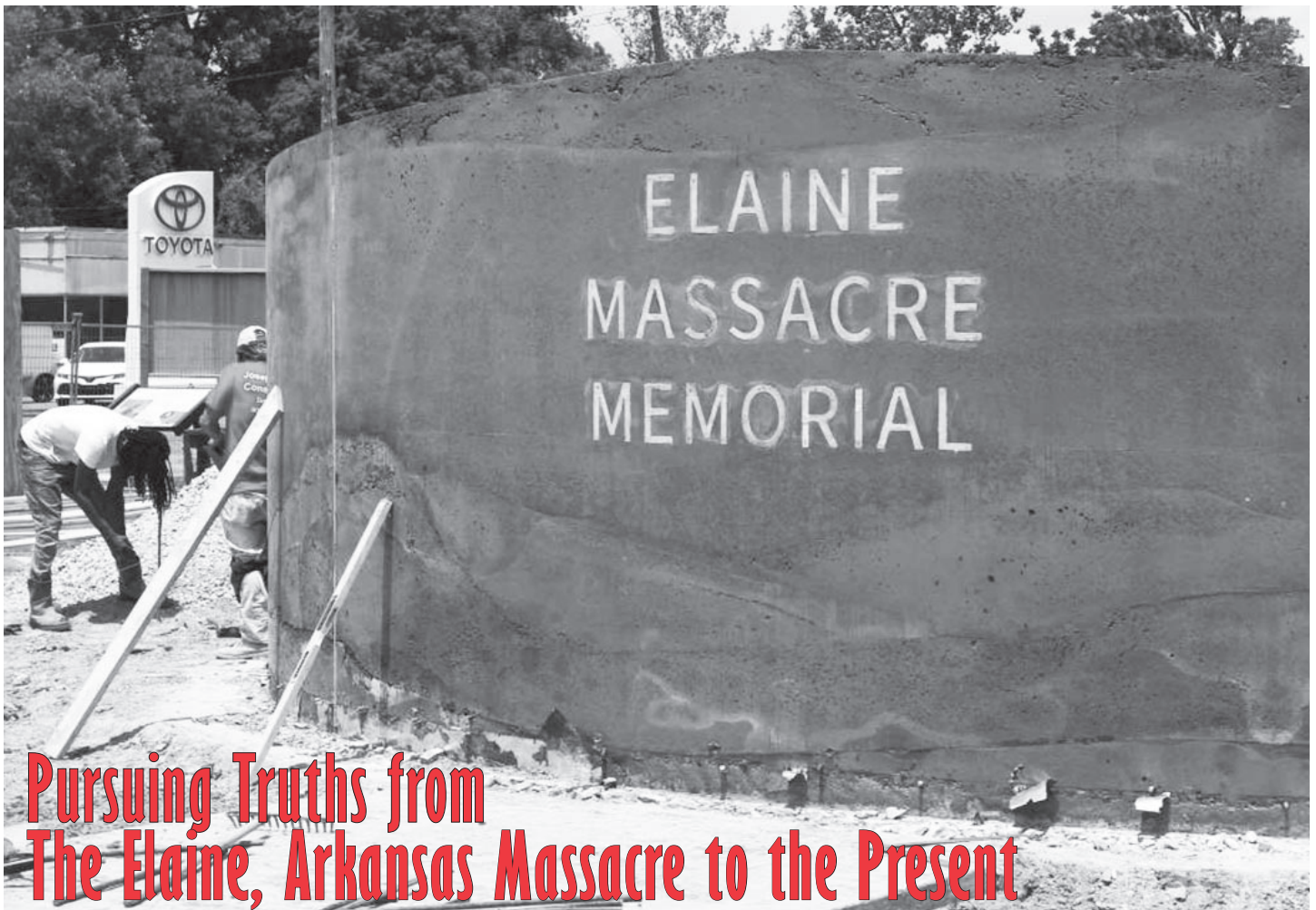


Richard Wright's Forgotten Speech ♦ 100 Years of U.S. Communism

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AGAINST THE **CURRENT**

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL



**Pursuing Truths from
The Elaine, Arkansas Massacre to the Present**

PAUL ORTIZ, OMAR SANCHEZ & JULIAN C. VALDIVIA

Race and the Opioid Crisis

♦ DONNA MURCH

On Black History and Struggle

♦ MALIK MIAH, DERRICK MORRISON, JOHN WOODFORD

Standing Up for Academic Freedom

♦ H. CHANDLER DAVIS



A Letter from the Editors:

Hope in the Streets, continued

LOOKING AT A string of popular revolts, we wrote in our September-October issue (*Against the Current* 202): “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...”

If that observation was germane then, in the brief subsequent time those upheavals have proliferated and the confrontations have become even sharper. As this is written, a mass strike is sweeping France against so-called pension “reform.” The costs of struggle and brutality of repression must not be ignored: hundreds of demonstrators fatally shot in Iraq and Iran, dozens killed and many blinded by police and military snipers in Chile, and that’s only the beginning.

The common theme in these diverse movements is identified by Gilbert Achcar in an extensive interview with *Marxist Left Review* (Australia): “(I)t is obvious now that we are witnessing a severe global crisis of the neoliberal stage of capitalism...If you look today at what is occurring in Chile, Ecuador, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Hong Kong and several other countries, it looks like the boiling point is reached by more and more countries.”

The Middle Eastern uprisings represent a new stage in the long, bitter series of struggles that began in the 2011 “Arab Spring.” But this by no means exhausts the picture. In Hong Kong the pro-Beijing government’s increasingly heavy-handed repression provoked massive street battles with activists, leading to a full-fledged police assault on university campuses and a massive electoral sweep by pro-democracy candidates in district council elections.

(For updates and analysis on Hong Kong from left activists, we refer our readers to articles on the *Lausan* website. Of particular interest: a critical perspective on U.S. “support” for Hong Kong democracy, <https://lausan.hk/2019/between-washington-and-beijing/>.)

We’d be remiss not to point to the role of U.S. imperial policy in every part of the global crisis. Donald Trump’s detestable Secretary of State Mike Pompeo — who’s up to his eyeballs in the Trump gang’s extortion of Ukraine — on November 18 proclaimed that Hong Kong’s government “must take clear steps to address public concern,” the very same day that he announced that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories “are not per se inconsistent with international law.”

In fact, the plain text of international law expressly prohibits the placing of the occupying power’s population in the occupied territory. Pompeo’s announcement, instead, is consistent with U.S. doctrine that international law is what the United States and Israel’s colonial-settler policy say it is.

A global survey would also need to include Africa — where in Zimbabwe, for example, popular anger is boiling over due to the failures of the post-Mugabe ZANU-PF regime of Emerson Mnangagwa to deliver clean government and promised reforms. It’s a situation made worse by devastating regional drought conditions driven by climate change resulting in crop failures and desperate water shortages, all pointing to a future that faces tens of millions of people in southern and Central Africa.

Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Argentina...

The bitter contradictions and escalating stakes of the confrontations are particularly evident in Latin America.

Following a contested election result, the forced

“resignation” of Bolivian president Evo Morales enabled the extreme right, expressing the rage of white elites, to seize the levers of power. With strong Christian fundamentalist connections and fascist inclinations (although a marginal force electorally), they launched a murderous class and race war against the poor and mainly Indigenous population. (On Bolivia, see Bret Gustafson’s update in this issue of *Against the Current* as well as a lengthy interview with Jeffery Webber and Forrest Hylton, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Macho Camacho,” posted at <https://solidarity-us.org>.)

Among other measures, the “interim president” Jeanine Añez ordered the removal of Cuban doctors serving in Bolivia, the same measure enacted in Brazil by far-right president Bolsonaro — presumably acting on U.S. orders, to deprive Cuba of an important hard-currency income source. This will also create a desperate shortage of poor Bolivians’ access to health services, and quite likely a public health crisis.

Far from going unchallenged, however, the far-right takeover provoked angry uprisings and blockades in the Indigenous strongholds of El Alto and coca-growing regions, the sites of insurgencies that initially brought Evo Morales and MAS (Movement Toward Socialism) to power. Amidst military attacks that have produced dozens of civilian deaths at the least, the so-called interim government has promised peace negotiations and new elections, all of which remain to be seen.

Elsewhere, the rightwing reaction against what was called the “pink tide” in Latin America has produced, in turn, new popular revolts to block the re-imposition of savage neoliberalism.

In Colombia, the regime of Ivan Duque Marquez, a rightwing so-called populist, has gutted the implementation of the peace accords that ended a half-century guerilla war, leading to the targeting and killing of hundreds of activists and human rights workers — repeating the pattern that caused the collapse of a previous peace deal in the 1980s and a reversion to brutal civil and drug warfare.

Workers’ pensions and salaries are also threatened. In response, hundreds of thousands of Colombians have rallied to protest in the face of teargas and curfews.

In Chile president Sebastian Piñera called the military into the streets, for the first time since the days of the Pinochet regime, facing mass protests triggered by a rise in transit fares. The underlying issues run much deeper: The Pinochet-era constitution lifts the supremacy of private property over all social considerations, generating enormous inequality and insecurity for the majority of

continued on the inside back cover

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Front Cover: Commemorating the Elaine, Arkansas massacre of 1919.

Above: Unemployed workers, many of whom had been laid off at Ford, gather in Detroit for the Hunger March in 1932.

Back Cover: Friends and relatives swell the UAW picket line at the GM Tech Center in September 2019. jimwestphoto.com

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

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On the Coup in Bolivia

By Bret Gustafson

ON OCTOBER 20, 2019 Bolivians went to the polls to vote in presidential elections. Evo Morales of MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*), already in office for 13 years, was running for an unprecedented fourth term.

Many questioned Evo's candidacy. His re-election had been questioned in 2016, when he narrowly lost a national referendum that would have abolished term limits. In 2017, a constitutional court overruled the vote, allowing Evo to run. Even so, several opposition parties participated in the election, suggesting its legitimacy.

As returns began coming in, Evo's lead was significant. Victory by a margin of at least 10% would assure Evo a first round victory and avoid a runoff. When a preliminary vote counting system was temporarily shut down that night, opposition parties cried foul. As the official vote count came online, Evo's lead moved past the 10% hurdle. The next day he declared victory.

Yet opposition protestors had already taken to the streets. Government offices suffered arson attacks, including facilities where paper ballots were being stored. Many were burned. Street clashes broke out between organized opposition groups and supporters of Evo Morales.

In response to the protests, the government called on the Organization of American States (the OAS) to audit the vote. As that process got under way, street protests intensified. The Bolivian police used non-lethal force to disperse protestors, many of whom sought to enter a secure area surrounding the national palace.

Who is the Opposition?

The question of "who the opposition is" is complicated. Though widely popular (he won at least 47% of the vote), Evo Morales was opposed by a range of social groups. Many young people, frustrated at the lack of employment, were at the fore.

Urban middle classes, many of whom had

supported Evo in prior elections, were also frustrated with Evo's attempt to prolong his presidency. Feminists, anarchists, and many committed leftists also opposed the re-election, arguing that the government had taken a turn to the right.

Despite the popular and nationalist approach to redistributing wealth earned from natural gas sales, Evo's once revolutionary credentials had been sullied by a range of compromises with the right and the military.

Land reform had stalled. The government had deepened its support for the arch-conservative agro-industrial elite of the east. This included subsidies for diesel, government credit, and a measure that would facilitate more deforestation in favor of the soy industry.

Violence against women had intensified, but had seen little serious government response. Though somewhat leftist in comparative perspective, Evo's government had deepened the country's links to extractive capital.

Even so, the right wing, like the military, are a politically fickle and disloyal bunch. Bankers and agro-industrialists had reaped great wealth during the long period of economic growth and stability during Evo's government. Nonetheless, a vocal sector of the extreme right was at the center of the hard-core opposition to Evo.

Hailing from the eastern Bolivian city of Santa Cruz, this more extreme sector of the opposition seized the opportunity for a putsch. Led by a relatively unknown civic leader named Luis Fernando Camacho, and allied with an Andean opposition figure named Marco Pumari, of Potosí, this "civic" opposition demanded that Evo resign.

Evidencing the conservative Catholic and evangelical Protestant tenor of the re-emergent right, the opposition reacted to Evo's secular turn — and Indigenous symbols like the *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth — by demanding that "God be returned" to the national palace.

Clearly reflecting a premeditated plan, organized gangs of young men took to the streets to violently confront pro-Evo supporters. One group in Cochabamba, calling themselves "The Cochabamba Youth Resistance" or RJC, consisted of hundreds

of men on motorcycles wielding sticks, bats and shields.

The RJC was clearly inspired (and likely coordinated) with a similar organization from Santa Cruz, a men's group with fascist tendencies called the "Cruceño Youth Union" (*Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* or UJC). The UJC sent men into the streets of Santa Cruz to confront Evo supporters, enforce a city-wide work stoppage, and occupy public buildings.

The hard-right Camacho, in a bid to provoke instability and bring a violent style of Santa Cruz politics to La Paz, traveled to La Paz with his own delegation of UJC bodyguards to deliver a letter of resignation that he demanded Evo sign. The stunt further heightened the intensity of clashes.

As the otherwise moderate opposition clamored for political renovation and democracy, this more extreme and violent sector elbowed its way to the fore.

How the Coup Unfolded

Clashes between pro- and anti-Evo forces intensified with a few fatalities. The police did not deploy lethal force, but were increasingly subjected to public scorn from the opposition.

Three weeks into the protests, on November 8, police in major cities declared themselves *amotinados*, in mutiny. In effect, they refused to keep order. This was the first sign that a coup was coming.

On November 10, the OAS released a preliminary report on the elections, suggesting that there had been "irregularities" but failing to demonstrate any hard evidence for a major miscount. In response, Evo Morales, by then having retreated to an air force base outside the city, announced that there would be new elections.

At this point a dialogue might have still been possible. Yet the more extreme opposition intensified its calls for Evo's ouster. That same day, the military high command went on television and "suggested" that Evo Morales resign.

Evo and his vice-president flew to the Chapare region where his support was strongest. From there Evo announced his resignation. The next evening a Mexican air force plane landed in the tropical region and he was flown to exile in Mexico. The fraud

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On November 5, mineworkers marched in support of Evo Morales.

Telesur

claims have not yet been substantiated, and may never be. But by any reasonable measure, it was a coup.

With government figures resigning under intense threats and pressure, the chain of succession eventually made its way down to an opposition Senator named Jeanine Añez. Añez proclaimed herself president despite the absence of a quorum in Congress (many of Evo's legislators were in hiding and under threat for their lives).

Añez, who hails from the cattle-ranching region of the Amazonian state of Beni, belongs to a right-wing opposition party called the *Demócratas* [sic]. Her party had garnered only four percent of the vote in the elections.

The task of the coup government (coup deniers and apologists referred to it as a transition government) technically would be to call for and guarantee free and fair elections. Yet in the face of protests clamoring for Evo's return, Añez sent out the military who killed more than 20 people.

Some suggested that the military had done the right thing by asking Evo to resign, to avoid being asked to kill in his defense. Yet the military had few qualms about killing for Añez in the early days of the coup government. Indeed one of Añez' first acts as president — despite the outcry from the international human rights community — was to emit a decree guaranteeing the military impunity. (It has been abrogated, albeit only after two episodes of mass killing.)

The coup regime has also named a new cabinet that appears to be set to use its

power to rake back what it can before new elections can be held. A number of policy shifts are underway. Cuban doctors were sent home. Diplomatic ties with Israel and the United States were restored.

Political persecution of MAS supporters and social movement leaders has intensified across the country. The government is arguing that there is a threat of "terrorism and sedition" to mobilize special military units.

This is a revanchist putsch led by the most conservative sectors of society. On social media, many who opposed Evo's re-election for the sake of democracy, are now decrying a dictatorship of the right. At this writing, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has issued a report arguing that "grave violations" of human rights merit an independent investigation.

The Need for Solidarity

In a bid for stability, the congressional representatives of Evo's MAS party — still technically a majority in Congress — entered into negotiations to establish a procedure for new elections. The elections were approved as law on November 23, with elections set for April. Given the reality of the shift of the forces of power in the country — especially that of the police and military — the MAS conceded that Evo Morales would not be returning to be on the ballot.

Many critical observers in the United States are eager to see the hand of the CIA or some other U.S. involvement in the coup, something that is hard to prove. We may

some day learn of backstage support, but at the moment the eagerness to blame the U.S. hinders us from understanding both the errors of Evo's government and the complexity and form of the Bolivian opposition.

The Bolivian right is more than capable of staging its own counter-revolutionary coups, having done so several times in the past. Of more concern is U.S. acquiescence and support after the fact, like that of many pundits, observers and intellectuals who suggest that the coup was in fact not a coup, but a "victory for democracy."

At this writing, traditional conservative parties have seemingly risen from the dead, having been given some new life by the putsch. It remains to be seen if the MAS will remain a majority party in the April elections, assuming that conditions do not deteriorate.

The coup will surely lead the country into a new phase of social movement organizing and struggle, but it may take some time for movements to reconsolidate their autonomy and their political projects after many years of a stagnated and bureaucratic process of change.

Whichever government emerges will face a significant fiscal challenge. With income from gas revenues flat, and expectations high, we may see a return to fiscal austerity, a growth in debt, the return of the IMF and the World Bank as policy arbiters.

Though it will face strong opposition in Bolivia, the United States may also seek to restore its militaristic approach to foreign policy by re-upping its 'war on drugs' in Bolivia, and reintroducing the Drug Enforcement Agency along with forms of soft control, such as the USAID (US Agency for International Development), both expelled by Evo in the mid-2000s.

Solidarity from the United States, in the face of these risks, will be crucial in the longer term. This must include vigilance in the face of the Trump administration, which has given legitimacy to the coup government and hopes to repeat the Bolivia coup experiment in Venezuela.

We must also support congressional leaders who were bold enough to call it a coup, among them Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, as well as those who are calling for human rights monitoring.

We should also speak out against those who wish to apologize for this coup, a move that at once demonizes Evo Morales (with no small dose of paternalistic racism) and the leftist ideals that mobilized his supporters, while giving license to military intervention. This acquiescence to military intervention is frightening in an era in which democracy is in tatters, and in which the fascist urge is growing among middle classes and their oligarchic supporters across the Americas and around the world. ■

Backlash and Resistance: Canada's 2019 Election

By Paul Kellogg

LED BY PRIME Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada's governing Liberals were re-elected in a national (federal) election October 21, but reduced from majority to minority status. This means that issue by issue, they will need to seek alliances with one or more of the other major parties — Conservative, *Bloc Québécois* (BQ, a Quebec sovereignist party), the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), and Green.

Climate, energy and economic policy were major campaign issues. But a pretty good lens through which a non-Canadian audience can understand politics in this country is how two of these parties, the Liberals and NDP, have responded to the coup in Bolivia — ongoing as of this writing.

In the context of the flight of President Evo Morales into exile, the use of deadly force against protesters, and military-led assaults on indigenous neighborhoods, Jeanine Añez emerged to claim the presidency of Bolivia, in complete violation of the country's constitution. Even more alarming was her anti-indigenous racism, including an appalling (and now-deleted) tweet from October of this year, with a caricature of Morales accompanied by her comment "clinging to power, the poor Indian."¹

In spite of this, Canada's newly-re-elected Liberal Party Government released a statement, saying: "Canada supports an institutional solution that will allow for a temporary caretaker administration to prepare for new elections and avoid a power vacuum,"² implying support for Añez. But the Añez regime is not avoiding a power vacuum but rather filling up Bolivian politics with open racists and military thugs.

By contrast, Jagmeet Singh, leader of the NDP, on the morning of November 14 almost came out against the coup, tweeting that: "The gains made by Bolivia under the Morales government, in terms of indigenous peoples' rights, health and development, cannot be lost. The safety of Evo Morales and

his colleagues must be ensured."

This carefully worded statement avoided an open condemnation of the coup, avoided pointing the finger for Bolivia's problems at corporate interests in the Global North (including Canada), and implied that the main problems in Bolivia were actions taken by Morales: "Canada must strongly condemn the anti-democratic measures that led to this coup."³

By the evening of the same day, however, the fast moving events led Singh to put out a much better, less ambiguous tweet, openly challenging the Liberal position. "The worsening situation in Bolivia is alarming. Instead of supporting the self-proclaimed interim President that has a history of attacking Indigenous people, Canada must condemn the anti-democratic actions that led to this coup and are still getting worse."⁴

As this example shows, the NDP cannot be put in the same camp as the Liberal party. The NDP reflects the pressures of the labor and social movements more than it reflects the pressures of the corporations and the elite.

In the election, the NDP performed far better than was first feared. When the election was called — on September 11 — one poll had the NDP tied in support with the Green Party, both at 11%.⁵ Just eight years previous, the NDP captured just over 30% of the vote and was able to claim the mantle of Canada's "official opposition."

However, when the 2019 votes were counted, the Green Party had faded to just under eight percent, NDP support climbing to almost 16%, third most of any major party, enough to elect 24 MPs. (See Table I.⁶)

Racially Tinged Politics

Even though fading from their pre-election polling, the Greens did win their most votes ever, electing three MPs. In two provinces, the Greens actually outpolled the NDP. Some will see this as a shift left under the impact of concern about climate change, and that was a factor for some.

However, there is an unsavory side to the story. New Brunswick was one of the two provinces (the other being neighboring Prince Edward Island) where the Greens outpolled the NDP. Jagmeet Singh, leader of the NDP since 2016, is from a Sikh back-

ground and habitually wears a turban. One week before the election, several prominent members of the NDP in New Brunswick switched to the Greens, at least in part because of a perception that "a practicing Sikh who wears a turban" would have difficulty winning support, particularly in parts of the province.⁷

Singh had to combat racism elsewhere. In Quebec (the province where French is the principal language), the newly-elected conservative nationalist provincial government had just passed Bill 21, a so-called "secularism" bill, banning certain public sector employees from wearing religious symbols at work.

This bill is, at best, extremely hypocritical. Quebec — where the leading religion is Catholic — has for generations been a place adorned with religious symbols, the Christian crucifix being ubiquitous. The issue of "defending secularism" has only reared its head in the context of Islamophobia and the long decades of "Wars on Terror" in the Middle East and Central Asia.

