidizing appointments of “pro-capitalist faculty,” according to historian Nancy MacLean.⁴²

The Koch Brothers brought their big guns to bear by the 1980s and 1990s, backing James Buchanan’s Center for

Political Economy at George Mason University, which hosted a mini-empire of associated outfits there including the Mercatus Center, self-described as “the world’s premier university source for market-oriented ideas—bridging the gap between academic ideas and real-world problems.”⁴³

Like colonizing ventures in the age of great-power imperialism, these settlements on university campuses possess a kind of extra-territorial sovereignty. The Institute of Humane Studies, begun in 1961 by an American member of Friedrich Hayek’s Mont Pèlerin Society, gained additional Koch support and relocated in 1985 to George Mason, where its director boasted, “The imprimatur of George Mason University alone will aid our program . . . we will retain complete program and financial autonomy . . . and our post-doctoral programs will have full and equal standing” with other GMU programs.⁴⁴

This posture has become the model for a host of other Koch-funded campus ventures. As MacLean explains, the programs “would carry the authority of association with scholarly research in a public university, yet operate free of control by or accountability to that university as its operatives joined with corporate partners to promote their shared ideas to policymakers.”⁴⁵

In contrast to the advance of left-wing ideas in academia since the late 1960s, achieved through the autonomous research and writing of scholars whose work has met and surpassed standards of academic peer review, these conservative ventures rely on heavy-hitter donors intent on promoting interested viewpoints of extra-academic origin.

Almost ten years ago, donor agreements concluded by Florida State and Utah State Universities with the Charles G. Koch Foundation to establish special institutes to study free enterprise, became public and revealed outrageous clauses defining the character of faculty appointments the donor funded: Faculty should advance “the understanding and practice of those free voluntary processes and principles that promote social progress, human well-being, individual freedom, opportunity and prosperity based on the rule of law, constitutional government, private property and the laws, regulations, organizations, institutions and social norms upon which they rely.”⁴⁶

Given the scale of Koch-funded academic initiatives — amounting in one year alone, 2016, to \$77 million, according to one report — such designation of ideas to be fostered figure as a far more serious threat to academic freedom than any left-wing “bias” of the sort Campus Watch claims to discern.⁴⁷

The Balance of Forces

Meanwhile, as the far right hikes up its assault on “liberal” or radical scholarship, a broad left-leaning current has built a growing critique of “the neoliberal university,” targeting the decline of public funding, tighter connections with business, reliance on the casual labor of part-time instructors, high costs and skyrocketing student debt, the ubiquity of individualistic, “meritocratic” ideology, system-wide stratification and the reproduction of social hierarchies.⁴⁸



All these features indeed mark U.S. higher education, though concerns over the “corporatization” of university life are not at all new. The negative impact of ties to big business and the corrosive effect of business-like management on the academic enterprise have been criticized almost from the beginnings of the modern research university, most prominently in Thorstein Veblen’s severe polemic, *The Higher Learning in America* of 1918.⁴⁹

Aside from the structural pressures on university life since the onset of “the long downturn” in world capitalism, however, one of the distinctive features of our time is the tension between Left Entry and the revanchist program of Right Colonization.

How do we assess the balance of forces between these contenders? If we recall Joe Queenie’s appropriately sarcastic view of the left’s social weight, the answer looks simple: The left loses. Yet strictly in academic, intellectual terms, conditions look a little brighter. Institutional norms of scholarly autonomy can militate against right colonization, and on occasion those norms talk just a bit louder than money, as when the faculty senate at Montana State University voted by a narrow majority to reject a \$5.76 million Koch grant to found a Center for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis there.⁵⁰

As yet, we see little evidence of administrations at major universities caving in to Campus Watch / Professor Watchlist-like pressure (although such administrations, true to the standards of corporate-style management, are not unwilling to seek refuge in a Trumpian NLRB to combat teacher unionism). And that kind of extramural harassment has not come to occupy the attention of Congressional committees as in the 1950s red scare.

The scholarly scene in the humanities and some social sciences, however, has dramatically changed since the days when the academic establishment resisted New Left demands in the 1960s. In contrast to the postwar norm that the disciplines’ professional associations dare not comment on controversial public policy, the American Anthropological Association in 2007 officially denounced the Human Terrain System, the military’s attempt to rope social scientists into the service of counter-insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Avowed Marxists and other radical scholars, feminists and scholars of color have taken presidential leadership in the American Sociological Association, the Organization of American Historians, American Studies Association, Modern Language Association and other such groups.

Where left-wing faculty have suffered conservative academic discipline, allies mounted a substantial response. Penalties imposed on Michigan professor John Cheney-Lippold for his actions in solidarity with the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions campaign were denounced by several professional societies as infringements on academic freedom. In the more severe case of Stephen Salaita, when he was peremptorily severed from the University of Illinois faculty, a fightback resulted in administrative turnover there, though not a return of Salaita’s job.

Younger and untenured faculty, not to speak of adjuncts in

the casual labor force, probably do find these cases chilling, inducing caution in voicing their political convictions, but I see no mass trend among left-wing senior faculty to scurry to some political safe harbor. Furthermore, in disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, anthropology and others, young Ph.D.s today are likely to be inclined to the radical left — along with the general radical reawakening of their generation following Occupy, Black Lives Matter, the threats of the climate crisis and of Trumpism.

In short, despite the stacked odds of life in the “neoliberal university,” a kind of Left Academy has a foothold, more than a toehold, on campus with a sufficiently large body of sympathizers to resist, so far, the heightened right-wing attacks on higher education and the dissenting content of much teaching and learning. That status bears witness to the long-run influence of the ‘68er generation of academic intellectuals and innovators. And since ideas actually matter in political struggle, albeit in contexts shaped by concrete pressures and limits, the left turn in scholarship now 50 years old merits both appreciation and resolute commitment to its protection. ■

Notes

1. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (Harper & Brothers, 1947), 127.
2. Lewis F. Powell, Jr., “Attack on American Free Enterprise System” (1971), quoted in Roderick A. Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 35–6.
3. Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 2.
4. Biondi, 30–35.
5. In his history of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *The End of Concern: Maoist China, Activism, and Asian Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), Fabio Lanza emphasizes the early CCAS attempt to fashion new non-hierarchical modes of knowledge-production, which he credits largely to the influence of Mao’s Cultural Revolution and echoes of it in French Maoism after 1968. Although romantic notions of radical egalitarianism associated with Mao’s slogan, “Serve the People,” achieved salience throughout this period, the insurgent challenge in pedagogy owed as much to the practices of movement-building in the United States and other exemplars outside of China.
6. Armistead L. Robinson et al., *Black Studies in the University; a Symposium* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), viii.
7. In his retrospective on the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Geoff Eley potentially describes the insurgent spirit of the U.K. parallels. Assuming leadership of the Centre after a student-power building occupation in late 1968, Stuart Hall proposed that the Centre “become a ‘utopian enclave’ capable of ‘transcend[ing] the limits of what appears possible and natural within the existing limits of our situation. It would ‘challenge and modify the prevailing modes of knowledge and authority.’ The goal was ‘nothing less than the creation, within . . . the existing system, of a collective — an intellectual foci: a sort of advanced base.’” See Eley, “Conjuncture and the Politics of Knowledge,” in Kieran Connell and Matthew Hilton, eds., *Cultural Studies 50 Years On: History, Practice and Politics* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), 30–31. In Britain, as in the United States, disciplinary departures proliferated from Radical Philosophy and a Radical Science Collective to a “New Criminology” and the emergence of interdisciplinary studies of “Women in Society” in the early 1970s. Also, a right-wing backlash appeared by the late 1970s in publications such as *The Attack on Higher Education: Marxist and Radical Penetration* (Eley, 32–38).
8. Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 179.
9. Formally, Radicals in the Professions was an offshoot of the Radical Education Project (REP), which Al Haber started in 1965 in Ann Arbor, as the more academic, campus-based alternative to the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), the community-organizing program championed by Tom Hayden. As SDS continued to radicalize, REP published “Study Guides,” including Jim Jacobs’s *Power in American Society* and Michael Goldfield’s *Marxism — An Introduction* (Ann Arbor, n.d. [1967]). Meanwhile, in Ann Arbor, the embryonic Weatherman circle of Bill Ayers, Diana Oughton, and Terry Robbins was gaining influence in the REP, with consequences for the *Radicals in the Professions Newsletter*. See Kirkpatrick Sales, *SDS* (NY: Vintage, 1974), 251, 490–91, 558.
10. Karen Sacks, “At the AAA Meeting,” *Radicals in the Professions Newsletter* [hereafter *RiP*], December 1967, 12; David Norris, “Caucus for a New Political Science,” *RiP*, June 1968; Bob Levine and Richard Ochs, “New Science Prospectus,” *RiP*, July–August 1968; “Vocations for Radicals: Some Suggestions,” *RiP*, September 1968; Martin Nicolaus, “Remarks at the ASA Convention,” *RiP*, November–December 1968.
11. Bob Ross, “New University Conference: National Director’s Report,” *RiP*, September 1968.
12. “Something Else! or: R.I.P. Didn’t Die, It’s Just Growing: An Editorial,” *Something Else!* 2:1 (March 1969), 2–3.
13. Sigrid Schmalzer et al., eds., *Science for the People: Documents from America’s Movement of Radical Scientists* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018). Kelly Moore, *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945–1975* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 146–55. Martin

- Oppenheimer et al., eds, *Radical Sociologists and the Movement: Experiences, Lessons, and Legacies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).
14. Theodore Roszak, ed., *The Dissenting Academy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968); Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968); Philip Green and Sanford Levinson, eds., *Power and Community: Dissenting Essays in Political Science* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970); Edward Friedman and Mark Selden, eds., *America’s Asia: Dissenting Essays on Asian-American Relations* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971); Louis Kampf et al., eds., *The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
15. Dell H. Hymes, *Reinventing Anthropology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49–50.
16. Hymes, 52.
17. Hymes, 8.
18. Richard Edwards et al., *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).
19. Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
20. Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–75* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
21. Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 1–37.
22. Betty E. M. Ch’maj, *American Women and American Studies* (Pittsburgh: Women’s Free Press, Pittsburgh, 1971).
23. Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 174–210.
24. Dena Goodman and Wang Zheng, “Women’s Studies (2015),” in *The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedic Survey*, n.d., <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bicentennial/13950886.0002.096?view=text;rgn=main#section-2>. “Views on the Domestication of Women’s Studies,” *Michigan Daily*, April 15, 1980, 4.
25. See the bitter screed written by academic women against academic careerism, Ann Leffler et al., *Academic Feminists and the Women’s Movement* (Iowa City, Iowa: Printed by the Iowa City Women’s Press, 1973).
26. Dena Goodman and Wang Zheng, “Women’s Studies (2015).”
27. Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 179.
28. Fred Pincus and Howard J. Ehrlich, “The New University Conference: A Study of Former Members,” *Critical Sociology* 15 (Summer 1988), 145–47.
29. <http://www.marxistliterary.org/a-brief-history-of-the-mig>
30. Bertell Ollman et al., *The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).
31. Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
32. For a subtle analysis comparing the intellectual deradicalization of the early Cold War years with right-wing shifts of liberal and left-wing writers early in the 21st century, see Alan Wald’s assessment in the preface to his 30th anniversary edition of *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), xi–xiv.
33. It is telling, then, that amid the socialist revival of the past few years, a new generation has revived Science for the People, and veterans of the Radical Historians Organization now leading Historians for Peace and Democracy (H-PAD) collaborate with Democratic Socialists of America to distribute position papers on current affairs. See Schmalzer, Chard, and Botelho, eds. *Science for the People*.
34. James Livingston, *The World Turned Inside Out: American Thought and Culture at the End of the 20th Century* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).
35. In the late 1960s, while teaching at San Francisco State College, the Black Arts Movement poet Sonia Sanchez was visited by an FBI agent “to interrogate her for teaching the communist Du Bois.” Biondi, 47.
36. Sarah Bridger, “Anti-Militarism and the Critique of Professional Neutrality in the Origins of Science for the People,” *Science as Culture* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 373–78.
37. Quoted in David Hollinger, “Money and Academic Freedom a Half-Century after McCarthyism: Universities amid the Force Fields of Capital,” in Peggie J. Hollingsworth, ed., *Unfettered Expression: Freedom in American Intellectual Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
38. Andrew Kreighbaum, “Attorney General Sessions Blasts Colleges on Issues of Free Speech,” *Inside Higher Ed*, September 27, 2017.
39. Lee Bollinger, “Free Speech on Campus Is Doing Just Fine, Thank You,” *The Atlantic*, June 12, 2019.
40. Manuel Balce Ceneta, “DeVos Opens Investigation into Duke-UNC Event with Alleged ‘Anti-Semitic Rhetoric,’” *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), June 17, 2019.
41. Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart the Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 173–93.
42. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking, 2017), 109–111.
43. <https://www.mercatus.org/about>
44. MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, 188.
45. MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, 109.
46. Dan Berrett, “Not Just Florida State,” *Inside Higher Ed*, June 28, 2011.
47. Colleen Flaherty “Montana State’s Faculty Senate Narrowly Votes down Proposed Economics Research Center to Be Funded by Charles Koch Foundation,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 27, 2018.
48. Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Alpesh Maisuria and Svenja Helmes, *Life for the Academic in the Neoliberal University* (London: Routledge, 2019).
49. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015). With his characteristic wit, Veblen originally intended to subtitle the book, “A Study in Total Depravity.”
50. Flaherty, “Montana State’s Faculty Senate Narrowly Votes down Proposed Economics Research Center to Be Funded by Charles Koch Foundation.”

REVIEW

Competition, Inequality & Class Struggle By Kim Moody

Persistent Inequalities: Wage Disparity Under Capitalist Competition

By Howard Botwinick

Haymarket Books, 2018, 370 pages, \$28 paper.

PERSISTENT INEQUALITIES, BY former union organizer and continuing workplace and political activist turned political economist Howard Botwinick, was first published in 1993. Then, in the United States socialism and Marxist theory were still largely confined to academia and a small socialist movement on the defensive.

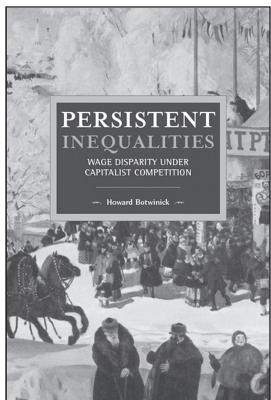
With the revival of socialism, the green shoots of worker self-activity by workers in (commodified and state-provided) social reproduction and communications, and rising resistance to racism particularly in the criminal justice system, the book's re-publication in an affordable edition by Haymarket Books is timely and badly needed.

While most of the text is unchanged with some updating and an afterword to bring developments up to date, the theory and practical observations more than stand the test of time for a generation (or more) of activists seeking sound analysis of capitalism's continuing inequalities.

Botwinick has crafted "a theory of competitive wage determination that is highly systematic but not rigidly deterministic" as he puts it. (67) Given the debates on the left today concerning the nature of Marxism this is in itself an important contribution to a version of Marxism that sees human agency, organization, and struggle as a central element in Marxist analysis without being voluntarist.¹

Still, you may wonder, why does a theory of wage determination matter when we face much bigger problems than mere wages? As mundane as it might sound at first, this is a theory that explains the underpinning of racial and gender income inequality in capitalism and all that flows from that, and a framework for the deployment of the power of organized workers — and hopefully, the

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interrelationship of these two.