The anti-Islamic nature of the law was revealed when "Quebec Premier François Legault confirmed the law would forbid Malala Yousafzai, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and renowned advocate for girls' education, from teaching in the province unless she removed her head scarf."⁸ Singh himself — his turban a symbol of his being a practicing Sikh — would be barred from certain public sector jobs, were he to refuse to remove his turban.⁹

Singh's NDP won considerable sympathy in Quebec with his push-back against these and other racist attitudes. At a farmers' market in Montreal, hours before a French-language leaders' debate, "Singh encountered a man who suggested he 'cut his turban off' in order to 'look like a Canadian.'" Singh's brilliant response went viral. "I think Canadians look like all sorts of people."¹⁰

His skillful response to this and other issues in the debate that evening marked the beginning of a steady, sustained rise in support for Singh and the NDP, in Quebec and throughout Canada.¹¹ By the end of the campaign — spurred by this and similar gentle yet sharp responses to other expressions of racism and right-wing politics — his net approval rating ("the difference in per-

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Table I — Results for Five Major Parties, Canada, Five Elections, 2006-2019
Ia-TOTAL VOTE

Party	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019
Conservative	5,400,000	5,200,000	5,800,000	5,600,000	6,200,000
NDP	2,600,000	2,500,000	4,500,000	3,500,000	2,800,000
Liberal	4,500,000	3,600,000	2,800,000	6,900,000	5,900,000
BQ	1,600,00	1,400,00	900,00	800,00	1,400,00
Green	700,00	900,00	600,00	600,00	1,200,00
Turnout	14,800,000	13,800,000	14,700,000	17,600,000	17,900,000

Ib-PERCENTAGE OF VOTE

Party	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019
Conservative	36.5%	37.7%	39.5%	31.8%	34.6%
NDP	17.6%	18.1%	30.6%	19.9%	15.6%
Liberal	30.4%	26.1%	19.0%	39.2%	33.0%
BQ	10.8%	10.1%	6.1%	4.5%	7.8%
Green	4.7%	6.5%	4.1%	3.4%	6.7%

Ic-SEATS IN PARLIMENT

Party	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019
Conservative	124	143	166	99	121
NDP	29	37	103	44	24
Liberal	103	77	34	184	157
BQ	51	49	4	10	32
Green	0	0	1	1	3

centage points between those who approve and disapprove of his job performance”) stood at plus 25, compared to *negative* 14 for Trudeau and an even worse *negative* 20 for Conservative leader Andrew Scheer.¹²

But while the NDP avoided a wipeout in Quebec (holding onto one seat, and polling almost half a million votes), this was a far cry from their breakthrough year in 2011 where under the leadership of the late Jack Layton, they captured 59 seats, not only their best showing ever in Quebec, but their best showing ever in any part of Canada.

In 2019 the surprise in Quebec came not from the NDP but from the nationalist *Bloc Québécois*, coming back from four seats in 2011 to 32 this time, almost matching the Liberals’ 35 in the province.

But the recovery of the BQ, and the inability of the NDP to hold onto its gains in Quebec, cannot be put down to a turn towards Islamophobia in the province. Singh, while winning sympathy for his response to racism on the campaign trail, would not take off the table the possibility of an NDP government in Ottawa challenging Bill 21 in federal court.

Such a stance — asserting as it does the supremacy of Canadian law over Quebec law — alienated many Quebec voters, for whom the autonomy of Quebec within Canada is a defining aspect of their politics. It is possible to combine anti-racism with support for Quebec’s national rights by say-

ing: a) we oppose Bill 21 on the grounds of Islamophobia; but b) this is an issue which will be decided inside Quebec.

However Singh would not stake out such a position, one more moment in the NDP’s long history of being unable to understand the national question in Quebec.

Narrow Liberal Victory

All this was part of the mix leading to the very narrow Liberal victory. Just four years previous, Trudeau had swept to office because of disgust with ten years of Tory rule — defeating then incumbent Tory Prime Minister Stephen Harper, through a massive increase in voter turnout — the Liberal vote going up from 2.8 million the previous election to 6.9 million in 2015, an unprecedented surge of over four million.

Trudeau pulled in these new millions through staking out aggressively progressive stances on key policy issues — among them climate change, corruption and Indigenous rights — and much of the surge towards Trudeau in 2015 was his perceived difference on these files from Harper. But on each file, he ended up pursuing policies which repelled many who had voted for him.

To protect the export of climate-destroying tar sands oil from Western Canada, he spent over \$4 billion to nationalize a highly controversial pipeline project (when a U.S. company backed out from building it — ed.).

He went to bat for a company — SNC-

Lavalin — confronting legal challenges over its corrupt relationship to the former Libyan regime of Muammar al-Gaddafi. When Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould objected, Trudeau demoted her, leading her ultimately to resign from the Liberal caucus.

Wilson-Raybould is Indigenous — a member of the Kwakwaka’wakw people — and the first ever Indigenous person to hold such a high Cabinet position.

Trudeau’s “progressive” mantle was sullied not only by these regressive actions, but by images which surfaced during the campaign of a 20-something Trudeau partying in blackface!

All of this cost him about one million votes, and dozens of seats — including one held by Wilson-Raybould who won re-election standing as an independent. However, revulsion for the Tories, led by the anti-abortion climate-denying Scheer, was enough to allow Trudeau to win the most seats.

One candidate tried to go further right. Prior to the election, Maxime Bernier split from the Tories and formed a new rightwing People’s Party of Canada, on an anti-immigrant platform clearly shaped in the model of Donald Trump. Not only did the People’s Party poll a risible 1.6% of the vote, Bernier himself lost his own seat in Quebec.

While the Liberals won the most seats, it was the Tories who narrowly won the popular vote — on the back of a significant move to the right in western provinces heavily reliant on resource extraction — tar sands and conventional oil, natural gas and potash. In one, Saskatchewan, the Tories took an astonishing 64% of the vote. In the other, Alberta, they captured almost 70%!

The cohering of a mass base for the Tories on a climate-change denying basis, a backlash politics which pulled in thousands of working people, is a warning about political battles to come in the country. Just how worrying? The rightwing surge in the West has led to a movement which takes inspiration from the New Right in both the United States and Great Britain.

Calling themselves members of “Wexit,” 750 of them rallied in Calgary November 16, many adorned with hats saying: “Make Alberta Great Again” and “Rednexit.” Leader of this right-wing movement, Peter Downing, stated: “We are going to build our pipeline and Quebec is going to pay for it.”¹³

Rising Resistance

Importantly, however, the West is incubating not simply the politics of backlash, but also the politics of resistance. Idle No More is a social movement coming out of Western Canada, led by Indigenous people insisting on pushing back against generations

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No Premature Burial for Academic Freedom: Speaking Up in Ann Arbor

By H. Chandler Davis

LET ME MAKE a case for urgency of defense of academic freedom.

I'm not addressing the whole University community. Surely there are some who don't have any concern for academic freedom as the AAUP (American Association of University Professors — ed.) understands it. Some who think, for example, that it was honorable and right in 1954 that the President of the University at that time fired Mark Nickerson and myself for perceived disloyalty.

Certainly I want to engage those people in debate, but that is not what I'm about here. I'm addressing friends, the majority that values the protection and encouragement of variety of opinion within the scholarly community: President Mark Schlissel, most of the faculty, most students.

Also, my plea is not directed at those who insist that the policies of the government of Israel be immune to criticism. I do engage those rigid Zionists in debate, quite a lot, it's important to do so; but that's not what I'm doing now.

I'm assuming here that the free exchange of ideas we value in academe includes candor on Palestine. Let's take for granted that it is legitimate on campus to call a crime a crime even if the victims are Palestinians.

One can say in the halls of the United Nations that it is unethical to hold under military control all the lands Israel occupied in 1967; to introduce large numbers of new settlers in the territories and enfranchise them but not the original population; to hold two million people, mostly already refugees, in the Gaza Strip in conditions essentially of imprisonment.

To condemn these Israeli practices is not only tolerated in the international forum, it is the prevailing opinion. It is a debatable opinion; indeed, Benny Morris, who is a leader among the historians who have uncovered the facts of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine 1947-1949, supports the practice!

The present article is directed to those — again, I think I'm addressing the majority — who see how wrong Israeli state policy is. Some of you may be uncomfortable with terms like “Israeli apartheid,” but let's not get hung up on a few such words: Israel gives one ethnic group favored status, and enforces its overlordship with overwhelming

weaponry, and if you don't want to call that apartheid, call it what you will.

How Do We Respond?

I hope we can agree also that recognizing the atrocity leads legitimately to looking for ways to combat it. Most of us look for non-violent ways. This is not cowering before armed might, even the nuclear weapon (which Israel has never promised not to use); nor is it necessarily committing to any philosophy of passive resistance.

Most Palestinians resist non-violently too, as in demonstrations in villages like Nabi Salih — or even the Great March of Return, where hundreds of Gazans week after week expose themselves to merciless wounding: though a few may use slingshots against the

heavily armed IDF (Israeli Defense Force), they do not inflict serious casualties and do not aspire to.

Accepting the policy of non-violence limits one to tactics like boycotts, and this is what many Palestinians and their supporters call for. Since 2005 or even longer, the world has been urged by leaders like Omar Barghouti to subject Israel to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) until justice is won.

This is not a recipe for action. Supporters differ on what actions are called for. I support the BDS campaign, but I wish I could avoid giving the impression that we are boycotting Israelis like journalists Amira Hass and Gideon Levy, not to mention valued friends like Professors Emmanuel

H. CHANDLER DAVIS (b. 1926), a world-renowned mathematician and noted science fiction author, is now Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto. In 1954, Davis was one of several faculty members suspended from the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor after refusing to co-operate with the hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities that were held in Lansing.

When Davis further declined to answer questions about his personal political views to U-M committees, he was one of those summarily fired. Inasmuch as Davis had pleaded the First Amendment rather than the more common Fifth Amendment, he served a federal prison sentence for Contempt of Congress.

Along with those who had chosen to take the Fifth Amendment, he was blacklisted from teaching in the United States. In 1962 Davis and his wife, the early modern historian Natalie Zemon Davis, relocated to Canada.

In 1990, following a revival of interest in the case of Davis and others who has been suspended (the biologist Clement Markert and pharmacologist Mark Nickerson), the Senate Advisory Committee of the University of Michigan sought to convince the Regents to make amends in some fashion. When this failed, an annual “Davis-Markert-Nickerson

Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom” was established, and has been held every year since then.

On October 27, 2019, Henry F. Reichman, chair of the American Association of University Professors Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, delivered a talk in this series on “Do Adjuncts Have Academic Freedom?, or Why Tenure Matters.”

For that occasion Davis, the only survivor among the suspended U-M faculty, returned to U-M as he has for all earlier lectures.

Among his primary concerns for the past year has been the mistreatment of two U-M teachers — Associate Professor John Cheney-Lippold and Lecturer Lucy Peterson — who were variously sanctioned by the U-M administration in October 2018 for their decision to honor the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) against the Israeli state and for Palestinian rights by declining to write letters of support on behalf of students wishing to attend Israeli universities. (For a detailed report of these events, see “Disciplined for Acting with Integrity,” *Against the Current* 198, January-February 2019.)

Thus Davis chose to issue the following statement, originally submitted to the *Michigan Daily* (but not published), which we are reprinting here. —Alan Wald for the *Against the Current* editorial board



Natalie Zemon Davis and H. Chandler Davis.

Farjoun and Gadi Algazi, people whose contribution to justice in Palestine I can only admire and can't emulate.

Some of those Israelis (Jewish and Arab), under the name Boycott from Within, collaborate with the international BDS movement in efforts to end support for Israeli policies and institutions. But some do not: some Israeli academics active in the difficult resistance I'm talking about dislike the call to boycott.

You understand that I am not engaging those who disagree with the objectives of BDS. As I have said, just now I am talking to friends. Let us assume agreement that for example, we should try to restrain the settlers from destroying hundreds of Palestinians' olive trees.

Those of us who don't go in person with the International Solidarity Movement to conduct civil disobedience, in the tradition of Rachel Corrie, cast about for actions we can meaningfully take from this distance. We do disagree, and regularly explore tactics among ourselves.

For example, years ago I happily accepted invitations to visiting positions at Israeli universities; yet today I urge young colleagues to consider declining such offers on principle. Some of us would refuse to recommend a student to a study program at an Israeli university; yet all of us protested when the Palestinian-American student Lara Alqasem was (for a time) denied permission to enter the country to study at Hebrew University.

Cultural contacts across borders can be precious peace-makers; yet most of us urged (for example) the Toronto Raptors to decline an invitation to celebrate in Israel their NBA championship.

Such questions of choice of tactics must be assayed seriously, as Omar Barghouti and

all our allies must appreciate. Weighing alternative methods of action does not mean resigning ourselves to inaction.

It's very different when some among us are attacked for standing up for Palestinian rights. John Cheney-Lippold and Lucy Peterson at the University of Michigan were denounced not for their choice of means — refusing to recommend students for study in Israel — but for their objectives.

Steven Salaita was victimized at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana not for bad choice of words in e-mail against the IDF's shelling of Gaza, but for objecting to the shelling of Gaza at all. Actually I never saw his messages, just as I never heard what programs the students of Cheney-Lippold and Peterson had applied to in Israel.

It is not required that we endorse every action and every utterance of colleagues in order for us to defend their freedom. Let us clear the air by insisting on this distinction. Taking away Steven Salaita's tenured appointment was unjust; denying Norman Finkelstein tenure at DePaul as punishment for his views on Palestine was unjust; any penalties on Cheney-Lippold and Peterson for their adherence to the BDS campaign are unjust.

We can debate calmly among ourselves what tools to use in defending Palestinian rights; but we must unite to defeat the powers that would silence the defense.

Echoes of 1950s Purges?

Now am I saying that the attempts today to purge the universities of supporters of Palestinian rights are like the purge of the 1950s? Be patient while I compare them, having seen both.

The number of firings from American Universities for perceived communism in

the great Red-hunt of 1947-1960 was in the hundreds, and the firings for perceived adherence to BDS or the like today are much fewer.

There is one effect that looks very similar. In the 1950s any untenured academic might be leery of signing a petition critical of the United States fighting a war in Korea (to take one example), knowing it would be vulnerable to public attack. The same went for critical examination of the capitalist system.

In the present period, criticism of the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians is subject to the same chill. We all know perfectly well that if you want to criticize the occupation of the West Bank you had better reflect on your job security, because Canary Mission [a website that blacklists pro-Palestinian student activists, professor and organizations —ed.] is watching you.

So what? We go right ahead, only we watch our step: what's wrong with that? Let me try to shoot down this complacency.

In the first place, constantly guarded speech is not free speech. It doesn't do the job free speech is needed for; the exploration of ideas and values. Capitalism was due for more re-evaluation, and after the silence of the Red-hunt descended it took a long slow struggle to get it back on the agenda.

Likewise, if we agree that the ethnic cleansing of Palestine needs exposure and condemnation, then we must fight for the right to discuss it freely.

In the second place, let me caution the beginning academic. If you have a few years to go to tenure, and you're treading carefully all that while, there's a risk you may end up imitating the uncritical conformists so successfully that there's no difference — especially since even tenure doesn't really give you security if Alan Dershowitz and Cary Nelson come hunting your scalp. Pussyfooting is not free-wheeling; defend your freedom.

In the third place, and this is too often overlooked, firing is not the main punishment held over your head. If you speak up for Gaza's access to clean drinking water, or if you quarrel with the IHRA's so-called "working definition of anti-Semitism," you will quite likely not be fired forthwith; but even if you are not, you will be put on the list, and when you go up for your next job, you will have opposition from the start. Powerful opposition, open or covert.

This is called the blacklist. It really hurts. Here I am, wanting the coming generation to take heart and speak up, but I have to tell you that it may really cost you.

All right, this purge is less thorough than the one I fell to; many jobs have been saved. Joseph Massad kept his position at Columbia after a fight, and David Klein at

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Beyond the 2019 UAW Negotiations By Dianne Feeley

EXCEPT FOR THE oldest strikers I met on the picket line during the UAW-General Motors negotiations, autoworkers did not remember a time when, if you passed a 90-day probationary period, you earned full pay and benefits. Back then, temporary workers were only hired during the summer months in order to cover vacations.

But since the economic crisis of the early '80s every contract negotiated has required the membership to accept concessions. The union explained this was necessary in order to keep the Big Three afloat. Once the companies got back on their feet, members would be able to win back what had been given up. Despite the billions the corporations have made over four decades, that moment never came.

Although the UAW negotiates a pattern contract for General Motors, Ford and Fiat-Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), it chooses to negotiate with the one they feel will give them the best offer, and then uses that as a template for the others. With the signing of the 2019-23 contracts, it is reasonable to conclude that concessions are here to stay.

UAW officials needed to take on GM as the initial target in negotiating the 2019 contract because the previous November GM announced it was “unallocating” products at five North American plants, four in the United States. Since the 2015 contract was supposed to guarantee job security, the announcement blindsided the UAW (and Unifor, the Canadian union). Plants have been closing for some time, but doing so just months before the opening of negotiations was a deliberate “in your face” tactic.

By the time negotiations opened, three of the U.S. plants were closed and the fourth, the Detroit-Hamtramck plant, was limping along with a third of its workforce. Workers had transferred to other plants but had not pulled up roots, hoping to return home.

The two issues on top of the strikers' agenda were “Keep the plants open” and “Make the temps permanent and equal to other UAW members.” Yet despite the

40-day strike at GM neither demand is embedded in the new contract. In fact, the agreement recognized the closure of the three plants and even added a distribution center to the list. Only the Detroit-Hamtramck plant will remain open. The contract also required the UAW to drop its lawsuit against the closure of the Lordstown, Ohio plant. While the Ford contract okayed the closing of the Romulus, MI plant under the FCA contract the Maryville, MI plant will be shuttered.

Instead of going into negotiations with the demand “Everyone tier one,” the UAW talked about “a path” to permanent status. And that's what they got, as they split the difference between the corporate demand for labor flexibility and thousands of temporaries who lack even minimal job security.

Starting in January 2020, full-time GM and Ford temps who have been continuously working three or more years can be added to the seniority list and advance on the wage ladder. (The following year that will be reduced to a two-year window.) FCA, where temps represent 20% of the total workforce, has a different formula.

Who Wins?

This paltry “win” signals that from now on, hiring at GM and Ford will mean working under disciplined conditions for at least two years as a temporary. Those laid off for more than 30 days must begin all over again.

The UAW, the corporations and the media all call the contracts a “win-win,” citing as proof a large signing bonus, a wage increase and profit sharing along with no added health care costs.

These are small potatoes in comparison to the expansion of a tiered system with a long probationary period, continued outsourcing of work at lower wages with few benefits and the red circling of parts plants and distribution centers with an inferior wage scale. And then there's the same ineffectual language about moratoriums on plant closings.

When the UAW was founded in the 1930s as an industrial union, it demanded and won roughly the same wages and working conditions for its members whatever their job classification. The UAW's strength came from wall-to-wall organizing that

bound its membership together.

That solidarity also extended into the past and future: members respected retired workers from whom they inherited their decent contracts and sought to build on them. We prided ourselves on leaving better conditions to next generation. For many, the struggles UAW members waged over the years are stories of their own families.

Thirty-five years ago — with more than 1.5 million workers — auto's labor costs represented about eight percent of the industry's total cost. Today — with a Big Three workforce of slightly more than 150,000 — labor costs have declined to five percent. The cost has been whittled down through cutting minutes of break time, instituting a strict absence policy, requiring those hired since 2007 to work at reduced wages and few benefits, outsourcing whole departments and hiring temporaries who are saddled with low wages and bare bones health care coverage.

In the 2015 contract, autoworkers' highest goal was to bring up at least the wages of the second-tier workers (now termed “in progression”) to match the pay of those hired before 2007. When the tentative agreement didn't do that, the FCA workers voted it down; UAW officials were forced back to the negotiating table.

The revised version promised that second-tier wages would rise over an eight-year period. The contract passed but many voted no, emphasizing that an eight-year progression in a four-year contract wasn't adequate. Furthermore, the lower tier never reached top pay, and the contract failed to restore either a pension or health care after retirement.

Handicapping a Possible Win

Despite the fact that the Big Three employs only 10% of the workers it had 35 years ago — and at lower real wages — UAW officials believe they have done what's needed to keep members working. They go into negotiations with low expectations. That was certainly true in 2019. Secondly, the UAW did little to prepare for a strike. This meant the strike lacked strength:

- From their offices at Solidarity House UAW officials did not organize union members to stop the closure of the “unallocat-

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ed” plants nor work with Unifor to organize a public campaign. They did not mobilize the membership to refuse overtime and use work-to-rule tactics to show GM they meant business. They did not initiate group grievances, have workers show up at management offices with complaints, or coordinate the wearing of union t-shirts, buttons and caps. (To its credit Unifor approached the UAW to mount a joint campaign only to be turned away. Unifor also took out full-page newspaper ads and organized a few demonstrations.)

- Solidarity House did not direct local union meetings beforehand to discuss upcoming contract demands, plan strategy and fan out to churches and community organizations to request their solidarity.
- Although the 2018 Bargaining Convention raised the strike pay from \$200 a week to \$250 and finally \$275, that was hardly enough to sustain members or scare the

corporation into believing the strike was capable of making a dent in their profitability. With more than \$800 million in the strike fund, the union had the capacity to raise the pay to \$1,000 a week, sending a powerful message!

- There was no call for mass rallies at GM headquarters or mass picketing at the various plants. Community members *did* bring food to the strikers and flock to the picket lines, but if a call had gone out, people would have responded in an organized way.
- Solidarity House never suggested that Ford and FCA workers take a day (or more) and spend it on the picket line. (Of course many did go before or after work.)
- While a few UAW locals not in the auto industry leafleted in support of the strikers at GM dealerships, this was never a plan the union adopted.

While the UAW is noted for having a democratic Constitution and not paying its

officials outrageous salaries (although these have edged up in the last years), the UAW has proven corrupt at the top.

So far the federal government has charged a baker’s dozen FCA executives and UAW officials of misappropriating funds from joint training centers. All have plead guilty and several are currently in prison. According to the RICO lawsuit GM filed against FCA, the payoff included allowing FCA a higher percentage of second-tier and temporary workers than at Ford and GM.

At the Bargaining Convention outgoing UAW president Dennis Williams attributed corruption to a few rotten apples. But it is clear that this corruption extended well beyond stealing from joint training programs and taking kickbacks from vendors.

After a four-year investigation, the federal government has begun indictments against top officials for misappropriation of union funds. The smell of corruption disgusts UAW members, particularly as Vance Pearson, director of Region 5, was indicted just before the GM negotiations. The union allowed him to participate in the negotiations and only midway through was he put on paid leave.

Federal charges have not been brought against Officials A and B, but it is likely these are former president Dennis Williams and Gary Jones, elected UAW president in June 2018. Just as the Ford contract was being approved, six union locals passed resolutions bringing both Jones (who had also taken a paid leave) and Pearson up on charges that could lead to their trial, conviction and ouster from the union.

Within days the UAW Executive Board filed charges against Jones and Pearson as well. Both quickly turned in their resignations from their offices and the UAW, perhaps to avoid the humiliation of a trial and preserve their union pensions.

Rory Gamble, recently voted UAW president by the Executive Board, has outlined a few rules to weed out internal corruption. But he is also a member of the Administration Caucus, allowed and minimized the corruption. Will changing a few rules be enough to quell the dissent that has locals calling for a special convention? And given the hold that the Administration Caucus has over officers, is there enough leadership within the ranks to step forward?

The corruption that came along with concessions is embedded in the joint programs that the union and companies administer, yet despite selling off the buildings, the programs continue under the new contract.

How Could the UAW Have Won?

Because UAW officials think that relationships built up over the years with corporate executives and their negotiating skills produce “win-win” contracts, organizing the

membership for a contract campaign hasn't been high on their priority list.

Yet if we look at successful strikes, whether we go back to the auto sitdowns in 1936-37 that resulted in the first UAW contracts or whether we look to the numerous teachers' strikes today, the key to success is in the ability of union members to unite around core demands and appeal to the community to stand with them. In the 2019 negotiations, while strikers spoke of their priorities and found a sympathetic audience, the negotiating team blunted those clear demands because they had no confidence that they were winnable.

In the months before the negotiations, GM and Ford announced their restructuring plans. In particular GM's CEO Mary Barra prioritized autonomous and electric car research and development as she announced the plant closings. But the UAW's Research Department concluded that the production of electric vehicles would lead to a substantial job loss and therefore offered no advice to the UAW negotiators.

This restructuring is on top of a geographical shift in production. While 20 years ago 80% of auto manufacturing came from plants in North America, Western Europe, Japan and South Korea, today that share is below 50%. In 2018 North American production stood at 16.4%. Just 10.2% of the vehicles are made in the United States.

UAW officials ignored these realities, demanding only that GM bring back vehicles now made in Mexico, where workers earn less than two dollars an hour. Instead of helping Mexican autoworkers form a democratic union and bring up their wages, the UAW raised a demand that cut across any solidarity those workers might lend to the strikers.

The failure to build a powerful strike was matched by the failure to provide a strategy that could secure good jobs as the industry transitions. Without a program to reverse a shrinking U.S. manufacturing base, the UAW negotiating team could only tinker with what the corporations proposed.

But before we look at what kind of program the UAW could have outlined, let's look at how the Chicago teachers expanded their contract negotiations by raising issues that seemed far beyond the classroom: *the need for affordable housing*.

Their well-thought out three-part demand revealed that there were 17,000 public school students who were either homeless or lived in temporary shelters. Thousands more were living in precarious housing. Since teachers and support staff are required to live in a city where housing is expensive, the strikers raised the broader need for affordable housing.

Of course they didn't win all their demands, but raising the issue made a deep

impression on everyone who heard them.

By opening up a discussion about what it takes to have "Schools Chicago students deserve," the strikers won important demands for themselves and their students. These included librarians and nurses for their schools, and concrete measures for homeless students. *Their strike challenged the mayor's priorities.*

Now back to work, the teachers will monitor the contract to make sure its provisions become a reality. And they will also continue to advocate around community issues.

What if the UAW had opened negotiations by demanding the Big Three immediately move to develop a mass transportation system within the framework of the Green New Deal? It could have challenged the corporations to end their participation in the fossil fuel economy.

Such a visionary plan, backed by the mobilization of workers and their communities, wouldn't win first time out. But it would have exposed the Big Three — despite a press release or two about their greening their plants — as failing to move to a different transportation model. The earth can no longer sustain an industry built on the individual vehicle.

Under government order, corporations retooled quickly for war production as World War II approached. So we know it is

possible to retool today to build the infrastructure necessary to eliminate fossil fuel as an energy source. If corporations can't carry this out, the government needs to help unions and community partners do so.

Just as the Chicago teachers' strike was inspiring, a UAW call for a massive restructuring of transportation would stimulate a serious discussion about how swiftly we can move to eliminate a fossil fuel economy. And those who have profited from the irrational production of millions of vehicles each year must be the ones to foot the retooling.

If this seems far from a contract, perhaps that's because negotiating labor costs are detached from the disaster fast approaching. For those who would say this perspective is utopian, listen to Mary Barra, who challenged the UAW by claiming job security can't be guaranteed but "earned."

Now-closed GM plants — Lordstown, Flint, Ypsilanti and so on — earned prizes for excellence, so the workers from those plants must find that comment particularly callous. Yet in the corporate world where the market is all, that's the reality.

So why are we wasting our time in a game of musical chairs when corporations keep eliminating the chairs? Why not face up to climate change and develop a perspective for reorganizing how we live and work? We need to reject corporate disregard for our future and forge our collective vision. ■

Speaking Up in Ann Arbor

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Cal State Northridge, and Rabab Abdulhadi at San Francisco State. No firings so far at University of Michigan, either.

Some of the targets suffered penalties and threats of further penalties, however, but I'm drawing attention to something else: when you go looking for your next position, you'll be up against the same barrier that has kept Steven Salaita and Norman Finkelstein out of academe in the USA since they lost their jobs.

Fighting Back As a Community

Young university teacher, if the consequences of letting yourself be known as pro-Palestinian give you pause, you are not being paranoid. Face it. And everyone, face it.

Don't accept it. Recognize that there's a blacklist in operation, that it is stifling free speech in an important area of policy. There must be something we can do about it, right?

I'm not talking about the victims. I moved to a job I really liked in another country; most blacklisted did not fare that well. But I'm not talking about individual safe havens, I'm pleading with you to deal with the problem as a community.

One thing I learned over the years is that the purge feels very different if it man-

ages only to *almost* exclude someone. When I job-hunted after 1954, I got zero university offers in my field; later when my friend Ed Dubinsky job-hunted, he got just one. Now one is very close to zero, it's as close as nine is to eight, yet having one good offer allowed Ed to return to a satisfying life of teaching and scientific work.

The purge had almost worked in his case, yet the sting was pulled. But look what that means. That means that most of the force of Canary Mission's onslaught is overcome if just one employer finds the courage to step up and break the wall of exclusion for each targeted job-seeker.

That means, in turn, that the blacklist presents its ominous solid wall only by the collaboration of all employers in a field. The blacklist is everybody rejecting you.

As a consequence, the guilt is every employer's. Every university that won't hire a dissenter is an accomplice in the crime of deterring the next generation's free dissent. It is fair — and this is the moment to do it — to demand of every American university: don't be an accomplice. Break the unanimity. Offer a professorship to Steven Salaita. Offer a professorship to Norman Finkelstein. ■



The Communist-led Unemployed Councils fostered interracial organizations committed to direct action and mass demonstrations.

Riddle Me This, Comrade 100 Years of U.S. Communism

THE COMMUNIST TRADITION in the United States needs a better publicist. The year 2019 was the 100th anniversary of the movement's founding; the idea of socialism is urgently in the air, thanks in part to Bernie, while splendid new books about Karl Marx are popping up like spring flowers. And yet the riddle of Communism, its amalgam of earnest commitment to social justice and Soviet-centered *realpolitik*, remains as disquieting as ever.

Who among us has the qualifications to accurately mine the tragic, comic, and complex forces that coincided to create this beguiling, contradictory and elusive movement?

Those who truly care about rebuilding a Far Left — this time with a vibrant and intellectually heterodox spirit — have many complaints about partisans of the CP-USA.

There is no way to un-see what has been witnessed and documented. Over the decades, sundry of its leaders, members and sympathizers have consistently lowballed the party's truly insidious and troubling chapters. The CP-USA seems a movement incapable of fearlessly investigating and coming to terms with aspects of its own identity or even to attain the degree of critical self-assessment achieved by several of the Italian

and Spanish Eurocommunists of the 1970s.

The CP-USA is noteworthy for regularly publishing autobiographical and biographical books and pamphlets about its cadre. Yet too many read as if scripted in medieval times, when the primary motivation was religious and the object was to hold up examples of the subject's discovering and then living the godly life while instructing and inspiring.

Communist life-writing may be too serious a matter to be left to Communists. The most outstanding, such as Martin Duberman's 1995 biography of concert artist Paul Robeson, tend to be authored by sympathetic non-Communists.

Nonetheless, certain achievements of the CP-USA remain a reservoir of hope that nourishes us to meet the daunting challenges of the Trump era. At its 100th anniversary, there may be more to praise than bury.

Renegotiating the Past

Reading about the movement's contributions to anti-racism, anti-fascism, industrial unionism and working-class culture might cause an envy meltdown. Whether one is pro-Communist or not, memories of the Scottsboro Case, Abraham Lincoln Brigade, talented writers promoted by the John Reed Club and attracted to the League of American Writers, and devoted builders of the CIO will be part of a Red DNA of any

By Alan Wald
future Far Left.

These histories touch moral chords and offer strategic lessons whose echoes inspire us to fight for a new and improved society.

Meanwhile, much of the population remains mired in a surfeit of recycled memes generated by hitmen of the political Right to slime the memory of U.S. Bolsheviks and anyone who can be linked to them. These are often scare images of Communists as saboteurs, blinkered dupes, or useful idiots on behalf of an Evil Empire.

To escape any taint of such FOX News caricatures of Communism, some who champion socialism in the new millennium protest too much that a modern reincarnation would be simply the New Deal Redivivus. This type of "Santa Clausification" of Marx would surely have astonished Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who sought to save capitalism from itself.

Others, especially in cultural studies, reinvent the "Red Decade" of the 1930s as principally a warm and fuzzy version of the Popular Front while barely referencing the reign of terror in the USSR from which it was substantially meant to divert.

They deploy euphemisms, designed for readers distracted by shiny things, which downplay the full metamorphosis of the CP-USA in the mid-1930s, when membership shot up to 60,000 or so and went even higher during World War II. This is akin to

Alan Wald is a member of Solidarity and an editor of Against the Current.

recounting the story of Catholicism while not bothering with the Inquisition and pedophile priests, or at least playing them down as one-off bizarre episodes.

Working people of all colors were drawn to the movement less by ideology than the extraordinary activism of its cadres, but ultimately found themselves operating in a framework where every national policy switch emanated from the far-away Stalin leadership.

After all, at the command of Moscow, the Party switched from the extreme of designating Roosevelt a “fascist” to an overwhelming support, and concurrently transmuted its opposition to fascism from an anti-capitalist basis to an alliance with the leaders of Western imperialism. The approach to fighting racism was also reconfigured by 1937 as the CP-USA newly embraced an “Americanism” with George Washington as “Father of his country.”

The Communist tendency toward a selective empathy — compassion toward populations assumed to be on one’s own team; obliviousness to the mass suffering of those alleged to “objectively” assist opposing forces — became a permanent fixture with the Great Purge (which especially targeted Soviet Communists, Red Army leaders and wealthier peasants).

Should one laugh or snort? In fairness, the CP-USA on its own began to address problems in its ultra-sectarianism by 1934, an unusual moment when the international Communist movement was in disarray after the unexpected triumph of Hitler.

One example was a turn to united front type labor politics with workers in the Socialist Party and other radicals, which turned out to be crucial in the success of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) after 1935.

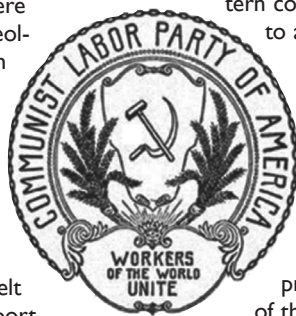
The jettisoning of many other older positions during the Popular Front was an improvement; yet certain of the adroitly-crafted stories acclaiming the new orientation as a model for radicals need to be untold and re-explained in multiple dimensions.

It’s the dumbed down versions of the Popular Front, Left and Right, that make the CP-USA the ideal subject for romanticization, defamation, manifold contending exegeses, obfuscation, and memoirs that rely on score-settling or jumbled recollection.

No wonder that Communist-curious young radicals may feel trapped between nostalgia for something that never was and perplexity over a debate that never ceases.

If we are to decisively unfable Communism, the murky jungle that is the history of the U.S. Left requires an *analytical* understanding of the place of the CP-USA in our

ancestry — to be approached not as arm-chair exegetes but as committed militants. Even if one concludes that its history is one of necessary failures, our search for a pattern continues: What is *our* path to a better world?



The Future Arrives

One hundred years ago, in September 1919, the electrifying impact of the October Revolution was organizationally kick-started by pro-Bolshevik components of the U.S. Left. The future of American radicalism arrived

when two factions purged by the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of America laid down the organizational foundation for the Communist movement in simultaneously held gatherings in Chicago.

The result, however, was more a hot mess than the effective launch of a revolutionary movement — let alone a demonic conspiracy of “outside agitators.” The 1981 movie *Reds*, with its sublime portrayal of revolutionary journalist John Reed by actor Warren Beatty, offers a sense of the over-heated, bare-knuckle debates that roiled the atmosphere.

Claiming some 50-60,000 total adherents, one of these two radical blocs called itself the Communist Party of America and the other the Communist Labor Party. Both had comprised a Left wing inside the Socialists, aspiring to membership in the newly-formed Third International, or Comintern, based in the USSR; but there had been a schism over how long to remain inside the old organization.

At this point, they were outside and operating “underground” — illegally and with pseudonyms. Yet it took nearly two years, and the formation of a transitional United Communist Party, to come together as a new Communist Party of America in May 1921.

Some have argued that this later event was the true founding of the Communist Party, a claim somewhat undercut by the fact that in November 1921 there was another schism, hyper-factionalized and brawling as was now customary. This time the rupture was over the question of whether to launch an “above-ground,” legal party with a public leadership using actual names.

For some months there existed two organizations with identical designations for their parties and journals. This was not a good start, comrades.

In spite of that, looking back on the 1920s reveals several features that should be remembered for any factually grounded understanding of the roots of U.S. Communism. First of all, the initial decade

was one of considerable self-sufficiency on the part of U.S. Communists as they balked at various recommendations of the distant Comintern. They even choose a rather independent national leadership, headed by Jay Lovestone, which sympathized more with the trend led by Nikolai Bukharin than that of Stalin.

Second, the interventions coming from abroad were often more salutary to the building of an indigenous revolutionary movement than the views of the national party, which was substantially foreign-born and hardly free of earlier traditions of industrial syndicalism.

For example, at the urging of the Comintern the U.S. party shifted wholly to a legal status; “Americanized” its members by promoting English-language publications; stepped into a vanguard role as an integrated, multi-racial organization; and dropped its sectarian refusal to have any truck with the American Federation of Labor.

Yet the culmination of the 1920s was a devastating makeover, one marking the beginning of the end for the utility of the CP-USA as a primary instrument in the United States for the liberation of working people.

In 1929, the triumphant Stalin leadership purged Bukharin from the Soviet Politburo and then lopped off the pro-Bukharin leaders of the CP-USA (who had themselves just purged the Trotskyists led by James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, and Antoinette Konikow). Earl Browder and William Z. Foster were installed instead as party leaders.

The nature of the Comintern’s intercessions also went increasingly haywire as U.S. Communists, guided by Moscow’s new “Third Period” policy, launched dual “Red” unions against the existing ones; declared their socialist rivals to be “social fascist”; developed the mechanical view that African Americans in the South had already opted for a Black Republic; and saw the New Deal as a Mussolini-type operation.

Bolsheviks Behaving Badly

Granting that the internal factionalism of the 1920s had been often debilitating, the transformation of the Party into a near politically monolithic entity intolerant of diverse views would eventually prove lethal. Rank and file agency and creativity certainly existed in many areas on a local level, but the leadership was an elite club.

This renovation was part and parcel of the process in which Stalin’s Caligula-like leadership of the Soviet Union, and hence the Comintern, progressively ranked the needs of the soviet bureaucracy over the world revolutionary movement.

For the following decades, the rest of the Left would be stunned as contradictory



Funeral march for four "Ford Hunger March" Martyrs along Woodward Avenue in Detroit, 1932. Workers demanding being hired (or re-hired) were shot by Dearborn police and Ford security chief Harry Bennett. Banner reads "Smash the Ford-Murphy Terror," referring to Henry Ford and Detroit mayor Frank Murphy. Communists concentrated on key industries, including auto, and organized mass marches through the Unemployed Councils.

policies were announced by Moscow and followed by the CP-USA with head-snapping regularity. The party membership and hundreds of thousands of sympathizers were far too trusting of the leadership.

No doubt the fog of battle obscured their vision, inasmuch as they were habitually embroiled in current struggles, almost always in the midst of action. It was as if the preservation of the selfless idealism that drew most of them to the movement required *not* knowing the truth.

Although Father Figures have fallen out of fashion, and Founding Mothers are scarce in CP-USA history, it is not uncommon to see Earl Browder cited as having the most recoverable record for those wishing to rehabilitate U.S. Communism.

Indeed the reformers of 1956, who sought to make the CP-USA independent of the Soviet Union and less sectarian, in the wake of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's speech disclosing some of Stalin's crimes, were called "neo-Browderites."

Today, varieties of Browder's strategy of socialists (and the CP-USA) backing "progressive Democrats" are certainly hegemonic. Yet Browder's legacy is as problematic as they come.

Starting in 1930, Browder consolidated his top leadership — with assistance from Moscow — for a 15-year run. During this stint he became better known for his public persona than his publications. A brazen author of his own mythology, he increasingly emphasized his native roots with a Kansas twang, family history of 100 years of residency in the United States and extensive

patriotic military service, and a superficial knowledge of national history.

Thus Browder cemented an image of U.S. Communism, with himself as avatar, as an American nationalism, on the psyches of tens of thousands of readers and listeners. Clandestinely, however, he operated as a recruiter for Soviet espionage and nourished an extraordinary expansion of ego.

With the atomic success of the Popular Front, Browder amplified his tendency toward grandiose pronouncements. Soon he became a masterful chest-thumper orchestrating big performances among huge crowds. Revealing an almost messianic side, and regarded by some as "the greatest living American," he sought to transfer his fandom into a form of mass obedience.

What could possibly go wrong? In 1939, six weeks before the appalling Hitler-Stalin Pact, he confidently announced to the world that "there is as much chance of agreement [between the USSR and Nazi Germany] as of Earl Browder being elected president of the Chamber of Commerce." Hubris, thy name is Browder!

The CP-USA response to the Pact, of course, was an object lesson in dishonor. Once again following the Comintern lead, anti-fascist political work was instantly jettisoned. The American League for Peace and Democracy, the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, and other groups were closed down, while the American Student Union and National Negro Congress suffered splits.

Throughout the world, the exodus from party membership was larger than any time before the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary;

it would have been even more had the secret clauses in the Pact been known.

Although Nazism during World War II, with its genocidal murders, visited greater horrors on humanity than did the USSR, the fawning sycophancy of Browder and others rationalized or simply covered up unconscionable actions. These include the Soviet deliveries of needed oil to Germany, Stalin's handing over to Hitler a substantial number of German Communists who had taken refuge in the USSR, and the shooting of thousands of Polish army officers by the Soviet secret police in the Katyn Forest.

Within a few years came a stunning twist in Browder's career. He moved from CP-USA savior, and even martyr (in 1941 he had served a 14-month prison sentence for passport fraud), to charlatan.

Obsessed with out-doing all competitors in his devotion to wartime Popular Front unity authorized by Stalin, Browder envisioned a postwar world of peaceful coexistence. Hence he reconfigured the CP-USA as an organized pressure group within the framework of domestic capitalism, establishing the Communist Political Association (CPA) in 1944.

Unluckily, the Soviet leadership was now seeing the future very differently and, in the spring of 1945, as World War II was ending, "Browderism" began to be denounced by Communists abroad as a dangerous revisionism. He was quickly replaced by Foster as party leader and expelled in early 1946.

The Cold War political persecution of the party that followed, coupled with further splits, crises, repression, and revelations in the international Communist movement following Stalin's death, set the stage for the decline of the CP-USA as a major force.

Reductio Ad Stalinism?

Nevertheless, every misdeed of the CP-USA leadership should not be approached as a predetermined and conspiratorial manifestation of "Stalinism." In fact, this kind of thinking about the CP-USA, which became increasingly addictive during the Cold War, should be buried with a stake in its heart.

In truth, many sins attributed to the CP-USA, even if accurate, are common to all manner of political organizations and movements. For instance, blind fealty to an authoritative leader is hardly an unusual aspect of political life — among Trotskyists and social democrats on the Left, Democrats in the Center, and Republicans on the Right.

In the United States today selective empathy, especially when it comes to the treatment of immigrants and people of color, is practically a way of life. Versions of "the ends justify the means" are standard operating procedure among everyone, except, per-

haps, pacifist absolutists. The heartbreak for Marxists is that Communists avow that they are internationalists, scientific, and against all forms of exploitation and oppression.

To be sure, careful definitions of Stalinism by those referring to unique policies and practices of the Soviet bloc — whether classical ideas of Trotsky, who saw Stalinism as a symptom of the problem, or later ones by E. P. Thompson (*New Reasoner*, 1957) and Joe Slovo (*Why Socialism Failed*, 1989) — are indispensable.

Loose talk, or talking political smack, frequently leads to insisting on likenesses with fascism, especially Nazism, and expressions like “Red Fascism” and the “two totalitarian regimes.” This is more insult taxonomy than weighty critique, but there is a sad truth to such catch-phrases — once they stick, they stick.

Of course, there are certainly points of comparison of Stalinism and Hitlerism in terms of millions killed, tortured and imprisoned; yet the deeper one goes in any comparative effort, the more one is struck by distinctions in ideology, economy, and the motives and ideals of the supporters.

Moreover, Communism out of power is hardly the same as Communism in power. In the United States, Communists, especially in the McCarthy era, were the victims of disgraceful political repression, not its perpetrators. And just because Communist culture may have commonalities even when existing in dissimilar national environments, it does not follow that the same results will be produced — unless one operates in a context-free world. The overwhelming majority of U.S. Communists broke with Stalinism when they realized what it was.