It is also the case that "wages" in this work are shorthand for all the conditions of labor in capitalist production. Botwinick's application and development of Marxist theory beyond where Marx himself took it, of course,

is not meant to be a panacea for a working class that is internally divided, unequal, and poorly organized. Rather it provides a method and analysis for approaching these problems in a way that other economic theories haven't.

"Competition," "Monopoly" and "Productivity" Theories

For example, neoclassical or mainstream economics, a major target of Botwinick's critique, tells us that capitalist ("perfect") competition will equalize the wages of workers with similar skills over time.

Despite the fact that this is obviously not the case, neoclassical economics continues to dominate the field. Then there is the seemingly opposite theory of monopoly capitalism with its Marxist variant, in which wage inequalities are explained by the lack of competition and the ability of giant corporations to pass on wage increases to customers via "administered" pricing.

But if that were the case, a Wal-Mart warehouse worker with skills similar to those of an auto assembly line worker for any one of the ten or so giants that dominate that industry would make about the same wage. Instead he or she makes about half that of a worker on the assembly line whether it's in Detroit or Dixie.

The fallacy of monopoly theory, that a small number of large firms in a given industry or market explain higher wages, should be clear from the fact that two of the growing giants in retail who have pushed rivals like K-Mart and Sears out of the market, Wal-Mart and Amazon, far from passing on wage gains to customers, engage in price cutting competition with all the firms in the field and do so on the basis of persistently low wages.

The reason lies in the reality of competition and different strategies for cost reduction, not in the absence of competition. In monopoly theory, those in highly competitive industries with lots of small firms are doomed to low and stagnant wages for all time. The same is true of monopoly theory's not too distant cousin, dual or segmented labor market theory, which concludes pretty much the same thing.

Here labor markets are "segmented" into two realms, to put it somewhat crudely, one of big firms that can afford big wage increases, and the other of small firms that can't. Contrary to this theory, however, such well-known low-wage sites as hospitals and hotels have themselves gone through intense concentration and centralization in recent years and still pay low wages to most of their non-professional workers.

While these theories were often presented as alternatives to the alleged rigidity, fundamentalism and orthodoxy of Marxist political economy, they are themselves highly static.

In the Introduction, Botwinick writes parenthetically of chapter 2 which introduces the debate over these different theories: "Nonacademic readers who may want to immediately proceed to the author's own arguments can skip this lengthy chapter with little loss of continuity." This is one of the few times I will tell the prospective reader to ignore Botwinick's advice.

Chapter 2 shows how neoclassical theory, and its left monopoly and dual labor market alternatives, ignore the realities of competitive war, the essential tools in that battle, and hence the dynamics of capitalism that, in fact, allow for a considerable role for class struggle throughout the economy.

While most activists may not be familiar with these theories in any detail, monopoly theory in particular continues to have a stronghold on the "common sense" of much left analysis. If there is something static about monopoly and dual labor market theories, much the same can be said about conventional labor economics where wages are claimed to be determined primarily by productivity.

Presumably, industries with higher productivity should have higher wages. But this is by no means the case. To continue the comparison above, the auto assembly industry paid about \$29 an hour in 2010 with an annual average productivity increase

of three percent a year from 1987 to 2009. General warehousing paid almost half that at about \$15 in 2010, but had average annual productivity growth of five percent over the same period.

Capital Just Can't Stand Still

If size, number and relative productivity do not tell the whole story, what does?

To try to summarize Botwinick's complex analysis in a few paragraphs would be a fool's errand. Rather I will outline some of the major elements in the dynamics of capitalist competition that give the theory both its analytical power and practical application. After that I will give examples of how this relates to the questions of union and workers' strategy on the one hand, and race and gender inequality in a capitalist context on the other.

In analyzing wage differentials among workers with similar skills, Botwinick locates "three key dynamics":

- The ongoing processes of capitalist competition and technical change that create different conditions of production, productivity, and profitability within and between industries;
- The continuing regeneration of a reserve army of unemployed workers; and
- The uneven efforts of workers to raise wages. (8)

We can see in the three "key dynamics" that real capitalist competition, in combination with the downward pressures of the reserve army of labor, and the uneven efforts of workers to raise them, are constantly in motion. Furthermore, these dynamics play out by the interaction of specific factors that apply to any industry regardless of the size and number of firms.

Here I will cheat and turn to the end of the text (301) where Botwinick summarizes these key factors in wage determination in the context of dynamic competition which he cites as topics for further empirical research:

Level of capital intensity (K/L or the capital/labor ratio)

Level of fixed capital equipment

Share of wages (total labor costs) in total unit costs

Size of workforce within average plants in the industry

Level of unionization across the industry as a whole.

Capital in real competition is anything but static. Seldom do these dynamics and conditions remain the same over time. Under the pressure of competition, no matter what the size or number of firms in the industry, all these factors change and interact. This in turn impacts the potential for as well as the limits to increases in total labor costs.

To get or stay ahead of the next firm, the capitalist has to cut costs per unit of production, which more often than not means more and better capital equipment to squeeze out more labor productivity in order to undercut the competition. When you change the proportion of capital in your costs you affect the rate of profit, even if in most cases you get higher productivity.

This means that profit rates in a given industry are constantly changing as the age and efficiency of each firm's capital becomes different. Since not all firms will have the same profit rates at any one time, one or more of the most efficient firms will set the pace. These are the "regulating capitals," the most efficient and most able to grant wage increases. This competition and its impact occurs not only within an industry, but also between industries as capital in its fluid form seeks a greater return by moving from one industry to another.

What is important in Botwinick's Marxist analysis of these changing factors, however, is that they can have contradictory affects depending, as he repeatedly argues, on the level of organization of the workers and to some extent the size of the work force as well as on the size and mobility of the reserve army of labor — that is, on the two active but contradictory human factors that both propel and limit the ability of organized workers to "take labor out of competition" in order to raise wages.

For example, where a firm invests in more capital equipment and raises the capital/labor ratio, thus lowering the proportion of labor costs per unit, it opens the possibility of increasing wages or improving conditions *if*, and these days it is a big *if*, the workers are well enough organized to force such an increase, and *if* troops from the reserve army of labor are not deployable in sufficient numbers at similar skill levels to undermine the workers' actions.

This depends not only on the size of the reserve army nationally, which these days is very large, but its mobility and suitability within reasonable distance of the firm's struck or affected facilities. As many industries have moved out of urban centers, the rapid mobilization of replacement workers may be more difficult in some situations.

Employers' "Cost of Obstruction"

Here Botwinick introduces a concept you may not be familiar with when you think about union bargaining power. This is "the cost of obstruction," meaning the cost to the employer of attempting to obstruct a wage increase.

Mainstream labor economics typically emphasize a firm's "ability to pay" increased labor costs. Here, we are looking at the company's cost of not paying more. This cost is most effectively inflicted, of course, by an

all-out, well-prepared strike (or occupation) based on prior workplace organization.

The tendency in recent years of union leaders to substitute external pressure tactics or "leverage" has been proven to be an illusion more often than not. Only the cessation of production or service-delivery and hence income (whether immediate or long range) can impose serious costs on the employer.

In this context, as Botwinick argues, the fixed costs of the firm embodied in capital plant and equipment and its depreciation, along with other operating costs (fuel, energy, maintenance, inventories) which are necessarily in effect even during a shutdown, along with the eventual costs of restarting production, work for the union and workers.

In addition, the more long-run costs of losing market share or potential investment due to the loss of output during a strike can add to the costs of obstruction. The bigger the firm and its fixed capital and operating costs, the greater the costs of obstruction. This turns monopoly theory on its head.

The other side of this coin is that higher levels of fixed capital and the capital/labor ratio means labor becomes a smaller proportion of total unit costs, allowing for potential wage increases even as the costs of obstruction rises.

But again, as Botwinick reminds us, actual outcomes rely on the state of worker organization, which depends not only on union density in the relevant industry and firm, especially the "regulating capital" of the industry, but on the quality of that organization represented by the leadership's understanding of the system and accountability to the workers, union democracy, effectiveness of workplace or stewards' organization, and the ability to overcome divisions within the workforce such as race and gender.

The countering human factor is, once again, the ability of capital to mobilize workers from the reserve army of labor to sustain production well enough to minimize the "costs of obstruction" over time.

Finally, there remains the fact that some capitalists and their managers will be willing to take even fairly substantial losses, i.e. to absorb the costs of obstruction, in the belief that this will serve their interests better in the long run. As this would entail losing market share or possible new investments diverted to other firms or industries under the conditions of real capitalist competition, however, this is a risky strategy for capital.

Unfortunately, neither firms nor their owners and managers are the rational actors possessed of perfect knowledge imagined by neoclassical theory.

These dynamics are not limited to manufacturing or capital-intensive industries, for the simple reason that the factors listed above are constantly changing in more

labor-intensive industries as well. The direction of changes in the capital/labor ratio or intensity, fixed capital, operating costs, etc., as well as their proportions, matter.

The warehousing industry provides an example. Warehousing has been transformed in the last two decades or so by the rise of logistics as a centerpiece for competition in almost all capitalistically-organized industries. The warehousing workforce in the United States grew by nearly two-thirds from 2000 to 2016, but total fixed assets in this industry grew by one-and-a-half times, thus increasing at over twice the rate of the workforce.

While this is not a precise measure of the capital/labor ratio, it is an indication that it grew significantly. Indeed, we know that the average size of a warehouse grew by two to four times, new equipment including some automation was introduced, increasing the proportion of fixed capital.

At the same time, the nature of warehousing changed from storage to the rapid movement of goods in and out of the warehouse, whether at a Wal-Mart distribution center, an Amazon fulfillment center, the two major rivals for the position of regulating capital, or an independently-owned warehouse. Thus, both competitive pressures and rapid income turnover potentially raise the costs of obstruction.

The vast majority of warehouse workers, two-thirds to three-quarters of whom are Black or Latino in most logistics concentrations, are not unionized. While we don't know the relative profit rates, using Botwinick's extension of Marxist analysis what these changes in fixed capital indicate is that this industry is far more ripe for organizing than it was even a decade or two ago.

In addition, warehouses are key "nodes" in today's competitive and "just-in-time" supply chains, so that the cost of obstruction impacts not only the immediate facilities on strike but those up and down the supply chains as well. Furthermore, the location of most warehouses trends to be well outside major urban centers where large pools of the reserve army of labor are concentrated, so that the use of replacement workers is at least somewhat problematic.²

Obviously it isn't this simple as there are other barriers to organization, including state intervention and union inertia.

In this era of economic turbulence and periodic crises, conditions will change and not all moments will be equally opportune for new organizing or aggressive bargaining with employers. Furthermore, as Botwinick makes clear throughout, these same dynamics present limits on what workers can gain under capitalism given the necessity of profits and the long-term tendency of their

"... the persistent inequalities that flow from capitalist competition provide a key to understanding the hierarchy of employment and income inherent in capitalism, not only between classes but within the working class itself, that reproduce the unequal racial and gender "assignments" rooted in the long history of patriarchy, slavery, Jim Crow, and present-day structural racism."

rates to decline.

Nevertheless, his extension of Marx's analysis of wage determination under capitalism is a welcome relief from the rigidity and stasis of monopoly and dual labor market theory.

Race, Gender & Persistent Inequalities

Botwinick is clear that the dynamics of capitalist competition provide the starting point for a Marxist understanding of the material basis of racial and gender discrimination in capitalism. Because the theory is presented at a fairly high level of abstraction, "a useful analysis of the question of discriminatory assignment [to lower wage jobs — KM] would require a much more concrete discussion of the social and historical forces that have led to particular forms of discrimination against women and people of colour within different capitalist nations." (9)

Nevertheless, quite aside from occupational differences and skill levels, the persistent inequalities that flow from capitalist competition provide a key to understanding the hierarchy of employment and income inherent in capitalism, not only between classes but within the working class itself, that reproduce the unequal racial and gender "assignments" rooted in the long history of patriarchy, slavery, Jim Crow, and present-day structural racism.

The origins of racism and sexism precede the development of industrial capitalism in patriarchy and slavery, but it is the rise of capitalist competition that provides

the new and changing unequal forms of wage labor that workers compete to fill. These in turn tend to shape the competition for housing, education, and other aspects of social existence.

Typically, the "assignment" of labor is controlled by capital, but sometimes by the actions of other (usually white, male) workers as in the case of exclusionary craft unions or rigged seniority systems. This in turn means that it is not only the struggles of workers generally against capital, but struggles by oppressed groups within the working class for equality, that affect the distribution of wages and the conditions that follow from that.

The slippery history of how racism in particular is reshaped to fit the changing contours of U.S. capitalism since the end of slavery have been well documented in works by Jones, Roediger, Roediger and Esch, among others. For a discussion of gender, social reproduction, and capitalism from a Marxist-Feminist perspective see Brenner.³

But the analysis of capitalist competition developed by Botwinick gives us a key part of the underlying material basis for understanding the survival and reproduction of racial and gender inequality and oppression, and their inseparability from actually existing capitalism.

Without the objective analysis of the *dynamic of capitalist competition* that produces inequality, however, we can fall into the trap of seeing race and gender discrimination as simply subjective or ideological or somehow a random historical development independent of capitalism. As Botwinick puts it in the Introduction:

First, there is the generation of jobs with substandard working conditions and below-average wage rates. And, second, there is the discriminatory assignment of a disproportionate number of people of colour and women to these low-paying jobs. (9)

This generation of low-paying jobs is the result of capitalist competition on the one hand, and the impact of the reserve army and hence the availability of desperate workers on the other.

For some time, the reserve army, in which workers of color are overrepresented, has grown beyond even those under-and-unemployed at any one time to include growing numbers of prime-age males, in particular, who have dropped out of the work force.

As a result, the competition among workers for employment and the impact on restraining wages remains intense even during periods of economic recovery or growth. On the other hand, growing industries like health care, hospitality, food service and warehousing have become the low-wage sites of the contemporary "assignment" of Black and Latino men and women to the

work force.

The simultaneous growth of better-paying “information” industries such as those dominated by Google and Facebook and expanded by burgeoning high-tech start-ups are notable for the absence of women and Black workers in their skilled jobs and “hip” workplaces, despite the growth of an educated Black middle class in recent years and the continuing existence of both a latent and available female workforce.⁴

Racism and sexism, in short, are still at work. At the same time, however, the very dynamic of capital competition that creates the low-wage jobs into which women and people of color are disproportionately “assigned” also opens the potential for organization as firms become more capital intensive, as most of those in the industries mentioned above have.

Furthermore, the integration of much of the private sector workforce into the “just-in-time” supply chains that tie the economy together offers more potential power, and

hence greater costs of obstruction. It is indeed worth noting also that much of the strike activity of the last few years has occurred precisely in the commodified or state-provided sectors of social reproduction and emotional labor: education, hospital (especially nurses), and hotel workers where the norms of “lean” production have become dominant in one form or another.

There is of course no salvation in political economy by itself, as Botwinick makes clear throughout. There is, however, the analytical basis for more focused research and clearer organizing strategies for labor and the means for women and people of color to break the barriers of economic inequality.