Beyond this, there is the problem of conflating Communism (in this context, Soviet-style Marxism) with communism (the broader doctrine, subscribed to by Bukharinists, Trotskyists, Council Communists and other heretics). This is an instance where the correct words and definitions are the foundation of a serious discussion.

Conflating large “C” Communism with small “c” communism assists in obfuscating that there was *always* a manifestation of Marxist resistance to both capitalism and Stalinism.

In this respect there is much to be learned from Trotskyists and those who would not accept the binary narrative of “campism,” a term for the view that the world divided into power blocs among which one must choose.

Sadly the broader, non-party, anti-Stalinist Left (Sidney Hook, *Partisan Review*, and so on), emerging in the late 1930s, vacated its chance to be the critical conscience of the world. Too many participants evolved into one-trick ponies banging on about Stalinist perfidy as they progressively accommodated

to what they euphemistically called “The West” or “The Free World.”

Stalinism cannot be the center of every discussion of the CP-USA, even as it cannot be banished to the sidelines.



Anticipating the Past

One hundred years on, the legacy of the CP-USA is something of a Rohrschach Test for those of us trying to make sense of its history for the future of socialism in the United States. 21st Century Socialism has many choices as to how to interpret and respond to this experience. It is hardly irrational to have some degree of worry about the recurrence of something like Stalinism, generated by the defeat of social revolutions that were once justified and inspiring.

But from what point do we open this oyster? Attempts to rationalize and apologize for what went before mean a distortion, and distorting the past leads to distortions of the present and sows confusion about what one may actually face.

New biographies of Stalin are claiming that he was actually a greater historical leader than Trotsky and others recognized; that may be true, but there is no evidence to challenge the fact that he was simultaneously a great historical criminal who soured the idea of socialism in the mouths of millions of working people.

The Left has no need for our own equivalent of charlatans who believe that NASA faked the moon landing or our counterpart of holocaust-denying David Irving, “disproving” the horrors of Stalin and Mao. To know the reality is to ascertain the boundaries of possibility; to sidestep it is to guarantee that the mistakes of Communism will keep returning as the worst buzzkill of our time.

Although we should not judge the CP-USA only for what it did in its most awful moments, we are not talking merely of some dark chapters in the life of the Left but of permanent losses of credibility and authority that are irreparable.

Certain wounds just take a long time to heal but with CP-USA there is no way to

reverse the decades of damage. The CP-USA exists today as a few thousand capable people, with a newspaper about as rousing as a half-flat cocktail.

Even as we are living in the moment of a reboot and revival craze, I see no likely future for its reawakening, not even a kind of Rolling Stones performance where Mick Jagger imitates the moves of a rocker one-third his age. Although U.S. Communists thought they were making history, they turned out to be on the receiving end.

That phase of radical history associated with derivatives of the model of October 1917 seems quite over. Nevertheless, there does remain one pesky matter: the injustices still persist — some are worse — that have driven people to revolutionary Marxist answers in the past.

Yearnings for social emancipation don't come with time stamps and the future is always just beyond the present. What is likely, however, is that 21st century socialism faces not repetitions but permutations and metamorphoses, since radicalism is a story that never ends. ■

Bibliography

As the above essay argues, the 100-year history of the CP-USA resists easy summary. There is no single book, and certainly no short piece of writing, that can do maximum justice to its scope and complexity, let alone provide a political perspective satisfactory to every reader. Nevertheless, I particularly recommend two essays that stand out for rigor, creativity, and Marxist political acuity: Charles Post, “The Popular Front: Rethinking CPUSA History,” *Against the Current* #63 (July-August 1996), on-line at: <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/63/p2363>; and Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of US Communism,” *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 139-73.

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Socialists & the 2020 Election

By Linda Thompson & Steve Bloom

PROSPECTS FOR SOCIALISM are off in the future. The 2020 presidential election is here and now, and confronts us with a right-wing menace unlike any that has been faced before.

When asked what our goals are in the 2020 elections the majority of left activists in the USA will say: “to defeat Donald Trump.” Many are even more specific: “We are Bernie or Bust.”

If we are honest with ourselves, however, we must acknowledge that many of these will also end up urging people to vote for the eventual Democratic nominee. We would like to suggest an alternative: Support the positive choice of the Green Party candidate for president in 2020.

How We Got Here

In almost every election cycle, going back to 1960 at least, it would have been reasonable to say (and many did): “Prospects for socialism are off in the future. The presidential election is here and now, and confronts us with a right-wing menace unlike any that has been faced before.” Because this is the entire analysis that most on the left have offered during these decades we are where we are today, trapped in a cycle of settling for the “lesser evil.”

There have been relatively small and mostly sporadic left electoral alternatives. The Peace and Freedom Party, one consistent effort, first fielded a presidential candidate in 1968. Its largest vote on the national level (almost 740,000) was achieved when Ralph Nader ran for President in 2008 — the only year PFP tallied more than 100,000 nationwide. But the party was never a meaningful presence outside California.

There have also been formations like Raza Unida, the Black Panther Party, the National Black Independent Political Party, Labor Party Advocates, and others. Each had a relatively brief lifespan, however, and aside from the Panthers, mobilized only a small

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THIS ARTICLE BY Linda Thompson and Steve Bloom continues our series of opinion pieces on socialist perspectives for the 2020 elections. Previous contributions appeared in ATC 202, by Dianne Feeley on the openings created by Bernie Sanders’ campaign; and in ATC 203, by David Jette on defeating Trump and by Howie Hawkins on the Green Party’s Green New Deal. We invite additional opinions.

fraction of the constituency it was hoping to rally.

Small left parties — such as Workers World, the Socialist Workers Party, or the Socialist Party — reached even smaller audiences with their campaigns. And most of the left has, for all these decades, focused its attention on the Democratic Party, or else just stood aside from electoral politics.

Let’s consider some of the reasons why. Integrated links exist between the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic Party machine. This deeply affects the outlook of the entire labor movement. Also, imperialism abroad grants the organized section of U.S. labor (and others) privileges in relation to the world working class, leading to support for — or at least acquiescence in — U.S. foreign policy by many.

In recent years currents have arisen (among nurses and teachers most clearly) which begin to understand that the interests of organized labor can be effectively defended only when the interests of the entire class are defended as well. So far, however, this has not extended to a generalized independent participation in the electoral arena.

The Democratic Party also has a hold on the Black community. Articles in Black Agenda Report and talks by Glenn Ford (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbvtE-4dl0eE>) help us understand why. Ford points out that the two-party system traps Blacks into voting for the lesser evil against the overtly white-supremacist Republicans.

The belief that this is some kind of protection has been disproved, however, by poverty, poor schools and housing, police brutality and killings even in cities where the Democrats rule. And while the DP allows Black electoral representation, it expects those who win office under its banner to

promote a ruling-class agenda over the needs of the Black community. Similar analyses are needed about Latinx and Puerto Rican communities (although this is beyond what we can offer in this article).

The “Spoiler” Argument

When workers, Blacks, Latinxs, and others have no alternative except to vote for the Democrats their votes can be taken for granted. The political rhetoric and policies of the DP become free to shift consistently rightward in an effort to capture votes from others. The Republicans shift rightward too.

The Bernie Sanders/Ocasio-Cortez phenomenon represents a momentary counter-current. How much staying power will it have? How much can it achieve? These things are unknown. Both Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez have already limited themselves in ways that ought to raise warning flags for their supporters. They have to limit themselves if their goal is to remain in and influence the Democratic Party.

Allowing electoral politics to be monopolized by parties which represent the interests of the rich and powerful is a serious default on the part of the U.S. left. The result has been that political protest movements consistently invest significant energy in pursuit of electoral solutions which, in the final analysis, reach a complete dead end.

Another factor that causes electoral politics to remain the same is, of course, the winner-take-all two-party system itself. As with the Black community, this consistently puts left and progressive movements in a position of supporting what they consider the “lesser evil.” Alternative candidates are pejoratively characterized as “spoilers.”

Instead of pointing to Democratic voters who switched to Trump, or the pathetic record of the Democratic Party on social justice which demobilizes voters (or has them looking to Republicans for answers), or the Republicans themselves, or the 46% of Americans who don’t vote, the ruling class, along with the two major parties and the media, encourage everyone to blame the defeat of any Democrat on the Green Party or other independent campaigns. But this “spoiler argument” is largely a myth.

In the Florida 2000 election, for example, Bush won by 537 votes if we accept the

official count. Eight third-party candidates tallied more than that number. (Somehow only Ralph Nader is singled out in the public discourse as “the spoiler.”) At the same time, however, it is estimated that 378,000 Democrats in Florida voted for Bush — almost four times more votes than Nader received. Clearly, what matters most here is not what Nader did but what the Democrats themselves did (or failed to do).

Likewise in 2016. The relatively poor mobilization of those who traditionally vote Democratic, and who would have been expected to cast ballots for Hillary Clinton, was surely caused not by the presence of the Green Party on the ballot but by the uninspiring campaign that Clinton herself actually ran.

Trump’s base of support, by contrast, came out in large numbers. That was the source of Clinton’s defeat, not any so-called “spoiler” effect from the Green candidate.

Exit polls tell us that the overwhelming majority of Green voters would probably have just stayed home if a Green candidate weren’t on the ballot. They wouldn’t go to the polls to vote for the Democrat. So the Green Party actually brings more citizens into the electoral arena, allowing them to express their preference for a left platform.

If Greens denied these voters that choice by deciding not to run, the result would be completely undemocratic. Everyone should have the opportunity to vote their conscience.

The Green Party has been instrumental in promoting something called “ranked choice voting” which would totally eliminate any possibility of a spoiler effect. RCV has now been adopted in the state of Maine and for primaries in New York City. A massive campaign is underway in Massachusetts. Every leftist in this country should join in the fight for this critical electoral reform.

Defeating Donald Trump

Yes, the overt racism of Donald Trump is a problem. But the covert racism of the Democratic Party includes the racism of U.S. foreign policy which imposes an imperial reality on the rest of the world, predominantly made up of people of color, maintaining a global military presence and engaging in military campaigns, always on a bipartisan basis. A victory for covert racism is not a defeat for overt racism, except in form.

It is, of course, still important for Donald Trump to be defeated in 2020. How then might that be achieved?

The 2020 Presidential race, from a very practical point of view, will primarily be shaped by the U.S. ruling class which owns and controls the means of mass public communication in this country. What candidate(s) they decide to back, to what degree and with what methods, will make far more of a difference than anything the left decides

to do.

True, a large section of the capitalist class opposed Trump in 2016, making an attempt to discredit him at a decisive moment through the publication of information that would have derailed any other candidacy. What was missing from the calculation, however, was that Trump’s base of support was willing to ignore his lying, alleged sexual assaults, and financial manipulations and probably crimes.

So the tactic failed. But we can reasonably expect more sophisticated methods to derail a 2020 Trump campaign — *if the ruling class is actually convinced that this is something it needs to do.* That suggests organizing in ways that might convince the ruling class that another four years of Trump will be a disaster for them.

Rather than door-knocking for Democrats, we need a meaningful effort to generate both substantial mobilizations for social justice and specific forms of organization that the ruling class cannot control. Part of that should include building and strengthening a meaningful electoral alternative in the form of the Green Party — which has maintained a principled antiwar and anti-racist stand for over two decades.

“Bernie or Bust”

Those who tout Bernie Sanders as the alternative also need to confront the question of covert racism posed above. The groundswell for Bernie results from the fact that he advocates a more equitable share of this nation’s wealth going to working people, a consistent social democratic politics. And yet that entire policy depends on maintaining the source of this wealth, which is the imperial system of U.S. world domination.

It’s a system Sanders has consistently voted to maintain/defend throughout his years in Washington. If that’s true, what effect does it have when socialists offer Sanders their unconditional support?

Then there is the other difficulty: that most of the “Bernie or Bust” advocates will, in fact, follow Bernie himself by campaigning for the eventual Democratic nominee. Ocasio-Cortez will do the same, as will most of her supporters.

This points to the limits of what left-wing Democrats can achieve in their current, and seemingly sincere, efforts to pull the DP to the left. In the end, as has happened repeatedly in the last 50 years, they create a trap for those who want the more leftist rhetoric to actually turn into policy. Their movement will have nowhere to go except

becoming a left tail on the right-wing dog of the Democratic establishment — unless it’s prepared to break with the Democrats and join the Green Party or create some new, genuinely independent, formation.

Leftists such as in DSA who tell us that they support an “inside/outside strategy” can only reasonably make that assertion if there is an outside electoral vehicle that’s able to attract genuinely anticapitalist forces away from the dead end of the Democratic Party.



The Green Party

The Green Party today is faced with tremendous opportunities. There is rising mass ferment and growing disaffection from the Democratic party. A Gallup poll taken in 2016 reported that 61% of Americans thought there should be a third party, up from 57% in 2015. This includes according to Gallup: 77% of independents (up four points), 52% of Democrats (up nine points), and 49% of Republicans (down two points).

True, the Green Party is confronted by considerable challenges — a media blackout, undemocratic ballot laws, the loss of the equal time provision for candidates, internet trolls, and the smears of Democrats — and will not win the 2020 Presidential elections. It isn’t necessary, however, for the Green Party to win in order for it to have a significant effect, helping to pull politics in this country to the left.

It’s sufficient for the party to field a credible candidate who can effectively challenge racism (overt and covert), imperialism, and other reactionary policies of the Democrats and Republicans, generating enough active support for others to take notice.

And helping to shift the political discourse in this country to the left has, in fact, been one practical effect of past Green Party campaigns.

Consider two issues that are currently part of the mainstream discourse: “Medicare for All” and the “Green New Deal.” Both of these ideas were promoted first by the Green Party and its candidates, only later adopted by left and even some mainstream Democrats.

The presence of the Green Party as a strong advocate was at least a significant factor in popularizing these issues and impelling

some Democrats to adopt them. Now that they have been adopted we must deal with a different problem: that the “green new deal” being promoted by Democrats does not even begin to solve the global climate crisis. (On this point, see Howie Hawkins’ analysis in the previous issue of *Against the Current*, November-December 2019.)

So the Green Party’s continued political presence and ongoing critique remains critical in the 2020 election.

In 2008 Jill Stein became the most successful female presidential candidate in U.S. history, winning 469,501 votes. The GP that year tallied more than 11 times more votes than any other national progressive party. It won federal matching funds for the first time, raising over \$1 million. The GP hit a high point in ballot access: 38 states comprising 82% of voters. There was a surge in GP registration, volunteer lists, local candidates, and state organizations.

In 2016 the Green Party campaign of Stein and Ajamu Baraka won 3.1 times more votes (1,457,216) than it did in 2012, 21 times more than any other progressive alternative party.

This was also the highest tally of any independent left presidential candidate in the last 100 years — with the exception of Ralph Nader’s 2,883,105 in 2000.

Stein/Baraka did this with a lot less name recognition than Ralph Nader. Their campaign won federal matching funds two months earlier than in 2012 raising over \$3.4 million — triple the 2012 total. Another high point was reached in ballot access: 45 states comprising 89% of voters.

Jill and Ajamu utilized their campaign to mobilize people for the women’s march, the climate march in NYC, against police brutality, and were the only candidates speaking out against imperialist war. All Green Party campaigns are activist campaigns urging voters to not only vote but to become engaged in ongoing struggles for social justice.

This helps us understand why the GP runs candidates for President, and why socialists should support them. The party can achieve a growth in volunteers, in donors, in state and local party activity, in registered voters, coalition partners, visibility in conventional and social media, trained staff and the recruitment of other candidates. Running for President is also a requirement for gaining ballot access in many states, which is only one way a national campaign supports independent state/local efforts.

The number of people who heard about Jill Stein’s campaign in 2016 surely numbered in the tens of millions. She convinced enough of those who heard her message that almost a million and a half cast their votes for the Green Party. Imagine how many more Stein might have influenced had

the U.S. left united around her campaign?

Conclusion

The stronger an alternative like the Green Party becomes, the more votes it has the potential to win, the greater the possibility that the U.S. ruling class will at some point be faced with a truly mass political force to the left of the Democrats which it cannot control. This is the most important element in any ruling-class calculation about what needs to happen in the electoral arena.

If the Democratic Party sees voters leaving the fold it will be forced to move its rhetoric (at least) to the left, and perhaps some if its actual political agenda as well. Campaigning for left-wing Democrats, on the other hand, is much less effective, because in the end all that political energy will be folded into the candidacy of the establishment Democratic nominee. That’s no threat at all to politics-as-usual in the USA.

The orientation we propose is rooted in an understanding that every choice socialists make in immediate campaigns — struggles like those around immigrant rights, against climate change, for prison abolition, a labor strike, or the 2020 elections — should at least attempt to advance two tasks simultaneously: a) winning some immediate goal or objective while b) also getting us closer to the prospect of a revolutionary transformation in the USA.

Canada’s 2019 Election — continued from page 7

of state-sponsored racism.

Leah Gazan, a leading organizer in Idle No More, stood as an NDP candidate in the Western province of Manitoba, and defeated the incumbent Liberal. Just weeks after the election, Gazan indicated she had every intention of combining her organizing roots with her new elected position.

Addressing a union meeting in Manitoba, Gazan provided us all with a post-election roadmap, condemning the Liberal government for its regressive policies on climate change and its inaction on the issue of racism and violence toward Indigenous people:

“Now is the time to move, to continue to build a movement. We need to move swiftly, we’re running out of time. So join me, brothers and sisters, as we move together to fight for a better world.”¹⁴ ■

Notes

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Under no circumstances can we develop a strategy to gain immediate objectives at the expense of our longer-term goals.

By helping to maintain the power of the Democratic Party and the imperial world system it supports, any effort to promote the Democratic nominee for president in 2020 will undermine these longer-term objectives. It needs to be excluded as a “tactic” on that ground alone.

Support for Bernie Sanders likewise means urging people to get involved in Democratic Party politics, and for many actually backing the eventual Democratic nominee. It therefore raises precisely the same difficulty.

By supporting and building the Green Party, however, we can pursue both our immediate goal of keeping the overt racist from another four years in the White House while also working to bring our longer-term objectives closer.

A stronger Green Party creates a deeper threat to ruling-class politics-as-usual, which can cause those who have far greater power than we do to take more resolute steps to ensure the defeat of Donald Trump.

By supporting the Green Party we also help to promote the self-mobilization and self-organization of the mass movement. Supporting the Green Party is, therefore, by far the best electoral strategy available to the U.S. left in the 2020 Presidential campaign. ■

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A racist “war on drugs,” and a for-profit health system, led to the opioid epidemic devastating the U.S. heartland.

420artclass.com

How Race Made the Opioid Crisis By Donna Murch

IN MARCH 2018, President Donald Trump delivered a 40-minute speech about the crisis of addiction and overdose in New Hampshire. Standing before a wall tiled with the words “Opioids: The Crisis Next Door,” Trump blankly recited the many contributors to the current drug epidemic including doctors, dealers, and manufacturers.

Trump droned on mechanically until he reached a venomous crescendo about Customs and Border Protection’s seizure of 1,500 pounds of fentanyl. He brightened as he shifted focus to three of his most hated enemies, first blaming China and Mexico for saturating the United States with deadly synthetic opioids, then moving seamlessly to what he considered one of the great internal threats.

“My administration is also confronting things called ‘sanctuary cities,’” Trump declared. “Ending sanctuary cities is crucial to stopping the drug addiction crisis.”

Like so many of Trump’s proclamations, this rhetoric is sheer political fantasy. In reality, the opioid crisis and the War on Drugs are intertwined in the mutually reinforcing framework of racial capitalism. Our ideas of drug use — which

kinds are legal, and which are not — are steeped in the meta-language of race.

Since the late 1990s, yearly rates of overdose deaths from legal “white market” opioids have consistently exceeded those from heroin. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 1999 and 2017, opioid overdoses killed nearly 400,000 people with 68% of those deaths linked to prescription medications.

Moreover, as regulators and drug companies tightened controls on diversion and misuse after 2010, the American Society of Addiction Medicine determined that at least 80% of “new heroin users started out misusing prescription pain killers.” Some data sets point to even higher numbers. In response to a 2014 survey of people undergoing treatment for opioid addiction, 94% of people surveyed said that they turned to heroin because prescription opioids were “far more expensive and harder to obtain.”

In the face of these statistics, the claim that the opioid crisis is the product of Mexican and Central American migration — rather than the deregulation of Big Pharma and the failures of a private health care system — is not only absurd, but insidious. It substitutes racial myth for fact, thereby rationalizing an ever-expanding machinery of punishment while absolving one of the most lucrative and politically influential business lobbies in the United States.

“Dope” versus “Medicine”

This paradoxical relationship between a racialized regime of illegal drug prohibition and a highly commercial, laissez-faire

Donna Murch gave this paper as a talk at a workshop during the Socialism 2019 workshop. It was first published in Spring 2019 “Racist Logic” issue of Boston Review. Dr. Murch is an associate professor of history at Rutgers University. She is completing a book on the militarization of law enforcement, mass incarceration and the war on drugs, Crack in Los Angeles: Policing the Crisis and the War on Drugs. Her earlier book, Living for the City: Migration, Education and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California (University of North Carolina Press) won the Phillis Wheatley prize in 2011.

approach to prescription pharmaceuticals cannot be understood without recourse to how racial capitalism has structured pharmacological markets throughout U.S. history. The linguistic convention of “white” and “black” markets points to how steeped our ideas of licit [“legal”] and illicit [“illegal”] are in the metalanguage of race.

Historically, the fundamental division between “dope” and medicine was the race and class of users. The earliest salvos in the U.S. domestic drug wars can be traced to anti-opium ordinances in late 19th-century California as Chinese laborers poured into the state during the railroad building boom.

In 1914 the federal government passed the Harrison Narcotics Act, which taxed and regulated opiates and coca products. Similarly, as rates of immigration increased in the aftermath of the Mexican revolution, Congress passed the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which targeted the customs and culture of newly settled migrants.

Although “cannabis” was well known in the United States — it was used in numerous tinctures and medicines — a racial scare campaign swept the country and warned that “marijuana” aroused men of color’s violent lust for white women.

The fundamental division between “dope” and medicine has always been the race and class of users. As bad as the early drug panics were, they paled in comparison to the carceral regime of drug prohibition and policing that emerged in the years after the civil rights movement.

In the 1980s and 1990s, mass incarceration and the overlapping War(s) on Drugs and Gangs became *de facto* urban policy for impoverished communities of color in U.S. cities. Legislation expanded state and federal mandatory minimums for drug offenses, denied public housing to entire families if any member was even suspected of a drug crime, lengthened the list of crimes eligible for the federal death penalty, and imposed draconian restrictions of parole.

Ultimately, multiple generations of youth of color found themselves confined under long prison sentences and faced with lifelong social and economic marginality.

Today, much of the Trump administration’s rhetoric is taken from decades of drug and incarceration frenzies past, including the threat of the death penalty for drug trafficking (Bill Clinton), Just Say No campaigns (Ronald Reagan), and the reinvigoration of the War on Gangs (Bill Clinton again).

“We are all facing a deadly lucrative international drug trade,” warned Trump’s then attorney general, Jeff Sessions. As he spoke before the International Association of Chiefs of Police in the fall of 2017, Sessions laid out a law-and-order platform that promised to “back the blue,” reduce crime, and dismantle “transnational criminal organizations.”

Sessions drew so heavily from 1980s anti-drug hysteria, in fact, that he earned giddy praise from Edwin Meese III, Reagan’s attorney general who helped enshrine the 100-to-1 sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine. “Largely unnoticed has been the extraordinary work that ... Sessions has done in the Department of Justice to create a Reaganesque resurgence of law and order,” Meese opined in *USA Today* in January 2018.

Over the past two years, Trump and Sessions repeatedly used the threat of drugs and racial contagion for a reactionary portfolio ranging from reversals of modest criminal justice reforms of the Obama era — including reinstating federal

civil forfeiture, limiting federal power to implement consent decrees at the local level, and the expansion of mandatory minimum sentencing in the federal system — to building a wall along the Mexican border.

And although anti-crime rhetoric no longer has the same purchase as it did in the era of Willie Horton or Ricky Ray Rector — thanks in large part to activist efforts to delegitimize mass incarceration — the reinvigorated machinery of criminalization remains firmly in place.

Race, Prohibition and Mass Marketing

Integrating the opioid crisis with the War on Drugs raises questions beyond familiar narratives and political discourses. In the United States, prohibition of illicit drugs and the mass marketing of licit pharmaceuticals fit together in a larger framework of racial capitalism and deregulation that are deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

The opioid crisis would not have been possible without the racial regimes that have long structured both illicit and licit modes of consumption. As we will see, the demonization of urban, nonwhite drug users played a crucial role in the opening of “white” pharmaceutical markets in the 1990s that proved so enormously profitable to companies such as Purdue Pharma and paved the way for our current public health crisis.

In the 1990s, Purdue created aggressive marketing campaigns to convince doctors and state regulators of the safety of a new class of timed-release opioid analgesics. Given their status as Schedule II controlled substances, Purdue faced potentially enormous pushback, especially at a time when the number of people incarcerated for drug offenses was reaching an all-time high.

However, a major shift had taken place in regulatory policy a decade before that made this possible. In the 1980s, President Reagan initiated a radical program of corporate deregulation that opened the door to a new era of pharmaceutical mass marketing.

Reagan’s “Second American Revolution” slashed government oversight, pushed through expedited review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and for the first time allowed direct-to-consumer advertising for pharmaceutical drugs. Postwar white consumers redefined pharmacological relief as an entitlement.

Amazingly, the deregulation of Big Pharma took place while the Reagan administration was launching a bombastic “second” War on Drugs which established a new standard for illicit drug prohibition, one that his successors George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton not only met but exceeded. This potent mix of racialized drug prosecution and corporate empowerment created the environment in which Purdue and other companies sought out new commercial strategies for marketing opioids.

So when Purdue introduced OxyContin in 1996, it proceeded with an awareness of both the opportunities and potential pitfalls. The company developed a number of marketing strategies to increase sales and to navigate the deeply segregated waters of drug consumption.

In order to market OxyContin, a long-term release opioid that contains the active ingredient oxycodone, Purdue created an expansive network of sales representatives, doubling its

internal sales force from 318 in 1996 to 671 in 2000.

Driven by sophisticated data collection methods that revealed the highest and lowest prescribers in every zip code throughout the United States, Purdue identified medical practices with the largest numbers of pain patients and with physicians who were the least discriminate prescribers.

Sales representatives received bonuses ranging from \$15,000 to \$240,000 a year for increases in opioid prescriptions in their coverage areas, and they visited doctors repeatedly, drawing them into an elaborate informational marketing campaign. Purdue offered doctors educational conferences in Sunbelt resorts, patient coupons, OxyContin-branded stuffed animals, and even CDs of the drug's marketing jingle, "Get in the Swing of OxyContin." The company's aggressive sales tactics convinced primary care physicians (PCPs) to prescribe opioids much more frequently for a wide range of patient complaints, including lower back pain and arthritis.

By 2003 PCPs made up nearly half of OxyContin prescribers. Some experts at the time worried that PCPs lacked independent training in chronic pain management and addiction. Meanwhile the increase in the sale of OxyContin — from \$48 million upon its introduction to \$1.1 billion four years later — demonstrates the enormous scale of this enterprise.

A potent mix of drug prosecution and corporate empowerment gave birth to new forms of Big Pharma marketing. According to public health scholars Helena Hansen and Julie Netherland, Purdue's success hinged not only on this aggressive sales campaign, but also on racially bifurcated understandings of addiction.

Drug sales representatives directed advertisement to overwhelmingly white suburban and rural areas to avoid the stigma of racially coded urban drug markets. By crafting a geographically distinct, white consumer base — understood as the antithesis of "hardcore" (nonwhite) urban drug users targeted by the Wars on Drugs and Gangs — the company both benefitted from and reinforced the racial ideology underwriting these punitive campaigns.

Regional Devastation, Racial Bifurcation

Not surprisingly, the regions that initially showed the highest rates of opioid abuse in the early 2000s — including rural Maine, West Virginia, Kentucky, and western Pennsylvania — had overwhelmingly white populations. While the press termed OxyContin "hillbilly heroin" and the drug of choice for poor whites, public health researchers have shown that

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS



130+

People died every day from opioid-related drug overdoses¹ (estimated)



10.3 m

People misused prescription opioids in 2018¹



47,600

People died from overdosing on opioids¹



2.0 million

People had an opioid use disorder in 2018¹



808,000

People used heroin in 2018¹



81,000

People used heroin for the first time¹



2 million

People misused prescription opioids for the first time¹



15,349

Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin (in 12-month period ending February 2019)²



32,656

Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone (in 12-month period ending February 2019)²

SOURCES

1. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Mortality in the United States, 2018
2. NCHS Data Brief No. 329, November 2018
3. NCHS, National Vital Statistics System. Estimates for 2018 and 2019 are based on provisional data.

NHS.GOV/OPIOIDS

affluent suburbanites also had high rates of abuse, exemplified by Rush Limbaugh's disclosure of his own prescription opioid abuse in 2003.

Racial disparities in health care access, discriminatory prescribing patterns among physicians, and a self-conscious strategy by pharmaceutical companies that cultivated "legitimate" white consumer markets all contributed to the racial demographics of the opioid crisis. A key reason that pharmaceutical companies could market such a powerful sustained release analgesic to treat "non-malignant pain" was that they made assumptions about their intended consumers.

"The disproportionate uptake of OxyContin by rural and suburban prescribers in majority white states (Maine, Kentucky and West Virginia) is notable in light of the historical hostility of regulatory agencies such as the DEA to the expansion of opioid use," argue Hansen and Netherland. "Urban markets would have brought with them race and class imagery of illicit use that may have made expanded prescription of OxyContin for moderate pain a hard sell to regulators."

The success of OxyContin hinged on racially bifurcated understandings of addiction.

In a similar line of analysis, pharmaceutical historian David Herzberg, author of *Happy Pills in America: From Miltown to Prozac* (2009), places the opioid crisis in the larger sweep of U.S. history. According to Herzberg, there is no real difference between prescription medicines and illicit drugs. Both possess physical and psychoactive effects, but the social meaning attributed to them has more to do with race, class, and differential application of state power than pharmacology.

The contemporary disparity between licit and illicit has its origins in the Jim Crow era, when the Supreme Court backed the principle of "separate but equal." In the years after World War II, the civil rights movement challenged racial discrimi-

nation in consumer markets, rendering illegal the most overt forms of discrimination, such as segregated lunch counters, public conveyances, and housing covenants.

The racialized division between licit and illicit drug markets, however, endured — indeed, it provides a primary rationale for the Wars on Drugs and Crime that emerged after the Voting Rights Act. Today African Americans and Latinos make up 80% of those incarcerated in federal prisons for drug crimes and 60% of those in state prisons.

One of the most compelling aspects of Herzberg's analysis is his exploration of how postwar white consumers defined themselves against racially coded, urban drug users by redefining pharmacological relief as an entitlement.

In the same period that Richard Nixon launched the first War on Drugs, white consumers steeped in the discourse of the silent majority demanded access to pharmaceuticals as a citizenship right. "I, as one American citizen make demand at this writing to restore all the drugs that people need," argued a complaint to the FDA. "Too many people are suffering and being penalized on account of the drug abusers."

This "problematic social entitlement" functioned as the flip side of the more familiar story of criminalization and divestment of Black and Brown populations in the Wars on Drugs and Crime. Prohibition of urban vice required a space of white absolution that enabled the profitable mass-marketing of licit pharmaceuticals.

"A focus on pharmaceutical white markets tells a very different story: of a divided system of drug control designed to encourage and enable a segregated market for psychoactive substances," Herzberg argues. "This regime established a privilege — maximal freedom of rational choice in a relatively safe drug market . . . and linked this privilege both institutionally and culturally to social factors such as economic class and whiteness."

Reinforced Racialized Boundaries

Cultural logics, as well as criminal justice policy, have also reinforced and animated the racialized boundary between "licit health seekers" and "illicit pleasure seekers" in the popular imagination. Iconic drug films such as "Traffic" and "Requiem for a Dream" (2000) dramatize the tragedy of white women's descent into illegal narcotic use through pornographic narratives, in which "innocent" young white girls are coerced into interracial sex by Black male "pushers."

Drawing on the cinematic grammar of D. W. Griffith's classic KKK paean "Birth of a Nation" (1915), they reenact the white supremacist ideology that reinforced racial segregation. Viewed in this way, the opioid crisis appears not as an unprecedented phenomenon, but the product of longstanding historical processes.

Over two-thirds of crack users were white, but very few white people were ever charged with crack offenses by federal authorities. The role of white absolution is even clearer when looking at the disparate consequences for illicit drug use across the color line.

Nothing speaks more profoundly to how the state artificially constructed segregated drug markets than federal prosecutions for crack use. Few realize that almost no white people were ever charged with crack offenses by federal authorities — this despite the federal government's own data

from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) documenting that over two-thirds of crack users were white.

Between 1986, when Congress signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act into law, and 1994, when President Clinton's crime bill was passed, not a single white person was convicted of a federal crack offense in Miami, Boston, Denver, Chicago, Dallas or Los Angeles. "Out of hundreds of cases, only one white was convicted in California, two in Texas, three in New York and two in Pennsylvania," noted *Los Angeles Times* reporter Dan Weikel. Instead, prosecutors shunted their cases into the state system, which had much lower rates of conviction and shorter sentences.

At the heart of this disparity is the paradoxical relationship in the United States between prohibition and provision: some of the harshest advocates for punishment and the criminalization of illicit drug use have also enthusiastically supported and defended pharmaceutical deregulation and expanded access to opioids.

If there were any doubt about Trump's acquiescence to Big Pharma — despite his campaign promises to lower Medicare drug prices — one need look no further than his appointment of Alex Azar II, former president of the U.S. division of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly and Co., to serve as secretary of health and human services.

The career of Rudolph Giuliani is one of the best examples of this cognitive dissonance around drug policy that can only properly be understood as a product of racial capitalism. As mayor of New York (1994-2001), Giuliani and his police commissioner William Bratton were central architects of the city's zero tolerance, quality-of-life policing, which criminalized low-level offenses ranging from panhandling and graffiti to illegal vending and minor cannabis possession.

Giuliani's administration presided over about 40,000 marijuana arrests per year, up nearly fortyfold from earlier decades. In fact, the highest number of marijuana possession arrests ever recorded in New York City took place under the Giuliani administration, with 51,267 arrests in the year 2000. Giuliani also led a vicious campaign against methadone treatment in the 1990s, advocating complete abstinence as the only acceptable response to illicit drugs.

Given his hardline stance on drug prohibition, it is striking that two years after New York's all-time high for marijuana arrests, the former New York mayor and prosecutor took on Purdue Pharma as a client, agreeing to help the company fend off a federal investigation into improper marketing of OxyContin.

"There are tens of millions of Americans suffering from persistent pain," argued Giuliani. "We must find a way to ensure access to appropriate prescription pain medications for those suffering from the debilitating effects of pain while working to prevent the abuse and diversion of these same vital medicines."

John Brownlee, a U.S. attorney from the western district of Virginia, initiated the investigation into Purdue Pharma shortly after his federal appointment in response to skyrocketing numbers of opioid overdoses in his region. "This was pushed by the company to be marketed in an illegal way, pushed from the highest levels of the company, that in my view made them a criminal enterprise that needed to be dealt with," Brownlee explained.

Although the young attorney's legal action was the first successful criminal suit against Purdue, the company currently faces a number of civil suits from other states, including Texas, New York, Indiana, and Massachusetts. (Already, in March, it agreed to a \$270 million settlement with the state of Oklahoma.)

In the Virginia case, Giuliani provided Purdue with legal services as well as access to his extensive network of political connections in Washington. He finessed an agreement that kept senior executives from serving prison time and attempted to restrict future prosecution of Purdue.

According to *The Guardian*, Giuliani's intervention avoided "a bar on Purdue doing business with the federal government which would have killed a large part of the multibillion-dollar market for the drug."

Hidden Culpability

Activists, investigative journalists and public sector attorneys have produced a significant body of work documenting the culpability of pharmaceutical companies in the contemporary opioid crisis. Until quite recently, however, this history has largely failed to penetrate mainstream opinion.

Despite the pathbreaking investigative journalism of Barry Meier's *Pain Killer* (2003) and Chris McGreal's *American Overdose* (2018), popular exposés have frequently centered on unethical practices by individual doctors and "pill mills," rather than excavating how Purdue and other companies built a commercial infrastructure that revolutionized narcotics sale at enormous social cost.

Culpability is shared by a resource-starved FDA and regulatory infrastructure's failure to intervene when it became apparent that widespread abuse was taking place. Unfortunately, the young have been the hardest hit. *The New York Times* recently estimated that nearly 400,000 people currently addicted to prescription opioids or heroin are between 18 and 25 years old.

Even more troubling in states such as Ohio and West Virginia with the highest rates of prescription opioid consumption, 50-80% of foster care placements are linked to substance abuse in the home. In the realm of health and human

pain, free market fundamentalism has proved quite deadly.

The origins of the opioid crisis in the licit pharmaceutical market calls not only for a rethinking of the politics of deregulation, but also an end to the sclerotic, racialized War on Drugs narrative still mobilized by the Trump administration. In moving testimony before the House Judiciary Committee on Immigration and Border Security, Stanford psychologist and West Virginia native Keith Humphreys spoke directly to this issue in February 2018:

"West Virginia is emblematic of where this epidemic is at its most destructive — rural areas that don't have sanctuary cities and indeed generally don't have cities at all. Recent immigrants are rare, yet opioid addiction is rampant. That's because the opioid epidemic was made in America, not in Mexico, China, or any other foreign country. The astonishing increase in providing opioids — which at its apex reached nearly a quarter billion prescriptions per year — is what started and still maintains our opioid epidemic. Prescription opioids come from American companies and are prescribed by American doctors overseen by American regulators."

Like many crises, our current dilemma also presents opportunities to radically rethink our approaches to both prohibition and provision. In addition to recognizing the role of Big Pharma, a critical look at the opioid crisis also requires examining the larger environment in which this predatory marketing campaign took place. Structural issues of economic downward mobility, diminished occupational safety and health protections, lack of health care access, and the limitations of managed care have all contributed.

Critically, we must push back against the racist logic that has long underwritten prohibition efforts while occluding, and even assisting, the pharmaceutical industry's attempt to expand its reach. Phantasms of drug sale and consumption continue to animate deeply felt national narratives demarcating the line between white and Black, native and foreign, innocent and guilty, medical and recreational, deserving and undeserving, licit and illicit.

The Trump administration, like its Democratic and Republican predecessors, has drawn some of its most destructive symbols of racial animus from the War on Drugs repertoire. One of the most important lessons to be learned from

viewing the opioid crisis and War on Drugs through the lens of racial capitalism is that the privileges of whiteness come at a great social cost — not only for those excluded from them, but also for those who possess them.

As our country witnesses a significant drop in life expectancy due to high rates of suicide and overdose, an honest reckoning with the true nature of power and culpability in the United States has never been more urgent. ■



Time to stop the madness!

drugpolicy.org



Interview with Suhkara A. Yahweh in the Elaine Legacy Center. He describes himself as a “civil rights/human rights activist” since the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign. From left are students Samantha Crisanti, Liana Zafran, Omar Sanchez and Marissa Volk

Oral History of the Black Struggle: The Pursuit of Truth in the Delta By Paul Ortiz

THE SAMUEL PROCTOR Oral History Program embarked on our twelfth annual Mississippi Freedom Project (MFP) field work trip this summer. I have been taking University of Florida (UF) students to the Delta and other counties of the Deep South to interview civil rights movement veterans since 2008.

MFP originally focused on learning from local people and civil rights activists who were involved with Freedom Summer in 1964. Increasingly, however, we have worked with Black History tour operators and museum curators, labor unionists, immigrant rights activists, educators and others who strive to use the lessons of the Black Freedom Struggle to infuse civic engagement and organizing in the Deep South.

Teams of graduate and undergraduate students pose an array of questions to narrators on topics such as voting rights and voter suppression, equity in education, re-segregation, systemic racism, mass incarceration, and democracy in their interviews. In turn, these questions inform the students’ senior thesis essays, activism and career trajectories.

Our students have interviewed rank-and-file organizers of the 1956 Tallahassee Bus Boycott, founders of the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Louisiana, members

of the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance and many other organizations.

In addition to gathering and preserving stories of how social change occurs, students have applied these historical narratives to chart pathways into becoming immigration and civil rights attorneys, historians labor organizers, and activists with Black Lives Matter organizations among many other important vocations and avocations.

Retrieving Hidden Histories

I began doing oral history field work in Florida as well as rural Mississippi and Arkansas counties when I was a graduate student at Duke University in 1994. Graduate student research teams conducted interviews with African American elders as part of the “Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South,” project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. One of the outcomes of this field work is the book *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South*.

As a former organizer with the United Farm Workers of Washington State, the experience of doing oral histories in the rural South taught me anew about the inter-generational and often hidden histories of organizing which were the foundation of the modern civil rights movement.

Interviews in the Florida panhandle guided me to archival sources which allowed me to write the story of how African Americans launched a frontal assault against white

supremacy in the guise of a statewide voter registration movement after World War I.

During the Behind the Veil interviews conducted in the mid-1990s, we learned from courageous individuals who witnessed anti-Black pogroms and who survived lynching attempts.

I was able to chronicle stories of generations of African American organizers, including coal miners who became organizers of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as well as founding members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Congress of Racial Equality in Florida.

During the 12-year history of the Mississippi Freedom Project, I have been able to introduce students to the children as well as grandchildren of some the original narrators who taught me a new understanding of American history that I still do not encounter in the history textbooks. We have conducted over 250 oral history interviews, many of which are now accessible to the public via University of Florida’s Digital collections.

Our Journey Into History

We pile into two vans at 6:00 am on a Sunday morning in August to begin an over 1200-mile odyssey that will bring us face-to-face with deep historical realities that no one can possibly confront alone.

Of equal importance to the encounters with local people and movement veterans are the long van rides between towns that allow students to discuss with each other

Paul Ortiz is the director of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and professor of history at the University of Florida. His most recent book is An African American and Latinx History of the United States.

what they've learned and why their lives will never be the same again.

This week-long fieldwork trip does not charge tuition or fees, and it provides opportunities for students to form a personal relationship with individuals and groups whose civil rights work changed the course of American history. The Proctor Program raises funds for the entire cost of the trip so there is minimal expense to the students.

In return, we ask a lot of our students. Most days begin before first light. While the students' primary objective is to conduct interviews, they also perform required readings, attend training and orientation, facilitate public programs during the trip, attend workshops, sing freedom songs, write reflections, transcribe interviews, and engage in evening discussions on the challenging topics of the day.

The trip is funded by generous donors who make it possible for us to take stu-

dents to do oral histories in Vicksburg and Natchez as well as Bogalusa, Louisiana. In addition, our students typically go on tours of the Emmett Till Museum in Glendora, Mississippi and the Equal Justice Initiative's "Slavery to Mass Incarceration" Museum and National Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama.

We combine interviews with days of service. This year's service days include a day of pulling weeds and lawn care in the "Colored Cemetery" in Natchez as well as informal "Getting to College" rap sessions with high school youth in several towns along the way.

Elaine, Arkansas

This year the Proctor Program was invited by Mary Olson and the Elaine Legacy Center to Elaine, Arkansas in order to help commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Elaine Massacre. In 1919, white elites and federal troops carried out a pogrom and mass murder of over 300 Black farmers in

order to steal African American land and crush working-class self-activity.

I have given testimony for the Elaine Truth Telling Commission, and was very excited to be able to introduce UF students to a group of courageous historians and community members from Phillips County who are working for racial truth and reconciliation in the Arkansas Delta.

I have studied and taught about the Elaine Massacre on many occasions as a university professor. I never dreamed, however, that the Proctor Program would be invited to the Arkansas Delta to help try to understand the terrible and triumphant legacies of this cataclysmic event.

Understanding the profound racial wealth disparities in the United States and the importance of the struggle for reparations means coming to grips with anti-Black pogroms like the Elaine Massacre, where plantation owners and developers disenfranchised and expropriated thousands of acres

A Freedom Odyssey By Omar Sanchez

WE WENT TO many places on the Mississippi Freedom Project Trip this summer — from Tallahassee, Florida to Glendora, Mississippi to Elaine, Arkansas, and many places in between. But there is one stop that stood out to me: Montgomery, Alabama.