Persistent Inequalities is a vital guide for those in the growing socialist movement as well as in a labor movement on the defensive, and reviving social movements that are grappling with the problems of organization, possible sources of power, and the interrelations of class, race and gender in the context of the capitalist system we hope to

transcend. ■

Notes

1. For a recent statement of this trend in Marxism see Jeffery R. Webber (2019) “Resurrection of the Dead, Exaltation of the New Struggles: Marxism, Class Conflict, and Social Movements” *Historical Materialism* 27(1): 5-54.
2. For a more detailed analysis of this industry see Kim Moody (2017) *On New Terrain: How Capital is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War* (Chicago: Haymarket Books), 59-69; Kim Moody (2019) “Labor and the Contradictory Logic of Logistics,” *Work organisation, labour & globalization* (in press).
3. Jacqueline Jones (1998) *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company); David R. Roediger (2008) *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon* (London: Verso); David R. Roediger and Elizabeth Esch (2012) *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press); Johanna Brenner (2019 “Marx for Today: A Socialist-Feminist Reading” *Against the Current* 199 (March-April 2019), 27-32; Johanna Brenner (2000) *Women and the Politics of Class* (New York: Monthly Review Press).
4. Consider, for example, the hundreds of thousands of teachers and nurses who have left their occupations out of frustration with the degradation of their professions, many of whom could easily be trained as designers, programmers, coders, etc. in these burgeoning high-tech industries, but are not.

What Sanders’ Campaign Opens — continued from page 5

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Congresswoman for NY-14 (the Bronx & Queens), introduced a bill to have the post office issue money orders as it used to do.

There are several million people who rely on check cashing outfits that charge an arm and a leg because people lack a bank account. It’s a simple reform, yet with consequences not only for poor people, but also strengthening public sector workers, the majority of whom are women and African Americans.

What does this simple have to do with socialism? It puts the needs of people before the megaprofits of the check-cashing business. That means something in today’s corporate-ravaged neoliberal America.

It is true that Bernie doesn’t raise nationalizing industry under workers’ and community control, and his opposition to U.S. wars abroad doesn’t scrutinize U.S. imperialism’s role in the world — issues that the independent socialist left needs to foreground. However the reality of his program — support to workers’ rights, expansion of Medicare for all, an end to a fossil fuel economy and the call for women to control our own bodies — can only be implemented if millions mobilize in the streets.

The Democratic party does not see Sanders as “reliable,” and will once again find a way to block his winning their spot

on the ballot. That was true in 2016 and I believe it’s true this time. In fact, this time around there is a surplus of candidates so delegates will be able to “pick” from a range — whether it’s Elizabeth Warren, who echoes a great deal of his program, or someone much closer to the center, whether Kamala Harris or Joe Biden.

Given that Sanders’ road will be blocked once again, what then is the point in supporting his primary run? Won’t that experience just demoralize his grassroots support, especially as he will then endorse a figure the establishment prefers? Won’t it reinforce reliance on the Democratic party?

Of course all that’s a possibility, just as the re-election of Trump is a possibility. But it’s significant that at its August convention, DSA voted not to support any candidate for president if Bernie is not a nominee. That doesn’t seem as if supporting Bernie’s run traps individuals and organizations inside the Democratic party — whatever choices individuals make in pulling the lever on election day, whether that’s for the “lesser evil,” progressive independent or third-party option.

It’s blindness to ignore how Sanders’ platform and dynamism have changed political discussion throughout the country. It gives socialists the opportunity to engage

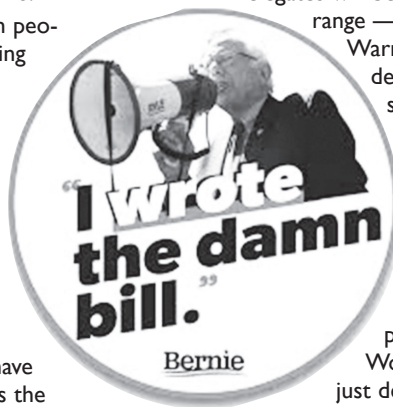
friends, family and coworkers in a discussion, far beyond support to a particular reform and without sounding like futile utopians. This broader vision of social, political and economic democracy is a battering ram against the austerity program that all wings of the corporate elite demand.

Although it doesn’t confront, let alone solve, the huge problem that we don’t have a party run by working people and in our interests, nonetheless Bernie’s campaign reveals a positive alternative to corporate domination. That insight will flourish, of course, only if millions find their voices in the struggles for justice.

Let’s not kid ourselves: The struggle to win a majority to realize that the destructive nature of capitalism can be replaced through mass intervention is still at a beginning stage. It can be nourished through the daily community struggles for clean water, affordable housing and quality schools. It lives in Black Lives Matter and the fight for a democratically-run union.

If we can pry open more political space during this electoral season, we may invigorate movements out of which these demands first arose. Isn’t that the point of the exercise?

It is unlikely, given the tools we currently lack, to immediately do more than widen the discussion for economic, political and environmental justice. But the deeper our roots the greater chance of success. The point Bernie makes, which socialists need to amplify, is that change comes about when millions mobilize for ourselves and each other. ■



REVIEW

Learning Through Struggle

By Marian Swerdlow

Red State Revolt: The Teachers' Strike Wave and Working-Class Politics

By Eric Blanc

Verso, 2019, 224 pages, \$19.95 paper.

THE TEACHER STRIKES that swept through “Red States” in early 2018 demonstrated how suddenly powerful upsurges can arise within the working class. The fire was lit in West Virginia and spread through half a dozen such states, surprising observers because the social conservatism of these states’ populations seemed at odds with the politics of the rising.

These educators challenged sacred cows of social conservatism such as cheap small government, and the privatization and discrediting of public education, and they did so often with the widespread support of their communities. Their rising breached and weakened the austerity regimes in their states, and drowned out the narrative that educators are to blame for the weaknesses of public education.

Eric Blanc has written an intelligent, often insightful, and vivid account of this momentous movement, *Red State Revolt*. In the first of his three chapters, “The Roots of Revolt,” Blanc observes that it “erupted in a period of virtually uninterrupted working class defeats and neoliberal austerity.” However, “the walkouts were not an automatic response by Red State teachers to receiving the country’s worst salaries.” He credits neither spontaneity nor any “worse the better” theory.

Blanc writes about what he considers the three most important strikes — West Virginia, Arizona and Oklahoma. He shows that the latter had a much less favorable outcome than the other two. According to Blanc, many common factors led to all three uprisings, and all faced similar challenges.

In his final and lengthiest chapter, “The Militant Minority,” Blanc explores the reasons for these differences. He makes a convincing case that the different outcomes were due to “the existence of a ‘militant minority’ of workplace activists” who played a leadership role in West Virginia and Arizona, but were absent in Oklahoma.

Marian Swerdlow taught in a Brooklyn public high school for over 25 years. She is a member of Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE), a reform caucus of the United Federation of Teachers.

The clearest and strongest part of Blanc’s concept of what distinguishes the “militant minority” from other activists is their shared political perspective, including being union members yet willing to act independently, if necessary, against the top union officialdom. Less convincing is when he distinguishes them by their level of experience, which is often limited to a couple of years of activism, or less.

But Blanc makes clear that all had learned — perhaps as much from studying and paying attention to many struggles, as from personal involvement — about unions, how to organize workers, and how to bring about change. Most thought deeply about these questions. He points out that during the mass working-class upsurges in U.S. history, it was Communists, socialists and Trotskyists who played this role, but that one doesn’t have to be any of those to be part of a militant minority.

Leadership Matters

In the first state to rise, West Virginia, Blanc views the main contribution of the militant minority as winning the state’s teachers to the idea of a strike. Two rank-and-file leaders, Jay O’Neal and Emily Comer, both members of the state teachers’ union, started a Facebook page in response to yet another state initiative to make its employees’ health insurance, the PEIA, less comprehensive and more expensive.

Although the two moderated the page, they allowed all page members to post on it. Not only did they argue for a strike, they brought forward the idea that the “fix” for the health insurance system should be more progressive taxation.

Blanc contrasts Oklahoma, the next of the three states to rise, with both of the others for its absence of a militant minority. In that state, there were two competing rank-and-file initiatives based on Facebook pages. Neither page founder was a union member, and neither raised demands around progressive taxation. On the more popular page, only the founder could make posts. Other members were limited to comments or responses to polls.

Another weakness in Oklahoma was that both the rank-and-file leaders and the state union, the Oklahoma Educators Association (OEA) adopted a strategy reliant on the support of local Superintendents. Neither rank-and-file leader advocated a strike vote

among school employees, or coordination of the strike with the OEA. Instead they asked teachers to reach out to Superintendents and work with them directly.

This made striking less risky, but it also put a great deal of control over the strike in middle management’s hands. Finally, neither leader saw any need to organize on the school level.

Hoping to avert a strike set for April 2, the Oklahoma legislature passed a bill giving teachers a raise of roughly \$6,000 or 15%. But it included only minimal funding for schools and a modest raise for school support staff.

Despite all this, Blanc notes that the walkout was “massive, given Oklahoma’s weak labor organizations and traditions.” He concludes that the relative failure of the strike there cannot be attributed to lower levels of educator militancy or mobilization.

After April 2, the Superintendents, satisfied with the 15% raise in the new state legislation, began pulling back their support for the strike. Although educators remained off the job and in the capital for 10 more days, desperately hoping to increase school funding, the legislature refused to budge. “The limitations of an infrastructure based purely on Facebook became glaring,” Blanc observes, “in the absence of clear leadership or an organized effort from below . . . the crowd began to decline.”

On April 12, the OEA officials abruptly pulled the plug on the walkout. “Teachers across Oklahoma were outraged at OEA leaders. Hundreds dropped their dues.” Instead of the strike building the union, as it did in West Virginia and Arizona, the strike eroded it. Blanc concludes that this is an object lesson of what can happen without leadership by experienced rank-and-file organizers connected to unions.

Victory Against the Odds

Turning to the last state to rise, Blanc observes that Arizona, “inhospitable to labor and the left” is the “perfect test case for the importance of a radical militant minority.” It is better to compare Arizona with Oklahoma than with West Virginia because of the latter’s “relatively strong labor movement and traditions.”

The militant minority there was a core of about 10 activists who came together through a Facebook page, Arizona Educators Union (AEU). One, Rebecca Garelli, was

a veteran of the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) strike. She was an invaluable living textbook of its lessons. She proposed building a structure of workplace representatives, as the CTU had done.

Blanc comments that these liaisons were “the most important part of the movement.” Furthermore, AEU’s two-month organizing campaign was done hand-in-hand with the Arizona Educators Association (AEA), the state teachers’ union.

Again, Garelli drew on her Chicago experience to coordinate escalating actions to build educator confidence and unity, as well as community support. By late March, the AEU invited its members to collectively draw up demands online and in the workplace. The final demands were presented at a mass rally in the capital on March 28.

“After two months of deep organizing,” says Blanc, the AEU had “won over school employees of all persuasions.” Although most AEU leaders were initially skeptical of striking in Arizona’s right-wing, anti-labor political landscape, after 110,000 Arizonians participated in walk-ins on April 11, they decided to hold a strike authorization vote.

As the strike began on Thursday, April 26, and Friday, April 27, the governor announced he had reached a deal with the legislature for a 20% raise without cutting services.

The AEU leadership polled its liaisons and found they and their colleagues still wanted to return to the capital and continue the strike on Monday. But on Tuesday afternoon, the AEU and AEA made a joint announcement of a return to work on Thursday if the governor’s bill passed.

Blanc reports that “a majority of teachers were upset that [the leaders] did not give them a choice . . . momentum declined rapidly . . . it seemed as if Arizona’s walkout denouement might end looking more like the implosion in Oklahoma.”

Although this seems like a very serious, and potentially devastating, error on the part of AEU leaders, Blanc merely observes, “After the fact, AEU representatives agreed that it had been a mistake not to put the question up for a vote.”

What saved the strike from failure was the initiative of a single member of the AEU leadership team, Dylan Wegela, who had been the most consistent advocate of militant action from the start. He thought of a way the strike could be revitalized by fighting to add amendments to the governor’s bill that would embody more of the strikers’ demands, including better ratios of teachers and counselors to students, and raises for



Arizona joins the uprising.

other school staff besides teachers.

While the Republican legislature voted all the amendments down, morale among the strikers rebounded, and the strike ended with a fight rather than dissipating in an anticlimactic letdown.

Contrasting Results

Blanc very effectively contrasts the results of the three strikes. In the West Virginia strike, educators forced politicians to back down from proposed changes in public employee health insurance charges, and to give an across-the-board 5% raise to all state employees, and more than 2,000 educators joined unions.

In Arizona, strikers forced a 20% raise that was not funded by cutting social services, and a scrapping of bills for a referendum on school vouchers, for tax cuts, and for tax credits by the Republican State Legislature.

Approximately 2,500 new members joined the AEA during that spring. In contrast, Oklahoma educators won nothing during their walkout to add to the raise they’d gotten by their strike threat; Blanc reports that the OEA actually lost hundreds of members. After extensive and detailed discussion, Blanc concludes convincingly, “What was missing in Oklahoma was a team of like-minded grassroots militants, armed with activist knowhow . . . and an orientation toward working within unions to push them along.”

In the book’s middle chapter, “The Power of Strikes,” Blanc thoroughly discusses how strike leaders built — or, in the case of Oklahoma, failed to adequately build — unity. He points out that unity is built through “deeds, not words.”

In West Virginia, rank-and-file and union leaders organized “wear red” days, a rally at the state capital and school site strike votes by all school employees in all titles, union

and non-union.

How to Build Unity?

Even in such a politically and racially homogenous state, divergent political perspectives were a source of division. Rank-and-file leaders in West Virginia and Arizona consciously pushed for demands that would unite all school employees, not only teachers, which made the movements there bigger and more powerful. Militant minority leaders were the ones who understood why and how to build unity.

They also limited their list of demands. Blanc comments, “Had educators

attempted to make broad ideological agreement or a long list of demands a precondition for unity in action, their movements would have never gotten off the ground. Instead, they focused on the big, burning demands that the vast majority of school employees and community members already felt strongly about.”

He reports finding this orientation among members of the rank-and-file themselves. For example, when he asked strikers about the particular challenges facing female teachers, “they almost always responded by pivoting . . . insisting the movement united all educators.”

This raises a question that Blanc treats less successfully: *the racial implications, for both strikers and their community supporters, of a unity based on limited demands.* Blanc observes that “the unconscious prejudices of white workers did not prevent them from striking with their non-white co-workers for common demands.” This does not seem noteworthy.

White workers refusing to participate in a strike because non-white members of their union were striking has not been a problem in teacher strikes, public employee strikes, or in any U.S. strikes during at least the last 40 years. The threat to interracial unity among strikers is usually that the white workers reject the demands raised by people of color to address *their special oppression*, and that rejection weakens those workers’ support. Blanc himself gives an example of this during the Red State uprisings, when white teachers in Kentucky rejected Black teachers’ demands against an impending racist “gang” bill.

Although Blanc does not give statistics for the racial composition of the teachers in the states he discusses, he does say that “a majority of the strikers were white,” and that Oklahoma had an “overwhelmingly

white teaching force.” Since West Virginia’s overall population is 92% non-Hispanic white, it is likely its strikers, too, were overwhelmingly white.

Race has also played an important role in public reaction to teacher strikes. Historically, teacher strikes were mainly urban, and provoked hostility in Black communities, who saw them as yet another way their children were being educationally shortchanged, and yet more evidence that predominantly white teachers did not care about their children.