From our college history lessons we know that Montgomery was in the center of the Civil Rights Movement with moments like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Martin Luther King's march to Montgomery from Selma, and the Freedom Rides. Though we did get to experience the different landmarks around Montgomery, our main stops were the Equal Justice Initiative's "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration" museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

The Equal Justice Initiative Museum is beautifully ironic because the building was a warehouse that housed Black slaves, and now it portrays the history of African Americans in Alabama. The first thing that you meet when you walk in are holographic projections of people who were held as slaves, telling their tragic stories and begging to be set free.

Then you start to learn about the injustices of Jim Crow. Seeing those signs telling Black people to stay out almost feels

unreal, because it's different to see them in person compared to seeing them in a textbook. What stood out to me, though, was that some of the segregation signs were aimed at Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as well which is something that you don't hear about often.

As you continue through the museum you start to learn about the War on Drugs and the term "super predators." I never really understood until that moment that the War on Drugs and the term "super predator" were an integral part of systemic racism. Such terms were used by the state to create fear about minority communities so they could be imprisoned and oppressed.

In other words, the government has rebranded slavery as mass incarceration. As you walk through the museum you start to notice that there's always new laws or new tools developed by the government to keep people of color down, whether it be slavery, Jim Crow or mass incarceration.

The second part of the Equal Justice Initiative complex is the National Memorial for Peace and Justice less than a mile down the road. This memorial is dedicated to people who were victims of lynching or other forms of anti-Black violence. One thing that is always tough is trying to find a way to show trauma and injustice without exploiting people, but I think the architect showcased the trauma in a respectful way.

You go through this maze-like structure with these pillars that have names of lynching victims from different counties, and as you go they keep getting higher and higher to symbolize hanging lynching victims. What

makes this memorial different is that each pillar has a twin that is supposed to be claimed by the respective counties.

Our guide told us that there were various counties interested in claiming their respective marker, but they want it for prestige, not to reclaim their history. The guide told our group that the museum wanted counties to use the markers as living curriculum to educate local residents, tell the stories of the people who were lost, and take responsibility for the actions of their ancestors.

EJI is hoping that each county would go through a racial Truth and Reconciliation Process to educate the entire community about specific incidents of racial pogroms and anti-Black violence. Counties need to understand that this process will take years. Whether these counties are willing to put in that work will decide if they are truly deserving of reclaiming their memorial marker.

Going forward, I would like to see new museums focus on incidents of targeted "minority" groups, because without this knowledge we will never be able to create an equitable society. In the South, there aren't enough museums that properly tell the history and injustices that minority groups have faced.

When I saw what the Equal Justice Initiative has created, it showed me what I was missing. I want this for my community and other communities. We each deserve for our stories to be told. That's my call to action: I want museums like this, I want classes that teach that history, I want my history back. ■

Omar Sanchez is a third year undergraduate student pursuing an English degree at the University of Florida. He has been with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program for over a year, involved with the Latinx Diaspora in the Americas project and the Mississippi Freedom Project.

of land from African American farmers and workers in Phillips County.

At the Elaine Legacy Center, I facilitated a discussion workshop among approximately 30 community members and visitors about what reparations might entail, while our students conducted interviews with descendants of the victims of the massacre.

During this workshop, Mr. William Quiney III took a group of UF students to the Elaine Willow Memorial, which symbolizes the lives lost during the massacre and captured what turned out to be the last video of the memorial before vandals destroyed it later that summer. The destruc-

tion of historical markers in Elaine as well as at the Emmett Till trail remind us that history is no longer an elective but a matter of life and death.

The Elaine Legacy Center reminds us that there are also positive legacies of 1919, and that the courage and resilience of African Americans in the Arkansas Delta truly makes Elaine “The Motherland of the Civil Rights Movement.” The discussions we had during that amazing August day in Elaine were the widest-ranging and most powerful dialogs I’ve ever participated in on the topic of reparations.

In the Delta, the reparations debate is

not an abstract rumination on white guilt and “past discrimination.” It is a vital discussion centering on generations of ongoing, anti-Black racism, land loss, white supremacist violence and federal malfeasance in the allocation of resources in rural counties.

Enduring Impacts of Oral History

Part of the enduring impact of the MFP trip is the way in which oral history encounters create bonds of solidarity between field researchers and the people they talk with and learn from. Many of our students continue to stay in contact with Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee veter-

Discrimination in the Delta By Julian C. Valdivia

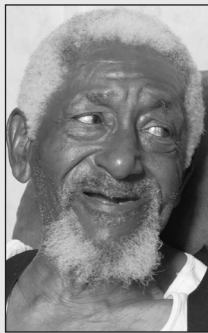
IF YOU GREW up in the United States it’s unlikely that you were taught local histories in school. It’s more probable that you learned national history from a top-down perspective. I’d wager this included elements of great-man history where you learned about one figure who led the masses towards some form of progress.

This model for American history is problematic because it generalizes the experiences of hundreds of millions of Americans who have different racial, ethnic, gender, regional and class backgrounds. Unfortunately this has been taught in place of local histories which are crucial to understanding struggles like the Civil Rights Movement.

In the summer of 2019, I researched responses to the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South through my participation in the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program’s Mississippi Freedom Project. My col-

leagues and I got the opportunity to learn local histories from Black elders who welcomed us into their communities.

These are individuals who lived through segregation, integration, and into an allegedly post-racial America. This includes working-class people like Lawrence Mansfield, a Black farmer in the Arkansas Delta, whose experience is the center of my research. Local histories like his are



Lawrence Mansfield, left (and below), being interviewed by Julian Valdivia in Lake View, AR.

important because they add nuance to national narratives surrounding race in America.

Typically discussions of civil rights in America end with the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making discrimination on the basis of race illegal. Stopping at this point is problematic because it makes people assume that racial discrimination and the fight for civil rights had a definitive ending.

Take the case of Mr. Mansfield. He was a farmer in the Arkansas Delta and discussed how loan officers discriminated against Black farmowners as late as the 1980s. Loans are critical to independent farmers because a line of credit is necessary to purchase seeds and capital in time for the growing season.

Mr. Mansfield shared how the farm loan officer in his area would delay when Black farmers received their funds, preventing them from planting until later in the season. That drastically impacted their crop yields because their plants had less time to grow. Over time Black farmers in the area started to hemorrhage costs that bankrupted their operations. Most, including Mr. Mansfield, had to sell their land and move away because there were few other economic opportunities in the Delta.

While Mr. Mansfield noted that the farm loan officer was eventually removed for discriminatory practices, the damage was already done. Black farmers were forced off their land. They unjustly lost their private property just as they had after the 1919 Elaine Massacre.

Lawrence Mansfield’s oral history is important because it contrasts national narratives around civil rights by showing how racial discrimination extended into the 1980s. His experience suggests that loan officers in the Arkansas Delta subverted the 1964 Civil Rights Act by delaying the Black farmers’ loans, rather than explicitly denying them.

The inclusion of local histories like these alter our understanding of our supposedly post-racial America. Perhaps most interesting is the way that his experience echoes post-Reconstruction America. Just as new rights afforded to Freedpeople were subverted in the aftermath of Reconstruction, so too were those given to people of color after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. With the inclusion of more local histories like Mr. Mansfield’s testimony, findings like these may finally make their way into national discussions about how racial discrimination continues to operate. ■

Julian C. Valdivia is a fourth year history student at the University of Florida. He was a part of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program’s (SPOHP’s) 2019 Mississippi Freedom Trip led by Dr. Paul Ortiz. Julian is sharing his experience in Elaine, Arkansas, on behalf of SPOHP where he is employed as a student researcher.

ans, and other activists they've met during summers in the Delta.

Another consequence of meaningful field work is that by venturing far outside of one's comfort zone, students are often able to break through the myth of "American Exceptionalism." This myth prevents most Americans from seeing their nation as anything other than a model republic that needs at most minor reforms. One former MFP student, now a practicing attorney working in civil rights and immigration law reflected on her experiences in 2011:

"I have always been global-minded — concerned with the welfare of all peoples, being a citizen of the world, and the like. I focused on global issues...yet this trip to the Delta showed me the uglier side of our great nation, the embedded horror in the still-bloodstained South. I am determined to begin with awareness. As I said, my generation has not found its voice, its cause yet. But we cannot rest on the laurels of our forefathers, we cannot bask in their achievements, because that is not sustainable behavior. We must find our fire, our voice, and wield it fiercely. But awareness and education are the first steps. Unless my generation understands the dire state of the world we inherit, we cannot do much. I can say that the trip to the Delta has awoken the activist in me. And she will not rest until ignorance is no longer a viable excuse for inaction."

Another student alumna of the Delta trip reflected on how living history can overcome the kind of cynicism and despair that appears to be a staple of bourgeois society today:

"Overall, these interviews and this trip has opened my eyes. Things may have changed but there's still much to be done. The point of the Civil Rights movement was to give blacks (and Latinos, other minorities, and laborers) equal footing as their white counterparts. When you look at things like the achievement gap and the black population in our jails, it's hard to tell how far we've come. And that's what these oral history interviews have given me: a closer look at reality. It's one thing to read a story on a page, but to be face to face with a living, breathing human who went through apartheid in this country is a completely different learning experience. You cannot simply shrug your shoulders after hearing stories of dehumanization and say things like, 'that was a long time ago. We're in a post-racial society now.' These interviews animate, give life to the history of Jim Crow you read in books. These interviews made me stare my own history in the eyes and see that the fight for equality still needs to be fought." ■

The Against the Current staff wants to thank Deborah Hendrix for her work in locating photos from Elaine, Arkansas and identifying stories and people. She made our work so much easier!



William Quiney walkabout tour of Elaine, talking at the Weeping Willow Memorial.

1919 Elaine Massacre: A Case Study in Racial Capitalism

THE HORRIFIC WAVE of anti-Black riots and pogroms that took place between 1917-23 were part of a violent response on the part of capital to Black economic and political gains in landownership, education, and political organization in the era of the Great Migration.

Seizing the opportunities afforded by rising cotton prices during World War I, African American farmers across the South — tenants, sharecroppers and small farm owners — began organizing.

Day laborers struck for higher wages and formed local unions. In Florida, farm workers joined a statewide voter registration movement. Black farmers in Phillips County, Arkansas created the Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America in order to market their cotton cooperatively as well as to bypass the power of white plantation owners and acquire more land of their own.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett conducted a careful investigation of the 1919 Elaine Massacre. She uncovered a seething race and class warfare waged by planters and business leaders determined to keep African Americans impoverished and landless.

The Progressive Farmers' union, in Wells-Barnett's analysis, represented a "Declaration of Economic Independence, and the first united blow for economic liberty struck by the Negroes of the

South. That was their crime and it had to be avenged!"

Phillips County planters recruited white military veterans, American Legion members and gunmen from the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta to crush Black organizing and to drive African American land owners off of their lands. Governor Charles H. Brough called in hundreds of federal troops who were characterized as "a rolling killing machine." Together, white military and paramilitary forces massacred hundreds of African American farmers.

Local people and organizers with the Elaine Legacy Center created the Weeping Willow Memorial to commemorate the victims of the massacre in 2019. Months after the memorial was dedicated, vandals destroyed it; the Elaine Legacy Center members believe this should be investigated as a hate crime. Weeks earlier, a group of University of Mississippi students photographed themselves in front of an Emmett Till historical marker that had been vandalized near Glendora where Till had been tortured and murdered in 1955.

— Paul Ortiz

Sources:

Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta*
Paul Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*

Such Is Our Challenge By Richard Wright

[This reprint of Richard Wright's 1948 Paris speech appeared in the fourth print issue of the revolutionary arts journal *Red Wedge* (www.redwedge.com) in 2017. Richard Wright (1908-1960) was an acclaimed author and novelist whose works are regarded as some of the most important on themes of race and racism in America. Scott McLemee's introduction, which puts the speech in biographical and political context, has been revised and somewhat expanded for *Against the Current*.]

Introduction by Scott McLemee:

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION of Richard Wright's address to the Revolutionary Democratic Assembly in Paris in December, 1948 seems to have escaped the notice of the biographers and literary scholars who have otherwise been extremely thorough in documenting the author's life and work.

That neglect is all the more remarkable given the speech's substance. A major defense of radical political and cultural principles at a moment when the Cold War was turning downright arctic, it is also a credo, a statement of personal values, by the preeminent African-American literary artist of his era.

"My body was born in America," Wright declares, "my heart in Russia" — a tribute to the spirit of the October Revolution, with its potential to realize a fuller measure of democracy and equality than the United States had claimed in even its grandest promises.

But the corruption of the best gives rise to the worst. Wright's speech, while expressing an ongoing commitment to struggles for liberation, was also his own declaration of independence.

Some points of biographical and historical information may be of value to the 21st century reader who knows Richard Wright mainly for his novel *Native Son* (1940) and his memoir *Black Boy* (1944). Between the publication of those works, he broke with the Communist Party.

While retaining an affinity for Marxism, he soon developed a strong interest in existentialist thought, with its emphasis on alienation, freedom, and self-creation. These had been major themes of his writing all along, of course, but only in the mid-1940s did word of existentialism as a philosophical

school begin to interest the American literary public.

Wright's fascination involved a shock of recognition: When the Marxist historian and theorist C.L.R. James noticed Wright's collection of writings by Søren Kierkegaard — the 19th-century Danish theologian whose work defined the basic existentialist concerns with anxiety, authenticity, and the crushing burden of social myths — Wright responded that, as a Black man living in America, he'd understood Kierkegaard even before reading him.

Wright in France

In 1946, Wright accepted an invitation to visit France. Finding a welcome contrast with American mores, especially concerning race, he moved there with his family the following year. He knew Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir from their visits to New York.

Translations of his work began to appear in their journal *Les Temps modernes*. His memoir *Black Boy* was serialized across several issues in 1947, at the same time as it was running chapters of Sartre's major statement *What Is Literature?*

In criticizing the limitations of bourgeois literary culture, Sartre cited to Wright's work as embodying the tension of writing that addresses both sides of an oppressive social order. During this period Wright joined the editorial board of another important literary and political journal, *Presence Africain*, which also had connections with the Sartrean milieu.

And so it seems almost a matter of course that Wright would be drawn, like others in the orbit of *Les Temps modernes*, to the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* when it emerged in 1948. Reflecting dissatisfaction with the status quo on the French left, the RDR sought to be — as one account put it — "more democratic than the Communists and more revolutionary than the Socialists."

Besides the involvement of Sartre, Beauvoir and others in their circle, RDR had a close relationship with *Franc-Tireur*, a left-wing newspaper with a circulation of 370,000. (The title means "Free Shooter," with connotations of guerrilla combat.)

The idea of an independent left move-

ment — one appealing to dissidents in the established groups as well as unaffiliated radicals — met with a warm reception at first. RDR events drew large audiences, and organizers were initially confident of growing to a membership in the tens of thousands.

It cannot have hurt that 1948 happened to mark the centennials of a wave of revolutions that started in France and spread throughout Europe, and also of the publication a certain manifesto by Marx and Engels.

But as Ian Birchall explains in the chapter on the RDR in his book *Sartre Against Stalinism* (2004), the Socialist and Communist parties soon proved hostile, while the Trotskyists and other small revolutionary groups regarded the RDR as a distraction at best. And as one East European country after another turned into so called "people's democracies" (i.e. extensions of the Stalinist political and social system), the RDR came under enormous pressure to "choose the West" as the lesser of two evils.

At its peak in 1948, the RDR had a few thousand members. Before the end of 1949, most of them voted with their feet. And by 1950, it barely existed at all, except as a memory of the hope for an alternative to the standoff between the United States and the USSR.

Wright delivered the speech reprinted here during one of the high points of the RDR's activity: a mass meeting in early December 1948 that drew an audience of 4000 people, with another 2000 turned away. André Breton and Albert Camus also spoke.

Wright's Paris Speech

Wright delivered his speech, originally written in English, in a translation by Simone de Beauvoir (so indicated by Arnold Rampersad in the biographical timeline appearing in the two Library of America volumes of Wright's work). *Franc-Tireur* published the French version of Wright's presentation under the title "Humanity is Greater than America and Russia" in its issue dated December 16, 1948.

The speech returned to English a few months later — circuitously, in the form of Mary Coleman's English translation, which is the version reprinted here. It appeared in the Summer 1949 number of *The Student*

Partisan, the magazine of the Politics Club at the University of Chicago, and was soon reprinted under the title “Such Is Our Challenge” in the Fall issue of *Anvil: A Student Anti-War Quarterly*, published by the New York Student Federation Against War.

The editorial note accompanying the speech provides no information about the translator Mary Coleman. When this introductory note appeared in *Red Wedge*, I pointed out that someone by that name born in 1928 received her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Chicago in 1950, worked with the Congress of Racial Equality throughout the 1950s, and went on to publish extensively on the neurology of autism.

Against the Current editor Alan Wald has confirmed that she was indeed the same Mary Coleman who translated the speech. Many of her papers in medical journals were published under the name Mary Bazelon, during her marriage to David T. Bazelon, a social critic who contributed to *Partisan Review* and *Dissent*, among other journals.

Perhaps the closest equivalent to the RDR on the American scene was the Independent Socialist League, known for the slogan “Neither Washington Nor Moscow, But the Third Camp of Independent Socialism” — a position substantially identical to that of Sartre, Wright and their comrades during the height of their involvement with the RDR.

Hence the evident enthusiasm with which ISL members and supporters working with *The Student Partisan* and *Anvil* must have greeted Wright's speech. The journals merged in 1950 and continued publication as *Anvil* through 1960 — an impressive achievement for any group of radical students, let alone one operating throughout the McCarthy era. (All issues of *Anvil* are available for download at <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/anvil/index.htm>.)

Cold War Chill

But by the time Coleman's translation was available, the existentialist left in France was taking its distance from the RDR. One of the group's founding members, David Rousset, had begun to drift away from a Third Camp perspective, towards support for the U.S. bloc.

When the RDR held an “International Day Against War and Dictatorship” in Paris at the end of April 1949, the list of participants included the philosopher Sidney Hook and the novelist James T. Farrell — two American leftists turned Cold Warriors — who spoke in support of the military alliance that would soon be known as NATO.

Sartre, Wright and the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty submitted a statement to the conference but declined to participate. “We condemn,” they said, “for

the same reasons, both the more or less disguised annexations in Eastern and Central Europe by the USSR, and the Atlantic Pact. It is by no means certain that this pact will slow up the coming of war. It may on the contrary hasten it. What is certain, on the other hand, is that, a little sooner or a little later, it will contribute to make it inevitable.”

In May 1949, the ISL newspaper *Labor Action* published “An Interview in Paris with Richard Wright on U.S. Politics” that affirmed support for the principles expressed in his speech a few months earlier, but with evident concern that the Cold War pressures were only worsening.

Wright scholars have been aware of the interview for some time; its text was reprinted in the volume *Conversations with Richard Wright* (University Press of Mississippi, 1993). It seems to rescue this other text — published by the same cluster of American radicals standing fast in hard times — from oblivion. It is a small part of his legacy, but as such worth reclaiming. ■

“Such Is Our Challenge,”

by Richard Wright

MY BODY WAS born in America, my heart in Russia, and today I am quite ashamed of my two homelands. The American State of Mississippi gave me my body; the Russian October Revolution gave me my heart. But today these two giant nations — symbols of the nationalistic scourge of our times — rival each other in their efforts to establish projects for the debasement of the human spirit.

They are guilty of degrading humanity, guilty of debasing the culture of our times, guilty of replacing the value of quality by the value of quantity, guilty of creating a universe which, little by little, is revealed as the gas chamber of humanity.

These two nations, the American and the Russian, pretend to be the official representatives of human liberty and, between these two official pretensions, between the threats they hurl at each other, the human spirit finds itself crucified.

Men are afraid. They are unable to choose. They cannot plan. They cannot think of the next day. They tremble in the night from fear and dismay. The imperatives of military and industrial life have so obscured and enfeebled the instincts of men that they no

longer even know that they are lost.

You know that is true. I know it. Then, why not admit it? Why not grant it as a point of departure which determines our words and actions?

Certainly, as conscious men, we ought to know that the crisis before us is more weighty in substance than the combat between America and Russia.

The truth is that those two nations make war on your spirit and my spirit, that contemporary spirit which books, culture and history have given us; that Dante, Shakespeare, Racine and Goethe have given us. Each step that America takes and each step that Russia takes brings us nearer to the point where free thought, free spirit and free action are not possible. We live in this vise.

America says that she alone is the champion of liberty; and Russia also says this. In fact, those two nations advocate ideals in which they really don't believe, which they even hate and despise. America is suspicious of you intellectuals; she has invented a whole terminology to express her disdain

for the products of the human spirit: men who think, she scornfully calls Long Hairs, Pedants, Dreamers, Makers of Theory, Intellectual Bastards, Visionaries, etc.

And in Russia, what do they call you there? Monkeys, Hyenas, Chimpanzees, such are the names they hurled at T.S. Eliot, at Andre Gide, and at the best living writers, at the recent cultural congress held in Poland.

The Conquerors' War

Listen, writers and artists: the men who today lead the world have declared war on you! They have no need of you, they don't want you in the society they are trying to build. They think you are dangerous. They said it at Hollywood and they said it at Prague!

Whoever is the conqueror, you lose; you shall be reduced to servile dependence, to slavery to discs of a phonograph repeating the official doctrine. I ask you, you men of spirit: what is there for you to choose? Are you able to say yes, with all your heart, to those things that America symbolizes?

If you are able to say yes to one or other of these points of view, that signifies something that has already died in you, that the battle which the Americans and the Russians wage for the conquest of your spirit is already won. If you are able to choose between them, that signifies that humanity is lost, that 2000 years of the history of man is ended, that the conception of man that we have is buried.



Richard Wright, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing left, 1951. Photograph. Retrieved from Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/item/94513299/.

I cannot answer the question that I raise and I don't apologize. There are times in history when words alone cannot give an answer. There are times when action alone is able to answer. Such are our times. Acts, that is what you, intellectuals, must accomplish, acts with words, acts which express your needs, your wishes, your dreams.

Do you believe that I exaggerate the gravity of the problem? Listen and remember. There are two nations in the world today, where feeling has become politically suspect, where speaking of the subjective qualities of man is a crime, where the mere act of speaking about freedom is smeared and spied upon, where servility is made noble, falsehood worshiped, double-dealing sanctified, false testimony binding, spying patriotic, and where the scientific laboratory is guarded by bayonets.

These are not isolated cases which affect some dishonorable individuals. No, these are the official beliefs of governments that lead hundreds of millions of men. To oppose this flood of opinion is to risk a brutal death or to endanger your means of earning a living.

The war against man is declared and, if you don't know it, if you are not conscious of it, you will be unable to set an example for those who are caught in the situation, but who still don't know that it is almost too late.

What is Freedom?

Freedom of speech is not enough. Freedom of religion is not enough. Freedom from hunger and fear, they are not enough. A nation which is not able to give its citizens the right and freedom to exercise their natural and acquired abilities is founded on fraud. Man ought to have the freedom to remain a man.

Freedom is not negative, it ought to be not only the possibility "of" something, but to go freely "towards" something. It ought to let man create new values for life, otherwise it was not created for man.

America and Russia are full of machines which strangle living more than they protect. America and Russia are full of educational institutions for whom the goal is not the formation of independent individuals, but of standardized human types who are loyal to the State.

The intolerant, harsh nationalism of America and Russia deprive the millions of men who live in these countries of having normal human sentiments and they are forced to become propaganda projectors.

In America and Russia, the right to an individual destiny is sacrificed in the name of a compulsory national ideal. The hysterical political atmosphere, in America and in Russia, already has removed from man the means of objectively and reasonably resolving the problems of food and shelter.

The present nationalism, in America and in Russia, forces a man to abandon his human heritage. America and Russia pretend that their action is in defense of the lives of their people; but in truth, it kills the life of man on earth.

In rejecting all this, what can we do? Fortunately, the situation is not completely desperate. I believe that we still have a chance. It is not a question of our fighting these national giants on their own ground.

Our weapons are not their weapons. For us there still exists room for liberty, and that room is your spirit and mine, your ability to speak and write the words which hold attention and make men stop, look and listen.

For some time yet, we shall have this liberty; for how long? We don't know.

But that tiny space of liberty is surrounded by threats, ersatz culture (fed to the masses, and impoverishing the spirit), false values, governments of gangsters, books which confuse more than they clarify, crime which speaks the language of the revolution, and revolution which speaks the language of crime.

Nevertheless, we can make ourselves heard. And that ought to be enough for us. We have only a few allies. For centuries men like us have worked for the bosses, the lords, the masters. But that is ended. Today the masters are afraid of you; they no longer want you. From now on, you are alone and you are your own masters.

You must find a way of making your words a good to incite men to decide for themselves. You must find words and images

which make men feel life in the most direct, most immediate, keenest way. Your words must drive man by powerful blows from passive existence to real life.

Your words must instill faith into men, but faith which is not based upon superstition. The strength of your words must empower men to escape their daily impersonal, big city routine and fill a new need of expressing themselves, of believing in themselves, of fulfilling themselves. Your words must stir up in man the desire to be a man.

Your words must be a prayer addressed to man for man. They must arouse a desire in man to remain human. I speak not of heaven or hell, but purely and simply of our sad and sweet earth, with its men who suffer and have their moment of bitter human triumph.

The great danger is that the threads of history, which we hold so feebly in our hands, may break asunder in our lifetime; that the past which has nourished us and the future which we seek should escape us and leave us in a barren present denuded of all human significance.

In order that our universe not escape us, a single man must speak with the tongues of ten, each of your acts must equal that of a thousand. Such is our challenge. If we fail, not only shall we lose our puny individual lives, but we shall lose all that is human in the world, all that history, however imperfect she is, has bequeathed us.

The world is greater than America or Russia. Humanity is greater than America or Russia. That is a fact. If we believe it, we shall conquer. ■



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A Valid Counterposition? “Not racist” versus “Antiracist”

How to be an Antiracist

By Ibram X. Kendi

One World Press, 2019, 320 pages,
\$27 hardcover.

IBRAM KENDI IS director of the Antiracist Research & Policy Center at American University. The thesis of his book, *How to be an Antiracist*, is that in a system fundamentally shaped by racism, Black people who have suffered from racist ideas also hold racist views themselves.

Whites also hold such views. To combat “racist ideas,” Kendi argues, requires recognizing that all previous Black leaders — the Black elites — including those who espoused militant nationalism, or more radical anti-capitalist theories, accepted white ideas of racism.

Kendi’s conclusion: fighting racist ideas means rejecting “not racist” as a term of self-identification. Instead, he explains, being an active “antiracist” is necessary to defeat racist ideas and government and state policies.

A Revelatory Moment

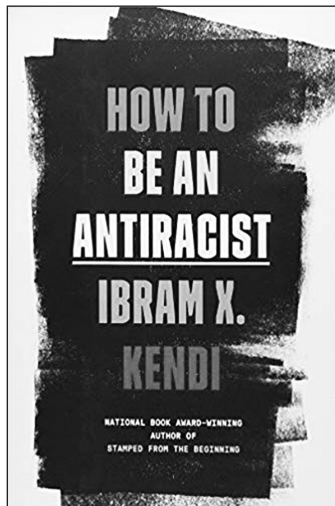
Recounting his own experience, Kendi traces his view of racist ideas following a speech he’d given at a Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in 2000. He says that his critical view of Black youth was a “racist speech,” blaming Blacks themselves for the failures of a racist society.

In the opening chapter “My racist introduction,” he explains how “A racist culture had handed me the ammunition to shoot Black people, to shoot myself, and I took and used it. Internalized racism is the real Black on Black crime.... Denial is the heart-beat of racism.” (8-9)

These aren’t new observations. Black educators and leaders, since the founding of the country from white settlements where indigenous peoples and slaves did not count as humans, have said the same.

The debate was what to do about it: Should the oppressed accept or accommodate to their inferior status, or fight to

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change it?

In the 1960s Black nationalists and militants led by Malcolm X and others said the road to freedom was through “Black Power.” Later some added that only socialism and a rejection of capitalism was the solution.

Kendi explains his “denial theory” of racist culture, targeting the concept of “not racist”

as a central reason why fighting racism has not succeeded. The onus is placed on the individual:

“What’s the problem with being ‘not racist’? It is a claim that signifies neutralist. ‘I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism.’ But there is no neutrality in the racism struggle, the opposite of racist is not ‘not racist.’ It is ‘antiracist.’ What is the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups, as a racist, or locates the root of problems in power and policies, as an antiracist.” (9)

Racism’s Complexities

The book’s 320 pages, with extensive footnotes, is organized in 18 chapters that are introduced with what he sees as “racist” and “antiracist” definitions — for example, in Chapter 12 on “Class,” with his discussions of “class racist” and “antiracist anticapitalistic.”

But the definitions are in most cases contradictory and confusing. The concepts of structural and institutional racism are not presented as the core of “racist ideas.” For example, referring to his 2000 MLK celebration speech, he calls his criticisms of Black youth as a “racist idea” — because whites said the same thing about African Americans.

Yet Black leaders, whatever their view of solutions to end racism, stood for Black self-reliance and education and, in Kendi’s view, were subscribing to white ideas of

By Malik Miah

how to do so.

But it is not a “racist idea” to advocate for self-reliance and to stand on your own feet. It has little to do with racism.

The counter positions are the same in each chapter: what are racist ideas and antiracist ideas, and how to transform individuals. The power of the state and capitalism, while mentioned, are downplayed as the solution except to say that racist ideas and policies are the problem.

Kendi is correct that fighting racism aggressively is key to change. But he is wrong to say that being “not racist” or color-blind is a default to being in support of racist ideas. The fundamental problem in the United States, as it is in other countries, is the use of ethnic and racial discrimination to keep the powerful in power.

Racism is a tool to convince whites and others to see the oppressors as “one of them” (most whites in the former Jim Crow South) and not the class unity of the working class and oppressed peoples (Blacks, Latinos, indigenous peoples).

Tactics to Fight Oppression

The tactics or slogans the oppressed use are concrete. In South Africa during the antiapartheid struggle, the African National Congress and its leader Nelson Mandela used the slogan “color-blind society” to demand Black majority rule. They also picked up arms.

In the Jim Crow legally segregated South, disenfranchised and broadly discriminated Blacks demanded an end to legal racial segregation. Martin Luther King did not accept legal white domination/racist laws. He organized against the immoral laws of the South to demand equality.

King and the civil rights movement organized the Black community and support from sympathetic whites in whatever way they could help. This included using the ideas of the U.S. Constitution that Kendi now sees as a source of “racist ideas” (understandably since its framers did not include slaves, non-white immigrants and indigenous peoples as citizens in the founding documents).

Yet the example of Black elected officials, or Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court and what DuBois called the “Talented Tenth,” hasn’t changed structural racism or

institutional power relations.

Power and the Freedom Struggle

What about power? Kendi refers to the fact that Blacks having some power hasn't ended racist ideas. Kendi's argument is: "Powerless Defense. The illusory, concealing, disempowering, antiracist idea that Black people can't be racist because Black people don't have power." (136)

In Chapter 11, "Black," Kendi challenges a belief that Blacks can't be racist because they don't hold power.

He confuses "prejudice" and racism. Prejudices can be based on culture or ethnic origins and preferences. Prejudice is not automatically a sign of racism.

Nor is it accepting "racist ideas" that explains why oppressed ethnic and racial groups are denied their rights. It is the system itself.

African Americans know what racism, white superiority, is. As a subordinate people who have been subjugated to torture and murder with no justice, Blacks are cold-blooded about this issue. African Americans are realistic in everyday politics.

Yet when the opportunity exists to have a more radical solution to racism, many Blacks who went for the "safe" electoral position will move quickly to the left. In the late 1960s and '70s as a record number of Blacks were elected to office and got management jobs in corporations, support rose for the idea of an independent Black political party.

In the early 20th century, the NAACP and others focused the fight on the legal issues such as lynching laws and Jim Crow. W.E.B. DuBois criticized Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute for accepting segregation and not fighting it.

Washington focused on training Blacks as teachers and other skills. The NAACP sought to integrate Blacks as equals to whites. Integration is not a "racist idea," any more than an oppressed people giving up on a unified America wanting their own country — self-determination.

Many in the educated Black elite have understood as King did that in the United States (unlike some European, or Asian or African countries), blood line doesn't determine citizenship.

The term "American" is based on the ideal, even though initially it only meant whites from parts of Europe. The ideal of citizenship is what Frederick Douglass, DuBois and King used to demand: let Blacks be fully equal part of that original ideal.

In the 1960s when civil rights were won by mass actions, but structural racism remained, the Black Power left wing demanded more.

Radical elements like SNCC and the

League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit's auto factories, and the Black Panther Party, led many to support anti-capitalist revolutionary views to fight racists. There was no debate about "not racist" versus "antiracist."

*It doesn't matter
if you call yourself
not racist, anti-racist,
or color-blind.
The test is your
actions to end racial
discrimination.*

Class Analysis and Politics

Racism as we know it today is a social construct of modern capitalism. It has been used and will always be used by the ruling class to dominate peoples and divide the working class.

Race and racism cannot be separated from that class reality. Even ethnic violence in Africa uses arguments of former colonizers to justify the oppression and exploitation of minority ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, the issue is not whether a person sees oneself as "not racist" or "antiracist." It is broader than that. To fight racism in the American context is to understand its roots. The Black left understands that to fight racism alone without an anti-capitalist analysis self-limits the fight.

Gains can be made (e.g. civil rights laws), but these same gains will be under sustained attack by the right until reversed (e.g. school desegregation demise).

Kendi says socialist countries have also failed. He points to Cuba. (159) Socialist Cuba — although under fierce attack by a U.S. economic embargo for 60 years — nevertheless has taken positive strides precisely because of antiracist changes in policies and structures responding to historical racism.

Afro-Cubans received positive promotions and assimilation — not as much as demanded by Blacks there, but more than any other country in the Western Hemisphere.

The problem in the old socialist left, prior to the civil rights revolution, was the belief that the issue of racism would be only resolved by the class struggle, without taking on the reality of racial discrimination and oppression.

Even at the height of the civil rights struggle in the 1960s, the Communist Party, for example, opposed Malcolm X and Black

nationalism. That is no longer an issue for modern day socialist and communist organizations.

Kendi is critical of the Black intellectuals and calls their ideas as a reflection of "racist ideas." "To be an antiracist is to recognize neither poor Blacks nor elite Blacks as the truest representative of Black people." (165)

Yet he never says who would be the "truest representative" of Black people. The focus instead is on individual decision making, not the power relationship between the capitalist system and its use of state power.

Solution: Treating Racism Like Cancer

"What if we treated racism in the way we treat cancer? What if the humans connected the treatment plans?" (237)

To cure cancer is based on medical science. But since racism is a manmade social construct of the powerful, it can only be eliminated by a socialist revolution that opens the door to its eradication.

No surprisingly, Kendi is not optimistic about the future. In his final two chapters ("Success" and "Survival"), Kendi writes:

"Race and racism are powerful constructs of the modern world.... Racism is not even six hundred years old. It's a cancer that we caught early.

"But racism is one of the fastest-spreading and most fatal cancers humanity has ever known. It is hard to find a place where its cancer cells are not dividing and multiplying.

"There is nothing I see in our world today, in our history, giving me hope that one day antiracists will win the fight that one day the flag of antiracism will fly over a world of equity.

"What gives me hope is a simple truism. Once we lose hope, we are guaranteed to lose. But if we ignore the odds and fight to create an antiracist world, then we give humanity a chance to one day survive, a chance to live in communion, a chance to be forever free." (238)

Kendi's definition of "racist ideas" is so sweeping, and contrary to the realities of racial oppression and of how to fight the ideology of white supremacy, to cause me to see it as a diversion.

It doesn't matter if you call yourself not racist, anti-racist, or color-blind. The test is your *actions* (Kendi does say so) to end racial discrimination.

As someone who made a conscious choice to go beyond Black Nationalism in the 1970s to identify as a revolutionary socialist and join a multinational socialist organization as the instrument to fight racism and capitalism, I'm confident the young generation of anti-racist activists will make the same choice.

While I'm critical of Kendi's analysis, each chapter is worth a fuller discussion and debate. ■

A Chronicle of Struggle

By Derrick Morrison

Moving Against the System

The 1968 Congress of Black Writers and the Making of Global Consciousness

Edited and introduced by David Austin
London, UK: Pluto Press, 2018, \$14.50 paperback.

WHAT WAS THE October 11-14, 1968 Congress of Black Writers?

Sponsored by Black students at McGill University in Montreal and aided by their counterparts at the Sir George Williams campus, it was a conference that brought together leading African diaspora militants of the Left.

Subtitles on the flyer promoting the gathering read, "Towards the Second Emancipation, The Dynamics of Black Liberation." (76). More than just a writers' conference, its revolutionary political character was duly noted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — the FBI of Canada. (1)

Alvin Poussaint, C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney, Richard B. Moore, Harry Edwards, James Forman, and Stokely Carmichael were the main speakers. Taking a phrase from Edwards as this volume's title, *Moving Against the System*, David Austin, an Afro-Canadian professor at John Abbott College, has assembled, edited and introduced the major Congress speeches.

In my view, one cannot deal with 1968, the Caribbean, Black Power, or the Vietnam war without starting with Cuba — the earthquake of the political revolution that shook the world — and I find that to be the thread that runs through the major contributions. More specifically, how to apply the lessons of the Cuban Revolution to the Caribbean keeps emerging as the key feature of the conference.

Walter Rodney, the prominent Guyanese Marxist historian, personifies that discussion, and we can see it further in his subsequent political development. Moreover, the concrete realization of the importance of those

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lessons would occur in the case of the Grenadian revolution a decade later.

At the time of the conference, many of the Caribbean islands were still British colonies, so the participants faced the question of whether they would be forced to take the Jamaican road — formal independence within a limited civil democratic framework — or could they aim for independence combined with social revolution?

Revolutionary Changes

When former Trotskyist C.L.R. James intervened, he gave the following explanation: "So, what is there about the Cuban Revolution that I want you to know? Number one: after ten years, it is today stronger than ever it was before.

[Applause] ...the English Revolution, they cut off Charles I's head in 1649, and that was a decisive point — decisive for his head and decisive for the revolution. [Laughter] Ten years afterward" — with Charles II on the throne — "royalty came back, monarchy did not." Because of the revolution, Parliament was still a power in the land, an irreversible transformation.

C.L.R. continued that the French Revolution of 1789 "had accomplished miracles by 1794. By 1799 they had descended into the grip of Napoleon Bonaparte, the First Consul.... In the Russian Revolution of 1917, by 1927 everything that was Leninist was wiped away. The Cuban Revolution is the first of the great revolutions that, after ten years, is stronger than it was at the beginning. [Applause]" (92)

As Walter Rodney asserted, before 1959 "in a certain part of Havana after a certain hour you were liable to be shot, guilty of being black.... Now, in Cuba today, barriers to entering certain buildings, certain eating houses, and that sort of thing have completely disappeared. Juan Almeida, one of the members of the Politburo of the Cuban Communist Party, is a black man who was involved in the struggle from the time of the Sierra Maestra with Fidel Castro....

"And we find in Cuba today more genu-

ine interest in the African Revolution...than there exists in Jamaica, which is a place 95 percent black, because the black people of Jamaica are still involved [in,] and are dominated under, imperialist relations. So that is Cuba and that is Jamaica." (129, 130)

In Stokely Carmichael's view, although "Fidel Castro fought in the Sierra Maestra for several years," the Cuban revolution "did not start until Fidel walked into Havana with guns in his hand, Che on his side, and said, 'This day I claim this country for the masses of Cuban people.' Then the revolution began....[Applause] So, you can't talk about revolution until you have seized power." (219)

Carmichael had spoken in Havana the year before at the Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) conference. And in 1966 the Cuban government organized an assembly called the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, OSPAAAL.

The focal point, the example to emulate for anti-colonial fighters, was Vietnam. The people there demonstrated that not only was resistance possible, but battles could be won if mobilization and organization were deep enough. The Vietnamese Tet offensive in early 1968, the ghetto rebellions in Newark and Detroit in the summer of 1967, and the growing worldwide anti-Vietnam war movement, based in the United States, were proving that the U.S. military machine was not invincible.

Harry Edwards, who was behind the expressions by Black athletes of solidarity with the ghetto rebellions at the 1968 Olympic Games, observed, "In moving against the system, we recognize that, regardless of who he is, if he is upholding... the system, he is as guilty as any other criminal...and he should be treated as such...

"To lambaste honkies is a fruitless waste of time at this late date. Talk should be aimed at educating black people to the system as the enemy." (200, 201) In this vein Edwards attacked the Democratic and Republican parties and extolled Malcolm X as one who told the truth about the system.

Civil Rights and Black Power

But we have to ask ourselves: What did the Congress of Black Writers really repre-



sent, and what role does it play in our long quest for social justice?

The Congress was a rough expression of that wing of what was called the Black Power movement that sought solutions to social inequality, not just civil inequality. It occurred in the midst of what Clyde Woods called "The Second Reconstruction, 1965-1977," marked by "passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (the War on Poverty), the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968...."¹

The first and third legislative pieces above signified U.S. government enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments of the Constitution, in other words the overthrow of Jim Crow — the lynchings, the segregation, the absolute denial of Black humanity.

Jim Crow was a negation of the rule of law, a negation of elementary civil democracy as defined by the Constitution. The contradiction of law in the North and West, versus no law in the South, fueled the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and '60s. Its victory brought to the surface a deeper contradiction — social inequality.

As stated by Dr. Martin Luther King in a 1967 address at Stanford University, "It's more difficult today because we are struggling now for genuine equality. And it's much easier to integrate a lunch counter than it is to guarantee a livable income and a good solid job. It's much easier to guarantee the right to vote than it is to guarantee the right to live in sanitary, decent housing conditions.

"It is much easier to integrate a public park than it is to make genuine, quality, integrated education a reality. And so today we are struggling for something which says we demand genuine equality...."²

For some in the Civil Rights movement, given the horrendous effort required in the face of police beatings, jailings, and Klan killings of activists — the achievement of civil democracy in the South was enough.

Its deepening in the North and West, and the manifestation of new levels of civil equality at the ballot box — notably the November 1967 elections of Richard Hatcher and Carl Stokes as the mayors of Gary, Indiana and Cleveland, Ohio — seemed to open up a whole new playing field of opportunities and possibilities, especially in the Democratic Party.

However, the new situation actually facilitated King's call for "genuine equality" and Carmichael's cry for "Black Power." Both demands went in the direction of a fight for social equality, a fight for social democracy.

Civil and Social Equality

When Walter Rodney contrasted Jamaica and Cuba, he was holding up one as an example of limited civil democracy and the other as an example of unbridled social

democracy. Jamaica's attainment of independence from the British in 1962 was a blow against global *civil* inequality; Cuba's revolution in 1959 was a blow against global *social* inequality.

How to implement the Cuban example was an immediate issue for social justice activists in the Caribbean and Latin America. In 1965 civil war broke out in the Dominican Republic. A "constitutionalist" wing of the army allied with, and armed, civilian groups in an effort to remove a military-backed government that had deposed the social-democratic president Juan Bosch in 1963.

U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, ever sensitive to any challenge to the system of social inequality that enriches the few and impoverishes the many, used the excuse of "communist dictatorship" and "another Cuba" to send in over 20,000 troops against the constitutionalist forces, and the revolution was derailed.

Walter Rodney became a central figure in the Caribbean. As a professor of African history at a University of the West Indies campus in Jamaica, he had a large audience for his speeches and articles. During the Montreal event Rodney was banned by the Jamaican government, setting off protests of students and urban youths in Kingston.³

It should be noted that Rodney, while working on his doctorate at the University of London, 1963-66, became part of a study group initiated by C.L.R., a socialist scholar and author of one of the best books on the Haitian slave revolt of 1791, *Black Jacobins*.⁴ Rodney would later author a significant work of his own, published in 1972, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

Rodney is said to have inspired "the most sustained expression of Black Power" to rock the Caribbean — in Trinidad-Tobago.⁵ Through the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), formed in the late 1960s, tens of thousands were mobilized in the months of February, March and April of 1970. In the course of suppressing the revolt, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force split and the government hung by a thread.⁶ "Order" was eventually restored.

Rodney, who also taught at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, developed the Working People's Alliance in 1974 in his home country of Guyana. Dedicated to fighting for social equality, the group endured severe repression from the Guyanese government, ever mindful of the interests of its financial overlords in London and New York. Rodney was assassinated in June, 1980.⁷

Grenada and Nicaragua

One person not present at the Congress would eventually lead a movement that resulted in the actual seizure of political

power and opening the door to social democracy, thus creating a "second Cuba" in the Caribbean.