In 2012, the CTU’s signal accomplishment was to turn that around by making their contract campaign and, finally, their strike, into a fight against what it denounced as “educational apartheid,” as well as for better job security and working conditions for school workers.

The Red State strikers all demanded more school funding. Demands on behalf of students were especially prominent in Oklahoma, where they were second only to wage demands. Educators in West Virginia and Arizona did grassroots organizing for months before the strike, talking to parents, holding walk-ins with parents, passing out educational flyers, and waving signs.

As one might expect from Blanc’s discussion of the basis for strikers’ unity, none made any special demands for students of color. Blanc argues that the “race blind” demand for more school funds was “objectively anti-racist.”

He also claims that because of the strikes, “thousands of conservative educators began to question their Republican affinities,” and that this amounts to “a redirection of popular anger upward, against the ruling rich,” and that this, too, has “profound anti-racist implications.” However, even if we accept the reasoning that disillusionment with Republican politicians equaled “anger toward the ruling rich,” this is still the same kind of “color blind” stance that flawed even the greatest Socialist Party leaders as long as a century ago.

It may have been easy to sidestep racial inequality in West Virginia, where 92% of the population is non-Hispanic white, or even in Oklahoma, where the non-white population is divided into 8% Black, 11% Hispanic and 9% Native American. But in Arizona, 70% of public school students are Hispanic, as is 32% of the population.

Interestingly, community support for the strike does not seem to have been as strong in Arizona as in West Virginia or Oklahoma. (For example, Blanc quotes Garelli explaining why the AEU decided to end the strike without a vote: “A lot of parents may not have responded well if we continued the walkout.” In the other two strikes, there’s no mention of any similar concern.)

Blanc passes over this, but one reason

may have been the strikers’ failure to raise issues affecting Hispanic students specifically. Another dynamic of earlier urban teacher strikes, which John Shelton documents in his book *Teacher Strike!* (2017), was the hostility they generated among whites who resented paying higher taxes to fund education for urban students of color. This factor, too, may have been at play in Arizona.

“The Union Paradox”

An aspect of the revolts that Blanc covers well is what could be termed “the union paradox.” On the one hand, weak union allowed space for militancy; on the other, the resources of even such weak unions were necessary for the success of the Red State strikes.

Blanc observes that, “since unions were weak and collective bargaining nonexistent, the strikes took on an unusually volcanic and unruly form,” which made them especially disruptive and exacerbated the social and political crisis they precipitated. He likens the teachers’ lack of full collective bargaining rights to “a pressure cooker with no escape valve.”

Blanc explicitly denies that workers are more powerful without unions: “... there’s no strategic substitute for a strong trade union movement.” Yet, in West Virginia, “it was only under growing pressure from below” that top union officials began to shift toward favoring a work stoppage.

Blanc observes that an important factor contributing to the effectiveness of this pressure was that since West Virginia was a “right-to-work” state, workers could stop paying dues at any time. “Although weakening the trade union movement as a whole, [this situation] creates a qualitatively different power relations between union ranks and officials.” Still, he adds hastily, right-to-work laws “are an impediment to sustaining working class power.” (Since the *Janus* decision, this situation now obtains throughout all U.S. public employee unions: time will tell if this different power relation leads to greater militancy.)

Blanc reports that “the most empowering moment of the strike [in West Virginia] was the night it went wildcat ... West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) President Dale Lee announced to the massive crowd that the strike was over ... educators began chanting ... ‘Fix It Now,’ ‘Back to the Table,’ ‘We are the bosses.’” Blanc comments, “The wildcat saved the strike.”

On the other hand, in all three states, Blanc documents that the strikes could not have achieved what they did without the resources the official unions provided, such as office staff, research teams, tactical advice, and even financial help.

In West Virginia, when the size of the movement grew so much it exceeded the

organizational capacity of its rank-and-file leaders, the official union stepped in to lead. (With 70% of West Virginia teachers union members, the WVEA was in a far stronger position than the unions in Oklahoma — 40% membership — or Arizona — 25% membership.) Still, as observed above, when it tried to settle for an inadequate deal, the rank and file itself took leadership into its own hands.

A related paradox Blanc explores is how the fact that unions’ political “allies,” the Democrats, were out of power in the Red States actually contributed to stronger and more effective union action. Unions were less hesitant to strike against Republicans: “the fact that Republicans were in power created considerably more room for maneuver.” In blue states, teacher unions are more reluctant to strike, since a strike is an attack on their allies, the Democratic Party, paradoxically leading them to eschew labor’s most powerful weapon.

How Social Media Helps and Hinders

Blanc discusses the role of social media in building mass militancy with insight and nuance. He observes that “without social media, there is no chance that the Red State Revolt would have developed as it did.” Yet when West Virginia rank-and-file leaders set up a Facebook group in response to the proposed changes in PEIA, few people joined until the organizers took clipboards and sign up sheets to PEIA informational meetings.

Another problem of social media Blanc finds is that it can “scale up too fast,” and outpace political relationships and infrastructure, and challenge internal democracy. Blanc concludes, “Real workplace power can’t be forged solely through Facebook.”

Developing a Winning Strategy

Blanc claims that during the uprisings, “the importance of trade unions ... became widely evident.”

Interestingly enough, although the unions in Arizona and West Virginia grew in absolute numbers, at no time did strikers in any of these states raise demands for greater rights for unions. Although public employee strikes are illegal in all three states, not even the militant minority leaders, as far as Blanc reports, even considered raising the demand to make strikes legal.

In Arizona, where there is no legal right to collective bargaining for teachers [Sanes, Milla and John Schmitt, “Regulation of Public Sector Collective Bargaining in the States,” The Center for Economic and Policy Research, March, 2014] the AEU, as far as Blanc reports, never considered a demand for that right. There is some indication that the AEU succeeded in organizing teachers in that intensely anti-labor state, precisely because they were not a union. One of its leaders is quoted saying “the Arizona

Education Association . . . didn't have the . . . trust of our members. There's strong anti-union sentiment in Arizona . . . It was important for AEU not to have partisan affiliation," with a strong suggestion that "partisan" here means "union."

This is in marked contrast to the teacher strikes of the 1960s to early 1980s documented by Shelton, which almost invariably demanded, and usually won, exclusive union recognition and the right to collective bargaining, and even, occasionally, the legal right to strike.

Blanc emphasizes the importance of the role of strikes in revitalizing the labor movement, pointing out the failure of other strategies, and the role strikes have played in U.S. history in creating a powerful labor movement that forced both capitalists and the bourgeois state to make important concession to the working class.

However, when Blanc claims that the Red State strikes "radically transformed the collective organization, self-confidence and political consciousness of working people," he seems on less solid ground.

Certainly, during the uprisings, strikers felt confidence, unity and empowerment. However, it is yet to be seen whether these changes are lasting or temporary. We don't know whether, for example, the liaison network AEU created will endure.

Unions in Arizona and West Virginia grew. But since Blanc gives prior union density in percentages, and the size of growth in absolute numbers, it is difficult to judge whether this growth was a "radical transformation" of those unions.

To illustrate changes in political consciousness, Blanc mentions educators' realization of "the extent of the subordination of politicians and governmental policy to big business," and "disillusionment with

Republican Party politicians."

As important as these changes in consciousness are, it's not clear they are "radical transformations," or merely bring the Red State teachers into line with large numbers of others in "blue states." Hopefully, the Red State revolts will be part of the beginning of such a radical transformation, by the inspiration of their example and their success.

So as significant as the changes brought about by the Red State risings are in the context of the overall continuing retreat of the U.S. working class, and the extremely conservative nature of those states in particular, it seems more accurate that these strikes show the *potential* for working-class collective action, rather than a "radical transformation of . . . the level of working class collective organization."

Blanc is optimistic that, as a result of the uprising, "a small but not insignificant number of strikers concluded that systematic solutions will be needed to resolve society's underlying crisis of priorities." However, he does not discuss what "systematic solutions" meant to these strikers, or whether they had developed any ideas as to the reasons why this society has the priorities that it does.

Blanc himself can be fuzzy on his own thinking on these matters. For example, he speaks of "the immense potential for working class politics," but leaves unanswered the questions, "potential for what? To do what?" He says "the left needs labor [in order] to win," but doesn't address the question, "Win what?" He speaks vaguely of "a better world," and of socialists' "inspiring vision of a better future." He speaks of "the system" that "depends upon our labor," but does not name the system.

Related to this is Blanc's use of terms from revolutionary Marxism while changing

their meanings so that their power to propel us from fighting for important reforms to organizing for revolutionary change is weakened. For example, he uses "class struggle unionism" as a synonym for militancy.

However, the term, in the part of the revolutionary left that developed it, conceptualized a far more dynamic, proto-revolutionary consciousness and practice that would be a transition from militancy to revolutionary Marxism [See, for example, Jack Weinberg, "Class Struggle Unionism," Sun Press: 1975].

In a similar vein, Blanc refers to "the importance of trade unions and worker solidarity . . . the potency of the strike weapon" as "lessons in class consciousness." While class consciousness includes these elements of trade union consciousness, what makes it a far more potent force for change is that it encompasses the realization that all workers, of all nations and races, and regardless of legal status, are part of the same class and share the same long-term interests.

Eric Blanc argues that the left needs a strong and militant labor movement in order to achieve its goals. But he warns that "it is not inevitable that the growth of socialist organizations will result in the rebirth of a militant labor movement."

The problem, as he sees it, is that "most young activists today are not convinced of the centrality of workplace organizing." Blanc is clearly convinced of this centrality, and would like to see socialists take jobs where they could do workplace organizing, although he cautions that "the presence of experienced radicals in an industry doesn't automatically enable collective militancy. Conditions need to be ripe." If *Red State Revolt* can win more of these young activists to this idea, it will have significant political importance. ■

Before the Algerian Revolution — continued from page 10

Some collectives do not do any work with women from popular backgrounds. Here, we organize workshops in villages, we talk about domestic work, we bring up the question of childcare in factories or in state companies — for now, the only one with a nursery is Sonatrach, the hydrocarbon company. Private nurseries are also very expensive: a woman can spend 70% of her salary there.

MW: Do different generations find common ground in these collectives?

WZ: This is not a conflict between generations, but it is true that the new generation accuses the old one of not wanting to pass on the torch, which is not entirely wrong.

That being said, it is important to reflect on the road traveled: the movement of the 1970s where women created a clandestine

film club in Algiers, then that of the 1980s, which questioned the Family Code, have been crucial.

In the 1990s, during the Black Decade, many activists were murdered or had to flee. Then in 2001, there was also the Berber movement. Not to forget of course, commitment during the revolution for independence.

There have been achievements. An older activist once told me that the fact that we dare to speak today about violence and harassment is already a huge thing. ■

Notes

1. Established in 1984, the Family Code is heavily criticized by many Algerian feminist associations. Dubbed the Code of Infamy, it keeps the woman as a legal minor for life, passing from the tutelage of the father to that of the husband. In 2005, a reform allowed some adjustments:

polygamy became subject to the "preliminary consent" of the first wife; marriage by proxy (which allowed forced marriages) was abolished; and the woman can henceforth remain in the family accommodation with the children, in case of separation.

2. A human rights activist and defender of the *Mozabite* cause (Berber-speaking minority), he had already served, between 2015 and 2017, a two-year prison sentence, on charges of "undermining the security of the state" and "disturbance of public order." This year, on March 31, he was incarcerated for denouncing in the press the repression against imprisoned *Mozabite* militants accused of "attacking the institutions." He began a hunger strike and died on May 28.

3. In early June, due to a lack of candidates, the Constitutional Council cancelled the presidential elections that were scheduled for July 4th following the resignation of Boumediène. The mandate of the interim president has been extended for an indefinite period. A national conference of civil society for a way out of crisis took place in June, organized by associations and unions. They advocate a transition period, an independent commission to lead the elections and a national dialogue with political actors, which should end with a national conference.

REVIEW

What is Working-Class Literature? By Matthew Beeber

A History of American Working-Class Literature

Nicholas Coles and Paul Lauter, editors
Cambridge University Press, 2017,
504 pages, \$105 hardcover.

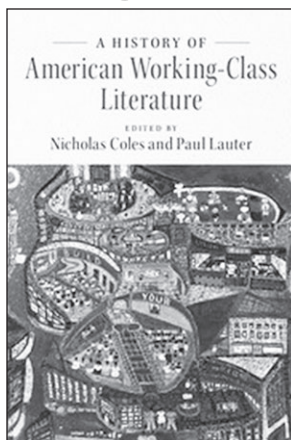
ON APRIL 26, 1935 proletarian author Edwin Seaver addressed the American Writers' Congress, assembled in New York City's Mecca Temple. The topic of his speech was the fiercely debated definition of the term "proletarian literature."

Seaver spoke of the need to "eliminate the sorry confusion that has prevailed and still does prevail [when one] assumes that a proletarian novel must be written by a worker, or must be about workers, or must be written especially for workers."

Ultimately, according to Seaver, "it is not the class origin of the writer which is the determining factor," nor necessarily the author's choice of subject matter, but rather "his present class loyalties."² Thus, proletarian literature is not limited to writing by working-class authors, nor to writing about workers, nor to writing produced for a working-class audience. The category could include any of this work, so long as the author is "on the side of" the proletariat.

The literary critic Kenneth Burke, speaking at the same congress, came to a similar conclusion. He considered the concept of the proletariat to be symbolic and, somewhat mystically, to denote a "secondary order of reality," transcending such mundane concerns such as class position, subject matter, or intended audience. Both Burke and Seaver, along with many leaders of the proletarian literature movement of the 1930s, thus advocated for the broadest possible parameters of the term.

A History of American Working-Class Literature, edited by Nicholas Coles and Paul Lauter, demonstrates that debates around the definition of proletarian literature are experiencing a resurgence in the 2010s. As a decade following a major eco-



nomomic crisis — with far-right authoritarianism and vicious racism on the rise internationally, when wealth disparity is at a record high and rising, when political camps are increasingly polarized — the 2010s make a seductive analog to the 1930s.

Indeed, although the term *proletarian* may have subsequently gone out of vogue (for reasons this review will address), the question at the forefront of the 1935 Writers' Congress is being asked today in strikingly similar language.

On the first page of their introduction, Coles and Lauter report being asked: "What do you mean, 'working-class literature?' Are you talking about writing produced by working-class people? Writing about working-class men and women? Writing directed at a working-class audience?"

Coles and Lauter answer these questions in the tradition of Burke and Seaver, responding simply, "yes." The volume, a collection of academic essays, makes good on this response: it conceives of working-class literature in the broadest possible terms, including critical essays on works and authors whom we may not always associate with the working class.

Transhistorical Approach

It is no accident that the volume uses the term *working-class* in place of *proletarian*; the first several essays of the collection address literature written before Marx popularized the word and with little resemblance to the Marxist-inspired literature of the 1930s. Spanning historical periods from the American colonies to the deindustrialized present, the volume takes a transhistorical approach to the concept of labor and the working class.

On the early end, co-editor Paul Lauter offers a wide-ranging discussion of the very concept of labor in his essay "Why Work? Early American Theories and Practices," and Peter Riley emphasizes the role of labor in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Through the course of 24 essays, the collection winds its way from the colonial period through the

18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, concluding with essays such as Joseph Entin's on "Contemporary Working-Class Literature."

Sherry Lee Linkon's discussion of "Working-Class Literature after Deindustrialization" in some ways frames the position of the collection as a whole, questioning — as first posited by E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* — the association between the working class and industrialization.

In severing this association we are freed to address the literature of "the next generation, working-class people for whom industrial work has never been an option," as well as writing by and about workers which predates the industrial revolution.

The stakes of this intervention go beyond academic questions of periodization. By extending the temporal boundaries of "working-class literature" beyond those of industrialization, the volume prevents "working-class literature" from becoming a purely historical designation, tied to the mills and factories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The volume also does significant work in expanding the boundaries of working-class literature to include writing by a diverse set of authors, including women and African Americans, both groups too often left out of traditional accounts of proletarian literature.

Following the lead of proletarian literature scholar Paula Rabinowitz, and riffing on the title of Michael Gold's famous 1929 essay, Michelle Tokarczyk offers an account of some female authors in her essay, "Go Left, Young Women," where she rightfully asserts the importance of writers such as Meridel Le Seuer, Muriel Rukeyser, and Tillie Olsen.

Yet again Coles and Lauter's volume de-centers the canonical authors of 1930s proletarian literature by including essays such as Christopher Hager's account of the "Lowell Mill Girls" and other women's writing in the early 19th century.

And although Bill V. Mullen takes the title of his essay "I Have Seen Black Hands" from Richard Wright's canonical 1934 proletarian poem, the piece convincingly argues that such work belongs to a continuum of Black working-class literature, spanning from slave narratives to the literature of Black Lives Matter.

As a whole, the volume extends the boundaries of working-class writing not only

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along a temporal axis, but along the axes of race and gender as well, a project emphasized by the final essay of the anthology, Sara Appel's discussion of "The Place of Class in Intersectional Analysis."

However, despite its valuable work in this direction, it could perhaps be wished that such a compendium would include discussion of the rich histories of working-class literature by Asian American and Latinx authors, a notable lacuna within the collection.

Broadening the Inquiry

In addition to its inclusivity in terms of time-period, race, and gender, the collection also takes a broad stance in regard to genre. Thus the volume not only interrogates our understanding of what works are considered working class, but also what are considered *literature*.

Not limited to the realm of poetry and prose, the collection delves into the fields of drama, music, and film in essays such as Amy Brady's work on "The Worker's Theatre of the Twentieth Century," Richard Flacks' discussion of "The American Labor Song Tradition," and Kathy M. Newman's treatment of "Class Struggle and the Silver Screen."

Even within the world of prose, the collection does not shy away from a discussion of "genre" writing, as evidenced by Nicholas Coles' essay on "Love and Labor in Farm Fiction," Alicia Williamson's on "Marriage Plots in Socialist Fiction," and James V. Cantano's work on "Utopian and Dystopian Fiction."

One of the most important ways in which the volume extends received boundaries of working-class literature is to give significant attention to writing which addresses various forms of forced or coerced labor. Several of the essays rightfully position slavery as an institution of labor,

and the writing produced by slaves as thus working-class literature.

John March, for example, locates the "Shadow of Slavery in Nineteenth-Century

Poetry and Song," whereas John Ernest addresses "Early African-American Expressive Culture" by both enslaved and free Black writers.

Matthew Pether's essay, on the other hand, engages with "Transportation Narratives" written by early British immigrants to the American Colonies who labored under various non-voluntary conditions. Joe Lockard extends the issue of un-free labor into the present with his analysis of "Prison Literature from the Early Republic to Attica."

The inclusion of these essays does valuable work in reframing our conception of the *working classes* necessarily to include the long history of enslaved and indentured laborers in the United States.

Then and Now

In 1935, the same year that Burke and Seaver addressed the American Writers' Congress, International Publishers released the landmark anthology *Proletarian Literature in the United States*.

In a 1936 review of the anthology, Burke suggests that the volume is "congregational" in nature.³ Its

purpose was to bring disparate elements together; it was not merely a collection of proletarian literature, but in fact sought to contribute to the formation of the literary movement which goes by that name.

The volume was congregational in that it welcomed new members — whether middle-class fellow travelers or hardscrabble worker-writers — to the movement. By including a wide range of works by authors of various subject positions, ascribing to

differing aesthetic schools, and working in diverse literary genres, the anthology embodied its congregational politics through its organization.

A History of American Working-Class Literature, although comprised of critical rather than literary writing (and appearing more than 80 years later), does very similar work. The breadth of the subject matter has the effect of inviting a wide range of art into the category of working-class literature, producing a literary formation larger and more diverse than the term *proletarian literature* typically evokes.

Similar to the mid-'30s, this politics of congregation will have its detractors today. As the literary Left abandoned the militancy of the early '30s in favor of the broad coalitions of the Popular Front, there were many who resisted what they considered the "watering down" of the movement. As early as 1932, the minutes of the Chicago convention of the John Reed Clubs noted that "young worker-writers seemed to have spent most of their time in Chicago exco-riating the sudden presence and prestige of fellow-travelers in the radical movement."⁴

If the power of Coles and Lauter's collection is that it broadens the category of *working-class literature* — to include pre- and post-industrial writing, work by women and minorities, cultural forms other than writing, and material which addresses un-free labor — this may also be cause for critique.

At first glance, to design a collection around the abstract concept of *work* (rather than, say, the *proletariat*) is to depoliticize it in a way which may cause discomfort to those most ardently invested in proletarian literature. And the transhistorical approach taken by the volume's authors may strike some as too uncomfortably near to an ahistorical treatment of labor which collapses, say, 1930s strike narratives with the poetry of Whitman.

To focus on these critiques, however, would overlook the important intervention which the volume makes. Broadening the category of working-class literature, the authors extend conversations about working-class literature backwards and forwards in time, developing an historical framework capacious enough to discuss both slave narratives and post-industrial writing, allowing for the formation of new and more diverse congregations of politics writing. ■

Notes

1. Hart, Henry, editor. *American Writers' Congress*. International Publishers, 1935, 100-101.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Burke, Kenneth. "Symbolic War." *The Southern Review*, Summer 1936, 134-147.

4. Lawrence F. Hanley. "Cultural Work and Class Politics: Re-reading and Remaking Proletarian Literature in the United States." *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38:3 (Fall 1992): 718.



Writers Meridel Le Seuer (top), Richard Wright (middle) and Muriel Rukeyser (bottom).

REVIEW

A Debate That Never Ends By Steve Downs

Building the Great Society

By Joshua Zeitz

Viking Press, 2018, Penguin Randomhouse paperback, 2019, 400 pages, \$18.

BERNIE SANDERS, IN his June 11, 2019 speech about democratic socialism and the centrality of “completing the New Deal,” gave a nod to the Great Society programs of the 1960s. Coming amid all the mentions of FDR and his programs, most people listening to this speech probably missed it.

It's not unusual for political activists on the left today to try to connect the policies they promote to the New Deal. It's pretty rare for any of them to make a connection, as Sanders did, to the Great Society.

Building the Great Society, a new book by historian and one-time candidate for Congress Joshua Zeitz, illuminates how current discussions of social, political and economic policies are continuations of discussions that took place not only in the 1930s, but also in the early 1960s.

Zeitz's book helps fill in the gap between the New Deal and today and makes clear that the terms of the debate have changed little over the last 80 years. It will help those committed to updating and completing the New Deal to have a fuller understanding of their place in the decades-long fight for a more equal and just society — and the obstacles that have interfered with the realization of those goals.

Building the Great Society is a group biography of Lyndon Baines Johnson and the team LBJ put together when he became president in November 1963. This team included veterans of the New Deal, such as Johnson himself, Jim Rowe and Abe Fortas (soon to be appointed by LBJ to the U.S. Supreme Court).

It included younger New Dealers who became involved in Washington politics in the late 1940s, notably Horace Busby and Clark Clifford (a future Secretary of Defense who in the early '90s was indicted in a major banking scandal). Bill Moyers (who became a major figure in journalism), Harry McPherson and Joseph Califano (future Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare) were of a younger generation that, in the late '50s and early '60s, was just beginning to make their mark in DC.

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And there was LBJ's close aide, Jack Valenti (future and long-term president of the Motion Picture Association of America), who became an active participant in national politics only after (literally on the day) LBJ became president.

Zeitz tells how that team advanced a broad liberal agenda of civil rights; health care for senior citizens; federal aid to elementary and secondary education; desegregation of schools, hospitals and nursing homes; measures to clean up air and water pollution; and comprehensive immigration reform. Those who are interested in how political goals become policies and laws will definitely find this book worthwhile.

He also tells the story of liberal Democrats' betrayal of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the Democratic convention in 1964, as well as how deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam brought the Great Society drive for reform to a screeching halt.

This is not a comprehensive history of the early '60s fight for civil rights or the later '60s fight against the war in Vietnam. Zeitz certainly acknowledges those fights, but his focus is very specifically on what was going on in the White House and on Capitol Hill during a brief period of time — early 1964 to late 1967.

Completing the New Deal

LBJ and much of his staff consciously saw themselves as continuing, or completing, the New Deal. Johnson himself had entered Congress in 1937 as an ardent New Dealer. He moved to the right in the late 1940s and 1950s (voting to override Truman's veto of Taft-Hartley and against anti-lynching bills, for example).

Zeitz writes that, on his first evening as president, LBJ told his aides, “...every issue that is on my desk tonight was on my desk when I came to Congress in 1937.”

Zeitz identifies those issues as “Civil Rights. Health insurance for the elderly and the poor. Federal aid to primary and secondary education. Support for higher education. Anti-poverty and nutritional programs.” (xviii)

Not only do the issues continue to resonate, so do the nuances of the discussions. There is food for thought here for anyone supporting the Green New Deal or other progressive social/legislative programs. For example:

• *Jobs and Income or Opportunity* — advisors to LBJ were split over the best way to tackle poverty. Some, based on their experience of Federal job creation in the 1930s, argued that guarantees of jobs or income were needed.

Others, drawing on “opportunity theory,” argued that the government should take steps (such as supporting schools, desegregation, training, provision of housing and healthcare) to make sure everyone had an equal opportunity (in what they expected to be a continually expanding economy) to make their own way — but should not provide jobs. The opportunity theorists won out and their position became the liberal orthodoxy for the next half century.

• *The effects of automation* — “(I)n the early 1960s, policy makers and journalists tended to associate the poverty with white families in areas of the Appalachians and Midwest that had been stripped clean of coal, or where automation had rendered human labor obsolete.” (48)

According to one survey, more Americans feared being replaced by machines than feared the USSR. (49) Obviously, it wasn't just white workers who lost jobs when coal mines closed or mines, factories, railroads, and warehouses became more automated.

Sixty years later, politics and economics are still shaped by the effects of job losses going back to the 1960s and U.S. workers still fear (with good reason) being replaced by machines, i.e., artificial intelligence, robots, and autonomous cars and trucks.

• *Classwide programs targeted to address the effects of specific oppressions* — LBJ's advisors knew there was the potential of strong backlash by white workers against the Great Society's civil rights and anti-poverty programs.

According to Zeitz, Horace Busby, a top aide to Johnson, “worried that a program specifically tailored to the poor, rather than initiatives designed to lift the floor for all citizens — education, health care for the elderly — would create a political backlash.”

Busby wrote, “America's real majority is suffering a minority complex of neglect... they have become the real foe of Negro rights, foreign aid, etc., because as much as anything, they feel forgotten...” (53)

How many times have you read a version of that argument since the 2016 election?

Backlash and George Wallace

LBJ's people hoped to avoid that backlash by advancing programs that would benefit large numbers of whites at the same time as they disproportionately benefited African-Americans. It didn't work.

Upon signing the Civil Rights Act in 1964, LBJ remarked, "We have delivered the South to the GOP for a long time to come." (75) LBJ would prove to be right, but it wasn't just in the South that an important layer of white voters rejected the Civil Rights agenda of the Great Society and shifted their votes to the GOP.

In 1964, immediately after the signing of the Civil Rights Act, George Wallace ran for president in Democratic Party primaries. Wallace was the very embodiment of white backlash. He ran, in Zeitz's words, on issues of crime, class resentment (against liberal elites) and fears of a race war.

Wallace received 25% of the vote in Wisconsin, 30% in Indiana, and 43% in Maryland. He dropped out of the race after the GOP nominated Barry Goldwater — declaring he had achieved his purpose. (101)

Nixon's Southern Strategy in 1968; the so-called 'Reagan Democrats' in 1976 and 1980; Trump's nativist and racist campaign in 2016, all of these were predicated upon the GOP — and way too many white voters — rejecting the Great Society and embracing white supremacy.

- *Union dues and free riders* — Given that LBJ had voted to overturn Truman's veto of Taft-Hartley, I was surprised to learn that his legislative program included repeal of the "right-to-work" provision from Taft-Hartley. A bill to do this was voted on by the Senate in February 1966. There was a majority in favor, but not enough to force "cloture," so it died.

According to Zeitz, George McGovern's vote against repeal was one of the reasons the AFL-CIO did not support him when he ran for president in 1972.

- *Realignment* — Michael Harrington (who would later be a founder of DSA) is mentioned a few times in this book. His book *The Other America* was influential in liberal policy circles in DC and he advised LBJ's team on a few occasions.

Zeitz does not bring up Harrington's strategy of "realignment" of the Democratic Party — that is, driving out the conservative Southern Dems and transforming the DP into a progressive party based on unions and civil rights groups. However, in his discussion of the Immigration and Nationality Act, he notes:

"Yet alongside the administration's vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws, immigration reform catalyzed a new electoral alignment — which some political scientists have dubbed the 'Great Society coalition' — that comprised African-Americans, Latinos

and well-educated white voters (many of whom unknowingly benefited from the legacy of Johnson's higher education policies). This coalition, though not ascendant for at least a quarter century after LBJ left office, would in later years prove a powerful counterweight to the forces of white backlash." (197)

That passing observation suggests that Harrington's goal was achieved — but realignment didn't have the intended result. Conservative Southern Dems left the Democratic Party. Unions and civil rights groups remained; today they provide much of its institutional base, although the influence of unions on the party has fallen along with the decline of unions in the private sector since the 1960s.

African-American and Latinx voters became the most reliable DP voters. But far from becoming a truly progressive, pro-working class party, the DP moved to the right — at least in part in pursuit of the very voters who were giving their votes to the GOP because they rejected the Great Society's civil rights and anti-poverty agenda.

Influential voices on the left, such as Justice Democrats (from JD website: "We want our democracy to work for Americans again as soon as possible. The best way to do this is by working to change the Democratic Party from the inside out") and Bernie Sanders ("As somebody who is an independent, we can bring them [those who are disenchanted with both parties — SD] into the Democratic Party to help create a party which will stand with the working families of this country and have the courage to take on the very powerful special interests who wield so much economic and

political power in America." CNN town hall 2/25/19) are pushing new versions of the realignment strategy.

It would be useful to ask why the outcome in the 1970s and '80s was so contrary to Harrington's vision and whether it is likely to be any different this time around.

The End of the Great Society

LBJ won reelection in a landslide in 1964. The DP increased its majorities in the House and Senate. Zeitz argues, though, that this did not reflect a mandate to pursue the policies of the Great Society.

By 1967, faced with the growing backlash on the right; rising costs for the Vietnam War, which soaked up funds that could have been used for domestic programs; and the loss of political support from the left due to opposition to the war, the Johnson administration put its domestic reform agenda on the backburner.

Zeitz opens a window on a time when mainstream liberalism had a broad reform agenda. That time was followed by the Nixon administration and then the rise of the pro-corporate, anti-working class neo-liberal agenda that became the common political currency of both the Republicans and Democrats.

Now, fifty years after the Great Society sputtered to a close, the concerns and policies of mainstream liberals in the 1960s are being given voice by progressive — even democratic socialist — candidates for office. It says a lot about the state of U.S. politics in 2019 that so few of the proposals raised even by democratic socialists would have been out of place in the policy discussions at the White House half a century ago. ■

Siwatu Salama-Ra Conviction Overturned



A MICHIGAN COURT of Appeals panel has unanimously overturned the May, 2018 assault conviction of Detroit environmental activist Siwatu Salam-Ra. The conviction, which shocked the activist community, resulted in a two-year prison sentence.

Despite a high-risk pregnancy, Siwatu was jailed for nearly seven months, giving birth to her son while chained to a hospital bed. Now 28, she was separated from him, and not permitted to nurse when her family came to visit.

Widespread public outcry contributed,

in November 2018, to her being released on bail pending appeal. However she had to wear a GPS teather that functioned to restrict her time outside her home.

The appeals court ruled that trial judge Thomas Hathaway incorrectly instructed the jury regarding Siwatu's self-defense use of her licensed and unloaded firearm to deter a woman from ramming Siwatu's car, in which Siwatu's two-year-old daughter was seated. When the woman drove away and filed a police complaint, it was Siwatu who was arrested and charged.

Furthermore, Hathaway deprived Siwatu of a fair trial by refusing her attorneys' permission to cross-examine the woman, who was already on probation for an earlier unrelated felony assault.

Wayne County Circuit Court prosecutors must now decide whether to re-try the case, or drop it. Clearly, this gross miscarriage of justice has lasted far too long already. ■

REVIEW

Fascism — What Is It Anyway?

The Coming of the American Behemoth

The Origins of Fascism in the United States, 1920-1940

By Michael Joseph Roberto
Monthly Review Press, 2018, 413 pages
plus 33 pages of notes, \$20 paperback.

THE HEADING OF Michael Joseph Roberto's first chapter, "Fascism as the Dictatorship of Capital" summarizes the book's central thesis: This Capitalist dictatorship will purportedly end the chaos of laissez-faire capitalism through a complete synchronization of state and private institutions (*Gleichschaltung* in the German). Today "the fascist reordering of government is underway under Trump...as a bona fide American fascist." (407-8, 410)

This approach to understanding fascism is not new. It has been debated within the left since the early 1930s. Roberto, a Greensboro, N.C. activist and retired academic historian, intends in this book to convince us of its continued viability.

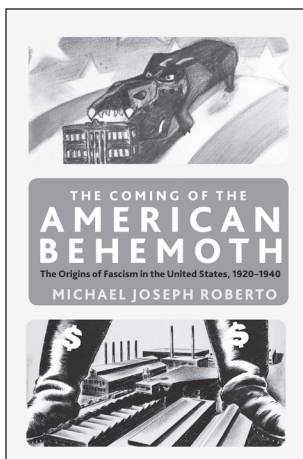
He begins by surveying the history of American industry, its growing role in the world, and how with the First World War U.S. finance capital became the world's banker. He describes how "technological innovation on a massive scale raised the productive capacity of American industry to historic levels which, in turn, made the United States the world's first, true consumer society." (43)

The advertising industry became increasingly important, not only in promoting consumerism but also in propagandizing for a culture of individualism and opposition to collectivism in all its forms. Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover, all Republicans, enacted tax cuts and tariffs and cut the size of the federal government, each one appointing industry and banking leaders to cabinet posts.

Under Harding "the United States embarked on an imperialist agenda facilitated by able capitalist modernizers in his cabinet who understood" that prosperity meant access to foreign markets and natural resources abroad. (151) Military interventions logically followed.

The rapid growth of the economy in this

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decade led to "a spectacle of prosperity." (79) Roberto walks us through a set of writers promoting a range of schemes that promised endless prosperity and an end to class antagonisms.

Thomas Nixon Carver blathered on

about wiping out the distinction between laborers and capitalists. Norman Fay of Remington Typewriters and V.P. of the National Association of Manufacturers advocated that businessmen (sic) enter "public service," since the average man is incapable of governing. Put more business in government and more government in business, he thought.

Edward Bernays, the "father" of public relations, believed that he and other molders of public opinion would do a better job. Why Roberto spends so much energy on what he himself terms this "ballyhoo" about capitalist progress (112) is not clear. These writers were certainly elitist, but their connection to fascism is tenuous. In any event, this ballyhoo would be laid to rest in 1929.

Struggle, Repression and Crisis

A massive wave of strikes in 1919 triggered by inflation and increasing post-war unemployment had been largely defeated. The big steel strike led by future Communist William Z. Foster, then a Wobbly, was suppressed in part due to the red scare that followed the Bolshevik revolution.

This hysteria led to the infamous Palmer Raids in January, 1920, targeting immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. In 1924 the National Origins Act drastically limited immigration from those and other non-Northern European areas. By then "Anxiety and fear over changing economic conditions [had] gripped much of rural society...Nativism defined the political landscape throughout small-town and rural existence" creating the conditions for the revival of the KKK. (37) "It is within all of these developments that we find the genesis

By Martin Oppenheimer

of fascist processes...." (53)

Meanwhile, the real deal in the form of Mussolini's *Fasci* had seized power in 1922. Italy's economy lagged behind such core economies as Great Britain and Germany, and its weak and divided ruling class greeted the new order with enthusiasm. U.S. business leaders as well as the three Republican presidents of the decade "jumped on board, as did many of the leading newspapers like *The New York Times*...." (156)¹

Within a few years the Wall Street crash would trigger the Great Depression and open the road to fascist power in Germany. The Communist Left in the United States was not alone in fearing similar developments here.

Communist writers A.B. Magil and "Henry Stevens" in *The Perils of Fascism* (1938) wrote that "The germ of Fascism was inherent within American monopoly capitalism but it was not until the economic crisis...that it developed into a definite political force of ominous proportions." (54)²

As the "fountainhead" of American fascism, they argued, "Big Business" would encourage the concentration of power in the executive and the diminution of power in legislative bodies. R. Palme Dutt, a Communist from India, saw the Roosevelt regime and its tepid Keynesianism as "pre-fascist" in 1934. (Ayçoberry, 55)³

Alexander Bittelman, a CP-USA leader, wrote in August 1934 that the New Deal, "hailed by the Socialist Party as a 'step to socialism' and by the A.F. of L. bureaucracy as a 'genuine partnership of labor and capital' is a weapon for a more rapid fascization of the rule of the U.S. bourgeoisie..."⁴

Even Lewis Corey (Louis Fraina), a prominent Marxist theorist who had by then broken with the CP, thought that Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration was proto-fascist.⁵

Nor was this idea limited to the Left. The growth of executive power in the Roosevelt administration led some right-wingers like George Sokolsky, a propagandist for the National Association of Manufacturers, to think the New Deal would lead to fascist dictatorship.

The idea of Roosevelt as a proto-fascist was not a complete fantasy. The highly respected journalist Walter Lippman apparently advised Roosevelt a month before his inauguration that there might be "no alternative but to assume dictatorial pow-

ers” given the crisis. Roosevelt pretty much threatened Congress that if it didn’t act promptly on his legislative proposals he would ask for “broad executive power” to deal with the emergency. (218-219)

In early 1937 Roosevelt, confident that his policies had succeeded, reined in deficit spending with the result that the economy dived back into a recession. “Big Business smelled Roosevelt’s blood” and, according to historian Kenneth Davis, hired gangs of “private armies” to attack unions. Said Davis, “...the threat, of a Fascist coup appeared to Roosevelt not only real but growing...” (Quoted, 332, 333).

Roosevelt, Roberto tells us, “was surrounded by individuals who had clearly and forcefully identified Big Business as the main fascist threat in America.” (342) This faction urged the President to end the Depression through deficit spending. But there were also powerful deficit hawks who advocated a balanced budget, hardly a fascist approach.

For his own reasons Roosevelt finally aligned with the former group and in April, 1938 sent Congress a budget requesting billions for relief, public works and other stimulus programs.

How the System Endures

Neither the Nazi nor the New Deal regimes prefigured the collapse of the economic order predicted by some Communists. American capitalists, according to Roberto, “forged new means to keep a Pax Americana intact, the social-democratic welfare state.” (181) Never mind that New Deal legislation was adamantly opposed by most sectors of capital and that the adoption of a weak proto-Keynesianism (hardly social-democratic) came only after intense battles within the administration.⁶

The New Deal was not simply a construct of “the ruling class.” It was the outcome of fierce battles among different sectors of the ruling class. It was also a response to large-scale unrest and a growing militancy by parts of organized labor.

The German Communist Party had believed that the capitalist order was on the verge of collapse in 1933 and that Fascism represented a last desperate attempt to save it, but would soon fail. The Social Democrats were labelled “social fascists,” and the Communist Party was to wean its proletarian membership away in a “united front from below” in anticipation of that collapse. “After Hitler, us” as the saying went.

With the stabilization of the Nazi regime, however, a new policy was required and the strategy of the “popular front” replaced the “united front from below.” In August 1935, Communist Georgi Dimitroff delivered his famous report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in which he held that fascism was “the open

and terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”

Note that Dimitroff’s definition differed from the proposition that fascism is engendered by “Big Business” as a whole. Rather than representing a more sophisticated analysis of German ruling circles, however, the theoretical shift actually represented a change in Stalin’s strategy vis-à-vis the Hitler regime. “If only open and terroristic dictatorship was fascist, then the bourgeois democracies were not — or no longer! — fascist” (Aycoberry, 53).

Only a fraction of big business was responsible for fascism, and so the popular front against fascism should reach out to include the middle and even parts of the capitalist class. The implication was clear: popular front meant that revolution against the entire capitalist system was off the table. Efforts at revolutionary transformations (as during the Spanish Civil War) would be suppressed by force if necessary.

Roberto, in his ninth chapter, walks us through what journalist George Seldes called “small-fry fascisti” who diverted attention from the real source of fascism: Big Business. (254) Nevertheless, Roberto considers some bigger small-fry who might become “shock troops for reactionary capitalists” to be important. (256)

There was William Dudley Pelley, an anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic journalist who founded the Silver Shirts on Jan. 30, 1933, the day Hitler was appointed German Chancellor. A year later Pelley had 15,000 all-white members dedicated to a corporatist economic structure that would in theory abolish classes.

Then there were the Khaki Shirts, headed by a “General” Art J. Smith, who called for veterans to march on Washington on Columbus Day, 1933. It fizzled and Smith went to prison for perjury.⁷ The Black Legion was a spinoff of the Klan revival of the 1920s and was able to recruit thousands into “regiments” throughout the Middle West in 1934 and 1935.

Oddly, Roberto overlooks the brown-shirted pro-Nazi German-American Bund, active in several Northeastern States. On Feb. 20, 1939, the Bund held a rally at Madison Square Garden with some 20,000 in attendance, many in full Nazi regalia (while an anti-fascist mobilization fought the police outside). When the war began in Europe, its Nazi sympathies led to the Bund’s collapse.

The Fascist Threat, Rise and Fall

The Catholic Father Charles Coughlin, in suburban Detroit, was more significant by far than these “shirt” groups. “Coughlin commanded a great following across much of America through his brilliant use of the

radio... (he) successfully tapped into the anxiety and fears of the middle and lower middle classes by explaining how they had been victimized by Big Business and the federal government,” both controlled by international Jewish bankers. (269-70)

His populist message eventually reached an estimated 40 million in 23 states. Roberto catches the fascist flavor of Coughlin’s thinking: “The organic unity of the corporate state is far superior to an atomized liberal democracy.” (279) Coughlin’s following had petered out by the time the U.S. entered the Second World War.

Huey P. Long was another story, elected Governor of Louisiana in 1928 as a populist, and to the U.S. Senate in 1932. Like Mussolini, Long was said to be a modernizer. In the process of turning Louisiana into his personal fiefdom, the story was that he brought its oligarchy to heel, built infrastructure and expanded educational opportunities, even as he secretly took payoffs from elements of the corporate sector, especially Standard Oil.

However, this relatively rosy picture has been disputed. The journalist Carleton Beals, in *The Story of Huey P. Long* (1935), claimed that Long did nothing to raise the standards of living, especially for African Americans, whom he despised. Beals described Louisiana as a “monopoly capitalist and feudal enterprise... Culturally and economically, Louisiana is closer to Peru than to Wisconsin...” (285)

Nevertheless, Long’s populist rhetoric, his platform of redistribution of wealth and his “Share the Wealth Clubs” attracted such large followings that even President Roosevelt expressed alarm. If his life had not been cut short by an assassin on September 10, 1935, could Long have succeeded in ousting Roosevelt to become a genuine fascist ruler clothed in Americanism? Sinclair Lewis’ novel *It Can’t Happen Here* (1935) suggested he could.

The reality of fascism in Europe and the threat of it in the United States poses the question of whom its supporters were. There is widespread agreement that “middle class” or “lower middle class” elements were heavily represented in proto-fascist circles in the 1930s and were the voting base for the Nazis, although the wealthy supported them disproportionately. They are similarly prominent in the U.S. ultra-right today.

The meaning of “middle class” is controversial to say the least. Most of the writers considered by Roberto seem to mean small-scale entrepreneurs, plus the growing sector of lower-level white collar workers.

A case study of the 1920s KKK in Athens, Georgia, found for example that the “single most common occupation of the Klan... was owner or manager of a small

business or a small family farmer...White-collar employees of the so-called new middle class—salesmen, clerks, agents, and public employees — filled out the rest...” (147)

Mauritz Hallgren, a *Nation* writer, cited independent retailers in particular as hard-hit by the Depression and by the growth of chain stores and mail-order houses like Sears. The insecure position of these petty-bourgeois made them vulnerable to a politics of anger and scapegoating and attracted them to Coughlin, Long and the like.

Indeed, as Lewis Corey wrote, “the struggle to save such property as still survives from the all-consuming maw of monopoly capitalism drives the class to reaction...” (304) Recent U.S. studies, including those of “Tea Party” adherents, show similar tendencies.⁸

Although fascism might be the last stand of the petty-bourgeoisie for capitalism, this is not necessarily so for the white collar proletariat. In numerous studies of European elections before and after World War II, white collar workers supported parties of the moderate Left.⁹

Where Capital Places its Bets

Was fascism simply “bought and paid for” by financial and industrial interests, as Robert A. Brady, a favorite of Roberto’s, thought? (364) In the founding years of the Nazi Party funds came only from marginal groups of capital, “lone wolves,” as Konrad Heiden, a close observer of Hitler’s rise, called them.¹⁰

Hitler’s access to bigger funding came only when he was in coalition with more moderate groups. The Big Bourgeoisie had its own parties. As David Abraham, in his exhaustive study of Germany’s divided ruling class put it, “conflicts within and between the dominant social classes...rendered impossible a consistent and coherent set of policies capable of satisfying all the fractions...”¹¹

Rather than fascism being a logical expression of capitalist domination, fascism was a last desperate attempt by the dominant segments of that class to find a way out of economic and political chaos.

Hitler’s “Brown [shirted — MO] Bolsheviks” were feared by the “respectable” German bourgeoisie. But “As [national



“Never Again is Now.” Historical memory of the horrors of fascism and Nazi genocide has spurred many people into action against the horrific mass detentions, family separations, raids on communities and immigrant communities that have escalated under the Trump administration. Trump is a thief, not a fascist dictator, but it’s time to rise and resist!

socialism) grew and seemed likely to gain power, expediency dictated contributions as a matter of self-protection, even from people of wealth not otherwise sympathetic to the ‘socialism,’ national or otherwise, of a ‘workers’ party.”¹²

In fascist regimes capital remains in “full command of all the military, police, legal and propaganda power of the state,” Brady wrote.¹³ But once in power, Hitler was never simply the instrument of German capital, acting on its orders. The factory is yours, said one observer, but the state tells you what to make, in what quantity and quality, and it provides raw materials and handles the markets. “All capital is at the immediate disposal of the government.”¹⁴

Hitler’s policy changed depending on what seemed opportune at the moment to extend his power. After 1938, with the country on a war footing, the Nazi Party was fully in command. But the Party and the State that it ruled, research has shown, were “characterized by...a highly disordered proliferation of agencies and hierarchies”¹⁵ so that squabbles over turf were constant.

As for the U.S. “Corporate Community,” as Domhoff calls it, we have seen how divided it was during the Depression. Later, its dominant sector did not support Senator Joe McCarthy’s anti-Communist hysteria, or Governor George Wallace’s Presidential bids, both men considered proto-fascist by many on the Left.

A number of “power structure” studies have clearly demonstrated that the “Corporate Community” is not mono-

lithic. There continue to be many disputes, including between a low-tax, low-regulation fraction and a more Keynesian wing that supports many social reforms and regulations.¹⁶ These differences are also reflected in foreign policy, with the latter group committed to the United Nations and other international bodies.

Blurring Important Distinctions

Roberto’s conceptualization of fascism as the fusion between state and big business blurs the distinctions between fascism and other oligarchic states where capital also dominates. It does not differentiate reactionary dictatorships seeking to protect or restore an unregulated capital linked to the Catholic Church (e.g. Somoza, Pinochet) from post-feudal modernizing capitalism.

Under Roberto’s definition, the U.S. big business community and its close interlocks with the state also fits the description. That makes little sense.

Roberto pays little attention to fascist movements, which are far more than just their voting base in the lower middle class. They included extra-parliamentary quasi-military formations capable of seizing power. The German ruling circles could not ignore that possibility and therefore were forced to incorporate the Nazi Party into the government.

Roberto similarly minimizes the role of mass organizations during the New Deal. Without the labor movement, without the strikes, Roosevelt’s reforms would very like-

continued on page 42

REVIEW

Bolivia's Legacy of Resistance

By Marc Becker

The Five Hundred Year Rebellion:

Indigenous movements and the decolonization of history in Bolivia

By Benjamin Dangl

Chico, CA: AK Press, 2019, 220 pages, \$18 paper.

BOLIVIA HAS LONG been one of the most politicized countries in Latin America, perhaps rivaled only by Cuba, with a population intimately aware of its role in a global capitalist environment. Furthermore its inhabitants are able to critique that situation and willing to act against it.

That understanding emerges out of a long history of extractive economies. Cuba was Spain's initial and most long-lasting foothold in the Americas. The island's economy boomed with the collapse of sugar production in neighboring Saint Domingue in the aftermath of Haiti's slave revolt, which led to United States domination of the Caribbean during the first half of the 20th century.

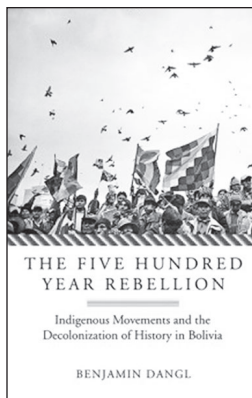
Similarly in Bolivia, discovery of silver at Potosí in the 16th century introduced a long period of brutal colonial exploitation that likewise underdeveloped its economy.

In 1952, Bolivian reformers organized in the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR, Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) led a successful military coup that quickly radicalized into a program that nationalized the tin mines and transformed an archaic landholding system with the distribution of land to farm workers.

Those social programs influenced the Cuban revolutionaries and the program they implemented when they marched into Havana seven years later. With these parallel histories, it is probably no coincidence that the two countries share similar militant traditions of critiquing colonial and capitalist exploitative enterprises.

Journalist, researcher and activist Benjamin Dangl's new book on Indigenous movements in Bolivia from 1970 to 2000 builds on and contributes to this history. His book draws on the work of other scholars, archival research, his own firsthand

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experiences and observations of the dramatic political and social changes in recent decades in Bolivia, and in particular interviews with social movement activists.

He argues that grassroots mobilizations drew on memories of the past to agitate for social change, to

develop new political projects, and to propose alternative models of governance. This book is particularly strong in its analysis of political uses of history.

Thirty Years of Organizing

Dangl frames his study with the 2015 inauguration of Bolivian president Evo Morales for his third term in office, but does not discuss current politics in any depth. He points to other works on the subject, including that of political scientist Jeffery Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation, and the Politics of Evo Morales* (Haymarket Books, 2011) and Dangl's own previous writings, especially *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia* (AK Press, 2007) and *Dancing with Dynamite: States and Social Movements in Latin America* (AK Press, 2010).

This new book provides important and useful historical context for this "dance" between electoral politics and social movement organizing strategies that he and others have examined. Dangl scrutinizes a sequence of organizations in a 30-year sweep of social movement organizing in Bolivia that largely predates the emergence of Morales as an elected leader.

Some readers may find the reference to the "Five Hundred Year Rebellion" in the book's title a bit disorienting. Rather than examining this long history of resistance itself, Dangl looks at how social movements in the last third of the 20th century made political use of these historical narratives to shape and advance their own contemporary struggles. For an accessible overview of that longer history, Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson's *Revolutionary Horizons: Popular struggle in Bolivia* (Verso, 2007) provides a fluid and compelling narrative.

Dangl begins his discussion of historical production and analyses with the *Kataristas*, a movement that took its name from Tupac Katari who led a bloody anti-colonial revolt in 1781 that ended with his execution. Katari proclaimed that he would return and would be "millions," a prophecy that his successors claimed to have come true with these contemporary social movements.

The *Kataristas* broke from the paternalistic tendencies of the MNR that led the 1952 revolution, proclaiming that they were no longer the peasants of 1952. The *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB, Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia) built on this tendency to mold a historical consciousness as a tool in organizing rural populations.

Their efforts shaped a political project that strongly informed subsequent peasant and Indigenous movements. One of these most significant organizations was the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas de Qullasuyo* (CONAMAQ, National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo), which in particular sought to reconstruct traditional community structures called *ayllus*.

These groups created a collective vision for the transformation of Bolivian politics and society. Dangl argues that the intellectual production of these grassroots organizations was essential for mobilizing and empowering social movements.

Popular appeals to a history of oppression and resistance helped grow a movement, and offered strategies and symbols for advancing their political agenda. This intellectual production was in particular the project of the *Taller de Historia Oral Andina* (THOA, Andean Oral History Workshop) that sought to recover Indigenous histories that the ruling class had written out of the educational literature.

Sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, who taught at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz, organized a project alongside other THOA members of gathering interviews and drafting collective histories of rural communities. Dangl explores in detail one particular example of early 20th-century leader Santos Marka T'ula, who subsequently became revered for his contributions to grassroots struggles.

The *Kataristas* who launched this sequence of grassroots mobilizations in

the 1970s famously declared they would critique society with “two eyes,” as both Indians and peasants or, if you will, through the lens of both class and race. As *Katarista* militants developed this critique of colonialism, however, the “eye” of class became displaced with a primary emphasis on race or ethnicity.

Class and Race Contradictions

Although Bolivian universities had a strong and highly developed tradition of Marxist class analysis, Rivera and others who encouraged this tendency of anti-colonial thought emphasized ethnic identities and marginalized leftist critiques. An unfortunate consequence of this ethnic turn is a type of reactionary Aymara fundamentalism that essentializes ethnic identities at the cost of

downgrading class struggles.

Historian Waskar Ari presents a more extreme example of this in his book *Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization, and Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals* (Duke University Press, 2014), which similarly examines how Aymara nationalists invented a discourse of decolonization that — in looking backward to embrace religious traditions — rejected leftist critiques of political economies.

I would argue — although Dangl might not agree — that a better and ultimately more successful approach would be to follow the lead of Marxist critiques of intersectionality to understand how race, class, gender and other forms of oppression exist on fundamentally different planes and require different types of resistance that do not necessarily intersect but require distinc-

tive and more complex analyses to advance grassroots struggles.

Privileging ethnic identities over class struggles undermines a more complete analysis of societal structures, and a fuller analysis of these issues is important to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of grassroots social movements.

Political movements are often comprised of multiple and conflictive ideological tendencies, and Bolivia is no exception in this regard. All the contradictions of a decolonial struggle are readily apparent in Morales' government. Benjamin Dangl contributes an important study that helps us understand how we arrived at this point, and provides food for thought as to how we can proceed forward to a more just and equal world. ■

Fascism — What Is It Anyway? — continued from page 40

ly not have been enacted.

The weakness of this monochromatic view of capitalist dictatorship is most evident when Roberto calls President Trump a bona fide fascist.

Trump's nationalism is implicitly when not explicitly racist, and Republican attempts to regulate women's bodies and return women to traditional roles as mothers and homemakers both fit right into a fascist program. Everything else, however, is populist rhetoric that is belied every day by policies friendly to Trump's sectors of capital out for a quick buck.

It is hardly fascism when Republican-led governments from federal to state level are busily trying to deregulate everything except the police and the military. President Trump heads a classic kleptocratic oligarchy. That is its sole economic strategy. Its mass base is among fundamentalist white Christians seeking a return to the mythical 1920s of small-town America. To consider Trumpism fascist is a diversion, as are today's “small-fry fascisti” of the alt-right.

Fascism is a mass movement that arises at times of deep economic crisis. Its message is extreme nationalism combined with a populist anti-finance-capitalism with anti-Semitic overtones. It proposes a dynamic re-ordering that will cast aside the messiness of parliamentary government, political parties and labor unions in favor of a dictatorship.

Fascism is not simply the dictatorship of Capital. Fascism advocates a strong, regulatory state that will severely limit individual capitalists' freedoms. It is able to come to power when the ruling elements of capital become incapable of agreeing on a coherent social policy to cope with the crisis through their parliamentary state, and dominant elements of capital agree that a fascist regime has become preferable to continuing chaos.

Since the root of fascism resides in

“Since the root of fascism resides in the crisis of capitalism, to oppose fascism implies a united front of anti-capitalist forces rooted in the working class. It requires a program that poses radical alternatives to fascist demagoguery and undermines fascism's faux populist ideas. Indeed Roberto agrees that only a class-conscious working-class movement can prevent fascism.”

the crisis of capitalism, to oppose fascism implies a united front of anti-capitalist forces rooted in the working class. It requires a program that poses radical alternatives to fascist demagoguery and undermines fascism's faux populist ideas. Indeed Roberto agrees that only a class-conscious working-class movement can prevent fascism.

The Coming of the American Behemoth provides us with an extensive treatment of reactionary and quasi-fascist thought in the 1920s and 1930s. The author's very useful survey of the historical context, especially of the New Deal, is perhaps the best section of the book. The bulk of his somewhat too lengthy and frequently repetitive treatment focuses on writers who have attempted to understand fascism and its roots. However, simplistically identifying fascism with Big

Business is not convincing. ■

Notes

1. They would have been shocked if they had read Mussolini's 1919 Manifesto, which called for nationalization of the arms industry, a progressive tax on capital, the seizure of 85% of military contract profits, the eight-hour day and a minimum wage, not to mention the overall Corporatist structure that included workers' representatives in industry commissions.
2. Magill was a well-known staffer for *The Daily Worker*. Stevens was probably a pen-name.
3. Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Nazi Question* (Random House, 1981).
4. John Gerassi, “The Comintern, the Fronts, and the CPUSA,” in Michael E. Brown et al., *New Studies In the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (Monthly Review Press, 1993) 79.
5. Paul M. Buhle, *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost: Louis C. Fraina/Lewis Corey...And the Decline of Radicalism in the United States* (Humanities Press, 1995).
6. See, for example, G. William Domhoff's description of the battle over Section 7a (which protected workers' right to organize) in his *The Power Elite and the State* (Aldine de Gruyter, 1990) 80 ff). Roberto seems unaware of “power structure” research in the United States and elsewhere. See Domhoff and eleven others, *Studying the Power Elite: 50 Years of Who Rules America* (Routledge, 2018), which is accessible online.
7. Not to be confused with the Bonus Army, some 43,000 veterans and their families, who marched on Washington, D.C. in the Summer of 1932. They were suppressed by the Army.
8. Oppenheimer, “What Fascism is, and isn't,” *ATC* #194 (May/June, 2018).
9. Oppenheimer, *White Collar Politics* (Monthly Review Press, 1985), 188.
10. Konrad Heiden, *Der Fuehrer* (Eng. trans., Houghton Mifflin, 1944), 113.
11. *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic* (Princeton U. Press, 1981), 315, 320.
12. Frederick L. Schuman, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), 10.
13. *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* (Viking Press, 1937), 22.
14. M.V. Fodor, *The Revolution Is On* (Houghton-Mifflin, 1940), 156; Douglas Miller, *You Can't Do Business With Hitler* (Brown & Co., 1941), 7.
15. Jane Caplan, “Theories of Fascism...” in Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, *Radical Perspectives On the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1945* (Monthly Review, 1989), 137. See also Heiden on the Nazis' internal disputes up to 1934.
16. J. Craig Jenkins and Craig M. Eckert, “The Corporate Elite, the Conservative Policy Network, and Reaganomics”; James Salt, “Sunbelt Capital and Conservative Realignment in the 1970s and 1980s,” in *Critical Sociology* v. 16 no. 2-3, Summer-Fall, 1989.

REVIEW

China: From Peasants to Workers By Promise Li

From Commune to Capitalism:

How China's Peasants Lost Collective Farming and Gained Urban Poverty

By Zhun Xu

New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018, 154 pages, \$25 paperback.

TODAY CHINA'S GEO-POLITICAL ambitions grow as quickly as its own contradictions. With the Jasic worker-student strikes last year and Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill protests earlier this summer, it is time to consider the economic and political alternatives to neo-liberal globalization from the perspective of the Chinese working class.

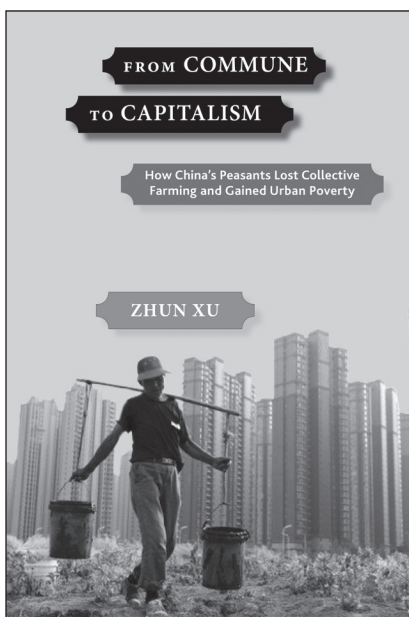
Zhun Xu, now an assistant professor of economics at Howard University, argues that the key might be in China's past. *From Commune to Capitalism* disputes the long-established claim that the decollectivization of Maoist-era peasant communes was better for the economy and an initiative wholly championed by the peasantry.

Xu shows that decollectivization under then-supreme leader Deng Xiao-ping and the post-Deng leadership, like collectivization under Mao, was a fundamentally top-down process that elicited a complex array of reactions from the peasantry. In the first chapter Xu writes: "decollectivization served as the political basis for the capitalist transition in China, in that it not only disempowered the peasantry but also broke the peasant-worker alliance and greatly reduced the potential resistance to the reform." (16)

Three Perspectives

Xu outlines three main positions the Communist Party leadership held toward decollectivization at the time: the pro-collectivization "socialist" forces led by Mao, the anti-collectivization "capitalists" led by former Premier Liu Shao-qi and Deng and the "populist" camp, which promoted small family farms over collectives and generally sided with the capitalists. With the death of

Promise Li is a member of Solidarity and former tenant organizer in Los Angeles' Chinatown. He is currently in a Ph. D. program at Princeton University.



Mao, the capitalist camp quickly maneuvered

its way into political leadership and, since the late 1970s, has pushed for market reforms.

Chapter Three reveals the problems Xu finds in the prominent research model developed by former Senior Vice President of the World Bank Justin Lin. While it supposedly established a correlation between Deng's market reforms

and increased production output, Xu argues that in 1978 the reforms did not happen uniformly across the nation. Ling's model does not take into account that, in certain locales, some reforms took place after the production season of a given year.

In addition, Xu points out that the technological developments in machine power and chemical fertilizer inputs that accompanied some of the increased output were investments from the collective era.

More importantly, the final two chapters demonstrate that the decollectivization process was by no means spontaneous. While the absence of mass unrest did signal some discontentment with the communes, Xu shows that the heavy political pressure that stimulated an efficient dismantling of the communes was the determinant factor.

In reality, only the cadres and a small part of the peasantry gained from the reforms. The Chinese Communist Party was able to diminish the political capital of both the urban working class and the rural population through decollectivization.

The state eventually invested less into agriculture, and a newly-disenfranchised population of rural folks entered the cities as a new class of migrant workers. The subsequent urban glut lowered wages and exacerbated inequality. Today China's ever-increasing population of almost 290 million migrant workers testify to the persistence

of this problem.

Xu's nuanced focus on the working-class and peasants' capacity for effective democratic self-organization is a necessary takeaway. Admitting that both collectivization and de-collectivization are top-down initiatives, Xu identifies "democratic control of the state by the workers and peasants" as the key to a truly stable and thoroughly effective process of workers' self-management.

How the Communes Functioned

Xu's fieldwork in Songzi county, interviewing cadres and peasants who lived through collectivization and the reforms, reveals some practical ways in which peasants effectively maintained their communes and combatted the "free-rider" problem.

Interviewees pointed out that teams kept detailed records of each plot of land and who farmed which. There was collective decision-making in the work-point system among the cadres and peasants. Work avoidance was tackled by buddy systems and simply by the fact that most people in a commune knew each other and kept each other accountable.

Of course, not every commune functioned perfectly, and issues of stratification between cadre and peasant proved widespread enough to encourage some to accept the reforms. But recovering these voices reveals how the benefits of workers' control is crucial to identifying sites of struggle today. While there is no movement for re-collectivization (in fact, there had never been a popular movement to begin collectivization in rural China), descendants of the "populist" camp that Xu identifies in the '70s hold influence over important contemporary iterations of workers co-ops and alternative food networks in rural China.

Xu is right that these forces do not directly organize to challenge capital, but one cannot deny these movements are at the forefront of countering the excesses of China's neoliberal policies and bureaucratic oppression. Promoters of the New Rural Reconstruction Movement like Wei Tiejun often occupy a tenuous and shifting relationship to capital, despite not actively antagonizing the state. Yang Hai-rong writes that despite their internal incoherence and diversity, these rural movements

form a critical mass that challenges the ongoing dominant neoliberal vision that

promotes urbanization and capitalization of agriculture as a viable future for China ... Even as many dismiss the Mao-era rural commune system, this recent past experience has perhaps sharpened their practical — though not always theoretical — egalitarian sensibility on the one hand, and has on the other hand made it easier for them to project a communal coherence that they hope to revive in the future.¹

While showing the potential of redefining state boundaries and challenging anti-capitalist policies, Christof Lammer and Matthew Hale's fieldwork also critiques contemporary instances of rural co-ops as implicated in capitalist modes of production.²

In other words, Xu's separation between the two camps of "socialism" and "populism" over decollectivization may be slightly overstated. Stressing the overlap between different social agents that support workers and peasants' self-organization would be vital in understanding China's grassroots sites for anti-capitalist resistance.

Xu's point on the need to rebuild the peasant-worker alliance continues to hold true, but it is still unclear as to what concrete ways are available. As He Congzhi and Ye Jingzhong point out, decades of com-

pelled urban-rural migration have fundamentally shifted traditional care network, family and village structures.³

How can we take into account these fundamental shifts in social and class consciousness, transformed by the effects of market reforms, as we understand and uplift concrete manifestations of democratic movements on the ground?

The Future Lies in the Past

Xu's text deftly reminds us that the key to the future is in China's past: the glimpses of democratic socialism in an otherwise authoritarian state. But we must also understand that the Maoist-era communes are no more than an auxiliary guide to our present and future. Despite Xu's recovery of the socialist potential of the communes, one must not forget that this whole process of collectivization began by state fiat, and not by peasants' self-organization.

Xu conveniently brackets out discussions of other Maoist initiatives like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, since they precede the time period in focus. The different consequences of each, however, does not negate the fact that the curtailing of workers' democracy centrally

determined the state of things under the CCP from Mao to Xi Jin-ping.

At the same time, we cannot dismiss or forget the radical instances of workers' and peasants' self-organization in modern Chinese history — from the "Yan'an spirit" of cooperatives and mutual aid in the wake of the 1930s Long March to the struggle of Jasic workers and students today.⁴

Understanding the complexities of the concrete struggle of China's rural and urban masses against capital today, no matter how "reformist" or "revolutionary," is the only reliable pathway to a democratic socialist future. ■

Notes

1. Yang Hai-rong and Chen Yiyuen, "Debating the rural cooperative movement in China, the past and the present," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40.6 (2013): 975-6.
2. Christof Lammer, "Reworking state boundaries through care: 'Peasant friends', 'greedy entrepreneurs' and 'corrupt officials' in an 'alternative' food network in China," *Vienna Working Papers in Ethnography* 5 (2017): 1-29. Matthew A. Hale, "Tilling sand: contradictions of 'Social Economy' in a Chinese movement Wfor alternative rural development," *Dialectical Anthropology* 37.1 (2013): 51-82.
3. He Congzhi and Ye Jingzhong, "Lonely Sunsets: Impacts of Rural-urban Migration on the Left-behind Elderly in Rural China," *Population, Space and Place* 20.4 (2014): 352-369.
4. On the Communist Party cadres and peasants' experiences in 1930's Yan'an, see Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and Now* (New York: The Free Press, 1999): 47-50.

IN MEMORIAM: James D. Cockcroft — October 26, 1935 – April 16, 2019

JAMES COCKCROFT WAS an historian, sociologist, political analyst, poet, and bilingual award-winning author of 40 books and countless articles on Latin America, and particularly on Mexico. His study, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution*, first published in 1968, became an instant classic.

Above all he was a political activist from the days of the war in Vietnam. And I knew him best as an activist.

Jim had already become a figure of note on the Left before I first met him. He had been a Humanities Fellow at Antioch College for 1967-68. While there, he had become an informal mentor of the Antioch chapter of the Young Socialist Alliance, many of whom lasted long on the Left, including my longtime friend, Alan Wald, who today is an editor of *ATC*.

My next encounter with Jim came in 1970 when he was a member of the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. At the time, I was the head of the Young Socialist Alliance chapter at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. We sent 10 members

from Madison to Milwaukee to develop a YSA chapter there when previous members left to join the Workers World Party. Jim immediately became the faculty advisor of the new YSA chapter.

Our young members respected his political acumen and appreciated his steadfast support. Jim had a special talent in relating to young people, helping them develop a fuller understand-

ing for socialism.

Jim grew up in Albany, NY and attended Cornell University. Graduating in 1957, he married Eva Sperling, who — as Eva Cockcroft (1937-1999) — became an internationally-recognized muralist. They had three sons, Ben, Eric and Peter.

Jim received his M.A. and Ph.D. at Stanford University. His interests were wide-ranging: sociology, history and political science, with a focus on Latin America and Latinos in the United States. His extensive publishing record also reflects that range.

My next encounter with Jim came during the later 1970s when, after he and Eva divorced, he met and married my friend Hedda Garza. By this time, several of his books on Mexico and Latin America had become "required reading" for U.S. socialists. Jim and Hedda became a team as lead-

ing members of the Left in New York City. Unfortunately, Hedda died of cancer in 1995, as Jim was to die after his battle with bladder cancer this year.

Years later I was delighted to learn that Jim became partners with my old friend, Susan Caldwell. Jim and Susan were a political team among the Left in Montreal. And when she worked at the International Institute for Research and Education School in Amsterdam, he lectured there as well.

My wife Mary and I would drive to Montreal almost every summer where we would get together. My last encounter was in their backyard late last summer, where we met up with two of Jim's sons.

Over the years Cockcroft taught at a number of U.S. colleges as well as abroad. A writer for the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*, he was most recently active in the International Committee to Free the Cuban Five, which eventually succeeded in securing their release from U.S. prisons.

Jim Cockcroft was one of the most extraordinary persons that I have had the good fortune to know. He was a delightful public speaker and a natural raconteur. His support of the Cuban revolution, in particular, was exemplary. Not only was he a superb academic historian, writer and an outstanding mentor of young people, he was the epitome of a committed socialist whose passionate advocacy of humanity was unexcelled. ■



Patrick M. Quinn is a longtime socialist and member of Solidarity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

underlying causes. The long, brutal suppression of democratic aspirations and unbearable kleptocratic regime corruption are obviously central. But there's also a burgeoning revolt against the degradation of popular classes' economic lives caused by privatization of services, slashes of subsidies in the prices of basic necessities, and governments' adaptations to the neoliberal demands of global markets and financial institutions.

These "reforms" don't reduce, but in fact exacerbate, the crony capitalism and clientelism plaguing these societies. They were particularly crucial, for example, in the years leading up to the attempted revolution in Syria. They have been important in the current Algerian and Sudanese upheavals, which also remind us — as expert left analysts such as Gilbert Achcar and Joseph Daher stress — that the transformation of the region is a protracted revolutionary process and not a linear march of triumphant events.

A Wider View of Revolt

Taking a wider lens to the global picture, the outstanding example of popular revolt against neoliberal economic strangulation has to be the Yellow Vest eruption in France. As Patrick Le Trehondat points out in the Summer 2019 issue of *New Politics*, it is made up of the people who've been priced out of the gentrified city centers and are now living in smaller towns and rural areas where a car is a necessity to get to work and reach basic public services.

It's not hard to see parallels with the grievances, and people's sense of abandonment by the system's elites and their institutions, that in the United States fueled the political rise both of Bernie Sanders on the progressive left and of Donald Trump on the reactionary right. Predictably, the Yellow Vests have been put under a microscope for every real or alleged expression of backwardness (e.g. anti-Semitism), and tarred as "anti-environmentalist" by privileged sectors who don't feel the pain.

In fact, the attempts by Marine le Pen's "Rally" (formerly National Front) party to exploit the movement appear to have largely fizzled. Whether the Yellow Vest phenomenon proves to be episodic — or as Le Trehondat argues, "Now the entire system has been called into question. A new social consciousness and political collectivity is appearing" — remains an open question. The point here is that it's an important example that will not be isolated in the framework of a crisis-ridden capitalist system in the "core" and "periphery."

If as seems likely, a global economic slowdown or recession is on the way with the inevitable ruling-class responses of austerity, such mass interventions can be expected to become more frequent and intense.

Further Examples

We note a few other examples where mass popular action has made a difference in the recent past, or is doing so right now.

- In Turkey, Erdogan's presidentialist regime was defeated in the politically crucial Istanbul municipal election — not just once but a second time, and by a larger margin, after the regime's puppet electoral council forced a re-vote. More than just a mayoral election, this was a popular mobilization in the face of Erdogan's increasingly autocratic rule.

- In Poland in 2017, angry pushback forced the withdrawal

of extreme anti-abortion legislation pushed by the rightwing nationalist ruling party. And in Ireland, abortion and the right to divorce was legalized in May 2018 — as in Poland, in defiance of the dictates of the Catholic hierarchy. This is the climax of a transformation that has virtually hurtled the Irish Republic from the late 19th right into the 21st century.

- In Russia, where economic stagnation and social disintegration have alarmingly accelerated, people are in the streets defying the government's suppression of the right of opposition candidates to run in Moscow municipal elections. The persistence of these actions is especially remarkable in view of the circumstances where no short-term victory seems possible.

- In Armenia, a vastly underreported nonviolent political revolution — "the first insurrection in a post-Soviet state that legitimately boiled up from the streets, free of influence from outside forces" (Marc Cooper, *The Nation*, December 7, 2018) led to the resignation of president Serzh Sargsyan and brought to office a reform government headed by veteran activist Nikol Pashinyan. Because it didn't particularly fit any power's geopolitical agenda, it was barely noticed.

- In the face of immediate climate catastrophe, young people's strikes called by Greta Thunberg demanding emergency action on climate change are gaining momentum in Europe and North America, with global actions called for September 20-27.

- The Puerto Rican people have forced out the corrupt governor Ricardo Rosselló and are pushing back against the "emergency financial oversight" board imposed by U.S. colonial *diktat*.

- Here in the United States, although on a smaller scale, revulsion against the white-nationalist right, for women's rights that are under sweeping attack, and in defense of terrorized immigrant communities has persisted throughout the vicious and cynical politics of Donald Trump and the bottomless corrupt cesspool of his administration.

What's Coming?

Reporters interview participants in these countries who insist it is their obligation to come out and protest against repression and to demand their democratic rights. It is the same message articulated by Palestinians marching in the Gaza Strip, by Hong Kongers rallying in the rain and by the Sudanese and Algerian women raising their demands for freedom and equality.

The courage of people to continue in the face of brutal repression is inspiring, but frightening as well. Labeled as "terrorists," beaten by police, military or paramilitaries, and threatened with severe prison sentences, they continue.

Whether Beijing will deploy the Peoples Liberation Army to crush the uprising as they did in Tiananmen Square 30 years ago, or whether Carrie Lam can force a sufficient crackdown, experts suspect the potential economic and political fallout would be too great. But India's takeover of Kashmir has not unleashed a storm of protest! Nor has Bangladesh's attempted repatriation of the nearly one million Rohingya Muslims, who fled from Myanmar for their lives just two years ago, unleashed massive protest.

The outcome of these struggles remains open. What's clear is that new social actors are rising up and socialists need to stand with them — our solidarity lies with those in the streets, squares and roundabouts. ■

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