Maurice Bishop of Grenada was in London studying to get his law degree in 1968. As Jorge Heine remarked, "Trinidad's 1970 'February revolution' coincided with his passing through Port of Spain [capital of Trinidad] on his way back to St. George's [capital of Grenada], and the recent law school graduate soon found himself leading demonstrations in solidarity with Trinidadian black power supporters."⁸

While setting up his law practice, Bishop and other activists extended solidarity to a group of nurses protesting abominable conditions in the general hospital.⁹ Out of these activities came the Movement for the Assemblies of the People, MAP, in 1972.¹⁰

During the same year, Unison Whiteman and others joined with small farmers and agricultural workers to form the Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation, JEWEL.¹¹ At a conference on March 1, 1973 the groups united to form the New Jewel Movement.

Grenada was a British colony and Eric Gairy was prime minister in the colonial legislature.

In June 1973 the NJM called a People's Convention on Independence — 10,000 attended, a most explosive event in a country of about 100,000 people. Ten percent of the population of any country attending a political event calls for more than just a heads up. In November of the same year the NJM convened a People's Congress elsewhere on the island, attracting again 10,000 people.¹²

When Grenada got its political independence in February of 1974, it was in the midst of a three-month general strike called by civil forces opposed to the repressive policies of Gairy. In general elections held in December of 1976, Bishop was catapulted into the position of leader of the parliamentary opposition.

The Gairy era ended "in the valley of True Blue, where on March 13, 1979 the armed wing of the NJM overpowered Gairy's army while the prime minister was on his way to New York for a United Nations meeting."¹³

Furthermore, the "NJM seizure of power cannot be understood as a Blanquist *coup de main* led by a small group of conspirators. If that had been the case, the enormous outpouring of support that followed Maurice Bishop's radio address announcing the establishment of the PRG would be incomprehensible."¹⁴

The formation of the People's Revolutionary Government, PRG, with Maurice Bishop as prime minister, is a very important chapter in the history of the struggles of

continued on page 42

A Chronicle of Justice Denied

Jazz and Justice:

Racism and the Political Economy of the Music

By Gerald Horne

New York: Monthly Review Press, 2019, 456 pages, \$27 paperback.

RIGHT UP FRONT, the prolific historian Gerald Horne of the University of Houston describes the contradiction that underlies this work:

“(T)here are terribly destructive forces — racism, organized criminality, brutal labor exploitations, battery, debauchery, gambling — from which grew an intensely beautiful art form, today denoted as ‘jazz.’ It is the classic instance of the lovely lotus arising from the malevolent mud.”

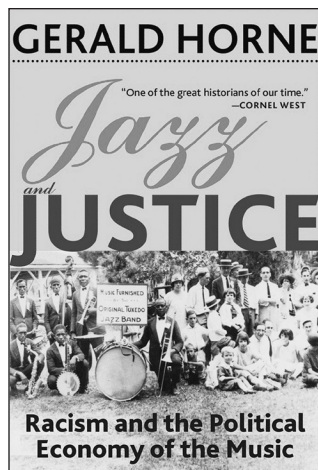
Since his book delves deeply into that mud, Horne says, he listened to the “pulchritudinous tunes of the musicians who continue to prevail against difficult odds” so he could better “digest this malodorous substance as I was writing these pages.” He advises his readers to do the same, and good advice it is, indeed.

Rather than yet another jazz history, *Jazz and Justice* chronicles the evolving travails of the music and its creators in a climate of racism, gangsterism, exploitation, struggle for survival (and in some cases like Oliver Nelson, death by overwork).

In 11 chapters, *Jazz and Justice* moves from the early days of jazz in New Orleans through a century of ups and downs, with the music’s death notice being announced or forecast numerous times, to its present status as a hardy cultural survivor.

For Horne, the survival story is epitomized by the career of Quincy Jones. In 2018, Jones’s “six decades as a musician, composer, arranger, conductor, executive, magazine founder, entrepreneur, humanitarian and producer was celebrated” at the 45th anniversary of the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy.

John Woodford is a retired journalist living in Ann Arbor. He was editor-in-chief for Muhammad Speaks and wrote for it and many other publications. His review of Gerald Horne’s Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism appeared in ATC 198.



Jones’s recognition, financial success and durability (he’s 86 years old) is far from typical of the many men and handful of women whose stories Horne weaves together through an impressively meticulous combining of articles, biographies, autobiographies, musical works and, especially, oral

histories of the artists themselves.

Herein, the reader encounters not only the familiar jazz giants and lesser-known artists of the genre, but also an array of gangsters, politicians, swindling record industry figures and critics who took advantage of the leverage derived from racism to fatten off the creativity of jazz artists.

The manifold and unrelenting process of profiteering off the musicians (not the least through stealing their works by listing producers as co-composers) is the “political economy of the music” of Horne’s subtitle. As for “justice,” you’ll find a continual striving for it in this book, but in the main it’s an epic of justice denied.

Riffs and Patterns

There can be little variation in Horne’s theme. He can provide us only with what’s there, and while that risks monotony, I found it a sort of repetition that, like long-form chanting or drumming, is compelling and moving because of, rather than in spite of the familiar pattern emerging page after page after page.

You know what’s coming in a succession of blues chords, but that doesn’t mean they can’t grab you and carry you away and so it is with Horne’s riffs, a smorgasbord of jazz anecdotes that are mainly sour and bitter, but juicy all the same:

Louis Armstrong: It’s Chicago in the 1920s, and mobster Al Capone is a sort of “patron saint” of the new music” even as he and rivals are firebombing the nascent jazz

By John Woodford

clubs.

“Louis Armstrong arrived in Chicago during this tense moment, and mobsters helped him get his first job in New York City after he arrived there from the Midwest in 1924...”

“The ties Armstrong forged in Chicago shaped his career trajectory. Joe Glaser, who helped shape his career as a manager and agent, was seen as a front for Capone via running one of the mobster’s brothels; his venality was exposed when he was indicted for rape. In a sense, Armstrong chose one set of thugs to protect him against another; such was the sorry plight of musicians then.”

Duke Ellington: “(M)imicking Armstrong, he [Ellington] forged an alliance with Irving Mills, born in Russia in 1894, who somehow became the publisher” and copyright-holder of some of the pianist’s most famous compositions, which “enriched this manipulator and his descendants.”

Lou Donaldson: “(W)hen I came on the scene . . . the junkies had everything — and the recording studios had the junkies. If you weren’t strung out, you couldn’t get a record date. I didn’t get high so I was kind of an outsider at first.”

Lester Young: “(T)hey want everybody who’s a Negro to be an Uncle Tom or Uncle Remus or Uncle Sam,” and he was unwilling to portray all three roles — and then suffered a nervous breakdown.”

Max Roach: “I had a rough period with major labels. . . . It’s like gold mines. We’re the material they [go] into South Africa [for]. . . . They take it and process it and sell it and make billions.”

Eddie Palmieri: “I was accused of being a Communist because of avant-garde ideas, and the CIA and FBI went to see my record company. Morris Levy [one of the arch-villains in a book teeming with them —JW] brought me and said, ‘Mr. Palmieri what did you record for me? Don’t record that shit any more.’”

Levy, Horne explains, was referring to Palmieri’s composition, “Mambo con conga Equals Mozambique,” seen as an affront to the U.S. ally in fascist Portugal, the colonizer of this African nation, which became independent in 1975.

Levy was “backed by the Big Mafia . . .



Oliver Nelson (1932-75), saxophonist, brilliant composer, arranger and producer. His albums included the pathbreaking *Blues* and the *Abstract Truth* and dozens of others. He died at age 43 from effects of overwork, an occupational hazard of the always insecure jazz music business.

[the] Gambino family” and the “Columbo family,” Horne adds, so Palmieri had to take his censorship seriously, “when the gruff Levy barked.”

But “there was a related problem in that Cuban exiles in the form of Alpha 66, known to deploy terror, were upset with him and were threatening ‘to blow up all the radio stations that played my music.’”

Abbey Lincoln: “We had to go to other nations for our careers ... If there wasn’t Europe, I don’t know what we would do... I [had] worked as a maid and I had made like \$30 a week and now — seemingly — had ascended economically.” But while performing “I would sometimes be the only Black person in the room. They didn’t want Black people ... in Miami. A Black man would frighten them.”

Moses Avalon, record producer: “The entertainment industry is like a big casino. Motion pictures are the backroom baccarat tables for the millionaires with the \$10,000 gold chips. Television is the \$100 table for the yuppies, theater the \$25 table and the record biz is the \$2 table, essentially for the bargain shoppers.”

Frank Kofsky, critic: His indictment in *Black Music, White Business* (1998) angered some leading figures among the white jazzers who tended to be irritated by accusations of racism in their industry: “All but a handful of those who have written books, articles and even advertisements about it [jazz], as well as those who have owned and edited periodicals and published the volumes that have dealt with it, have been white men,” and have “served to deny, obscure, rationalize or otherwise defend the single glaring iniquity with the production of

the music: that Black artistry has created it while ownership has profited disproportionately from it.”

Contradictions of “Integration”

Jazz and Justice also provides a sort of counter-melody, or narrative, that traces the ways in which social consciousness, born in political struggles engulfing the music and other industries, flourished and sharpened among the musicians.

Many musicians, for example, served in the military in World Wars I and II, enlarging their world view and their sense of worth. It lent strength to the civil rights movement against Jim Crow segregation and to the bold militancy of the Black Power and Black Nationalist periods.

Jazz and Justice provides today’s readers, especially those unfamiliar with this epoch, a chance to hear directly how these forces affected the musicians’ lives.

Horne also thoroughly delineates the peculiar reactionary effect of the destruction of Black-led musical locals under the drive for “integration” as distinguished from “desegregation.” The integration mode pursued in the USA consistently weakened Afro-American institutions and clout, just when the tide of history was expected to flow to higher ground, to equality, justice and power.

Previously all-white locals absorbed the once-segregated locals that had Afro-American leaders, and the cost was not only a loss of leadership posts but also of business records, camaraderie and militancy.

Thus, what looked like a “liberal” step forward proved to be a recast form of Jim Crow. Bad wine got a new label and a new bottle but it’s still contaminated. Horne

provides a sobering assessment of where we are today:

“(T)he overall climate in the United States in the early twenty-first century — a surging white supremacy — an unleashed capitalist class, a weakened labor movement — indicated that despite victories, the path ahead would continue to be rocky indeed.”

Conditions and Creativity

So much for the social issues that Horne explores in the mire. What about the lotus? *Jazz and Justice* left me with two intriguing but not readily answerable questions about aesthetics.

Horne raised the first when he noted in his introduction that there is no clear connection — despite occasional powerful political thrusts in jazz epitomized by Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.’s “We Insist! Freedom Now Suite” of 1960 — between the harsh conditions or personal anguish artists may experience and the works they produce (the lotus-out-of-the-mire).

Edmund Wilson touched on the same mystery-cum-paradox in his 1941 study *The Wound and the Bow*, in which he contended that artistic genius grows out of personal hardship or handicap. Maybe so. But such experiences do not predict or explain the works the artists produce.

Some afflicted artists, like Dostoevsky, produce works marked by anguish and pain, while others, like Dickens or Kipling, create tales marked by humor, satire or whimsy. And many great artists — Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Austen — are not known to have experienced hardships or handicaps beyond the mundane.

Horne presents a second question that suggests an interrelationship between the lotus and mire under specific historical conditions:

The philosopher Theodor Adorno has been cited for the proposition that “no artist is able to overcome, through his own individual resources, the contradiction of enchained art within an enchained society. The most which we can hope to accomplish is the contradiction of such a society through emancipated art, and even in this attempt he might well be the victim of despair.”

But I’d say that Wilson’s and Adorno’s attempted prescriptions sell the artist short. Neither social background nor psychological idiosyncrasy nor socioeconomic system can predict or account for the quality of a work produced by the individual artist.

An artist in an “enchained society” can produce works of great humor, joy and inspiration. Analyze and enumerate the characteristics of the mire all you want, you can’t deduce or sully the beauty of the lotus.

That’s exactly why Horne is so right to remind readers to *listen to the music!* ■

REVIEW

Latin America's Cauldron By Folko Mueller

Making the Revolution

Histories of the Latin American Left

Edited by Kevin A. Young

Cambridge University Press, 2019, 318 pages,
\$30 paperback.

Voices of Latin America

Social Movements and the
New Activism

Edited by Tom Gatehouse

Monthly Review Press, 2019, 300 pages,
\$32 paperback.

LATIN AMERICA HAS been subject to oppression and exploitation for over 500 years. Naturally, this has continuously spawned resistance on both individual and collective levels. Some of the earliest rebellion dates back as early as the 1500s.

The Inca emperor Manco Inca, for example, started a rebellion against the Spanish Conquistadors in 1536 in Cusco. Although ultimately driven into the remote jungles of Vilcabamba, he and his forces were able to establish a liberated zone and declare a neo-Inca State that lasted for several decades until the execution of his son Túpac Amaru in 1572.

The naked aggression of outright colonialism and imperialism has subsided to only slightly more subtle ways of foreign intervention, as the most recent coup against Evo Morales in Bolivia indicates. The neoliberal economic onslaught of the last three decades has had a devastating effect across Latin America.

While the implementation of NAFTA, for example, did lead to some job creation in Mexico, particularly in the maquiladora and informal sectors, it hit the agricultural sector extremely hard. Small and subsistence corn and bean farming, a very poor and vulnerable segment of society, was decimated by a 1.3 million job loss, as U.S. government-subsidized corn hit the Mexican market.

In addition, there are plenty of native examples of exploitation and violence, both verbal and physical. The current president of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro and his cronies are only the latest representation of this. They are outspoken homophobes and racists as

well as open admirers of the Brazilian military dictatorship which ruled the country from 1964 to 1985.

Making the Revolution and *Voices of Latin America* discuss the social movements that are tackling the issues of oppression and exploitation across various countries in Latin America. They come from rather different angles.

Making the Revolution, published by Cambridge University Press, takes a more scholarly approach and (re-) examines historical movements of the Latin American left, mainly based on academic research.

On the other hand, *Voices of Latin America*, from Monthly Review Press, is a very timely and current book (despite the most recent election results in Argentina) in that it addresses very recent resistance against the center-right to far-right regimes, following the ebbing of the so-called pink tide (center-left and left-wing governments that ruled a number of Latin American countries in the early 2000s).

Making the Revolution

The self-stated goal of *Making the Revolution* is to rectify the simplistic portrayal of the Latin American left, set by earlier treatments of the subject.

An often used stereotype portrays a movement of affluent urban and westernized youth who want to impose foreign dogmas on marginalized sectors of the population. This argument is used particularly when it comes to the indigenous sector, somehow accusing the

organized left of behaving implicitly racist and/or class reductionist.

Ironically, this argument itself contains a good deal of those two elements. *Making the Revolution* seeks to challenge this narrative by unearthing pieces of history that provide counterexamples and show how diverse and at times controversial the movement really was.

Edited by Kevin A. Young, the book seeks to do this in a non-binary way. Rather than only focusing on organized labor and political parties of the left or strictly looking at more identity-based groups such as the

indigenous or feminist movements, the collection of essays is looking for instances where synergies and collaboration between these historical actors existed.

It does so through 10 independent essays that roughly span 60 years of the 20th century, from the mid-1920s to the late '80s. Four major periods in the left's history are covered: 1) the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, 2) the Popular Front and early postwar period of 1935 through the early 1950s, 3) the aftermath of the 1959 Cuban Revolution and 4) the wave of civil wars in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s.

The essays are presented in chronological order, and each essay focuses on one geographic region and experience during a particular period.

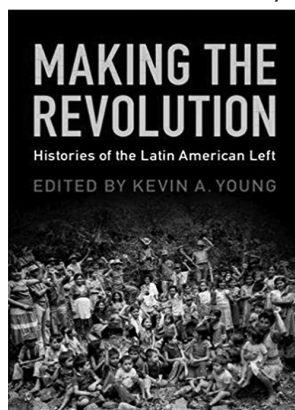
The book starts with an essay on the Chantaya Rebellion, a massive agrarian revolt in southern Bolivia in 1927, where an alliance between urban Socialist Party members and rural indigenous communities, based on a shared commitment to rural education, communal land ownership, and redistribution of wealth and power, rocked the mining and agrarian capitalist elites.

While ultimately defeated, this uprising brought about major state reforms in its aftermath and inspired other urban-rural alliances. The author of the essay, Forrest Hylton, associate professor of Political Science at the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, Medellín, explains:

"Given the miscommunication and distrust that divided indigenous-peasant movements from workers in Latin America between the 1930s and 1980s, the Chantaya rebellion deserves close scrutiny. The revolt failed to become a revolution due to fierce repression and the absence of a complementary insurrection by urban artisans, as well as its limited scale. But Chantaya nonetheless had national, and even international repercussions."

Making the Revolution concludes with an essay set during El Salvador's civil war of 1979-1992. In essence, it is a brief history of the group AMES, short for *Asociación de Mujeres de El Salvador* (Association of Women of El Salvador).

AMES was initially founded on a directive by the Marxist-Leninist FPL (*Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí*), one of the armed groups that made up the FMLN or *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). AMES was per-



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ceived as part of a larger strategy to organize working-class women.

The group was thus made up not only of combatant women or FPL militants, but also of peasant civilians residing in FPL-controlled territories or in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Soon the group engaged not only in grass-roots organizing, but also in educational work, and even international speaking engagements.

In the process, its members developed not only a revolutionary but also a distinctly feminist consciousness. In the guerilla territories, sexism was challenged, and gender relations altered under AMES' influence. As Diana Carolina Sierra Becerra, a postdoctoral fellow for the Project "Putting History in Domestic Workers' Hands," a collaboration between Smith College and the National Domestic Workers Alliance, mentions:

"Scholars are correct to argue that participation in class-based movements does not inevitably lead to feminist consciousness or a change in gender hierarchies. While the FPL insistence on mass organizing benefited women, AMES organizers made deliberate choices to reframe FPL theories and practices, and Marxism more broadly, in order to confront the specific forms of oppression that impacted the lives of rural women."

Since the ceasefire in the early '90s, many of the former AMES militants have remained active and push forward a feminist agenda either within the FMLN, which turned into a political party, or in independent feminist groups. Once again, this essay is trying to pose a counterinterview to the more accepted version of the FMLN being a group that was sexist, class-reductionist, and overly focused on military struggle.

The remaining essays, ranging geographically from Cuba to the Southern Cone [which includes Chile, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay — ed.], similarly seek to correct the historical record by documenting remarkable flexibility by (usually Marxist-Leninist) vanguard parties when working with non-member activists from other sectors of the community.

They also show that indigenous people are not some illiterate mass that served as a tool to advance ideas supposedly foreign to them, but have repeatedly proven to emerge as historical actors on their own accord, even when seeking alliances with established political parties of the left.

Voices of Latin America

Voices of Latin America was put together by a UK-based independent publishing and research organization, known as Latin America Bureau (www.lab.org.uk, LAB from here on), whose goal is to provide news, information and analysis from the perspective of the region's poor and marginalized communities, as well as social movements.

This collection was originally conceived as an update or replacement of an earlier LAB title "Faces of Latin America," currently in its fourth edition. Since a significant part of LAB's mission is to give "voice" to the less powerful of Latin America, the conclusion was to conduct interviews and give this marginalized sector room to "speak."

The editor of the *Voices of Latin America*, Tom Gatehouse, who holds an MPhil in Latin American Studies from Cambridge and heads the LAB's Voices Team, tells us who represents these voices:

"This is a book of many voices: of anthropologists and archaeologists; and politicians; women and LGBT people trying to halt gender-based oppression and violence; indigenous activists fighting oil drilling on their territory; residents of favelas resisting evictions; students staking their claim to a free, universal, and high quality education; and many more."

The result is a veritable *tour de force*. Nine authors contributed the 11 chapters of the book, which are themed and based on over 70 interviews, spanning 14 countries. Almost all the interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2018, a crucial moment in Latin America's recent history due to the retreat of the earlier pink tide that had swept across the region in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Those interviews that could not be considered for the written book format can be found at www.vola.org.uk together with additional multi-media material. It is a site well worth checking out. The themes themselves also cover a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from environmental issues to cultural resistance.

The first chapter is an introduction titled "Living life on their own terms." It provides us with some background on the previous pink tide era and the challenges that the return of right-wing governments backed by traditional elites represent for the marginalized sector.

One of the interviewees, the Argentine sociologist Maristella Svampa, identifies four common features (while acknowledging the range of very distinct policies and discourse across the governments associated with the "pink tide"). These are shared across the spectrum — from the soft-left administration of Michele Bachelet in Chile (2006-10 and 2014-18) to more interventionist

administrations like that of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (1999-2013):

- Challenging the neoliberal projects of previous administrations
- Introducing more unorthodox economic policies
- Developing a series of social policies aimed at the most marginalized sectors of society (which implied not only a salary increase, but also an increase in consumption which in turn helped increase the legitimacy of the "pink tide" in front of more classical economists
- Creating strong regional blocs of an anti-imperialist nature (such as UNASUR).

The most impressive results in terms of redistribution were arguably achieved in Brazil under Lula and under Evo Morales in Bolivia, but across the board the region saw a significant reduction in extreme poverty, much greater access to higher education amongst low- and middle-income groups, and greater efforts to engage with indigenous communities.

The reasons for retreat vary, from regular political cycles to an over-reliance on extractivism (or in the case of Venezuela, on just a single commodity) to military and institutional coups, as was the case with the overthrow of Manuel Zelaya in Honduras in 2009, Fernando Lugo in Paraguay in 2012, Dilma Rousseff in Brazil in 2016, and most recently Evo Morales in Bolivia.

The remaining chapters look at a range of topics from state repression and urbanization ("State violence, policing, and paramilitaries," "Spaces of everyday resistance: The right to the city"); a pushback from students, intellectuals, journalist and artists ("The student revolution," "The New Journalism: Now the people make the news," "Cultural Resistance"); to environmental and indigenous rights ("The hydroelectric threat to the Amazon basin," "Mining and communities," "Indigenous people and the rights of nature").

The struggle against culturally engrained machismo, sexism and prejudice is highlighted in "Fighting Machismo: Women on the front line" and "LGBT rights: The Rainbow Tide." The former piece was particularly interesting, since Latin American sees some of the highest gender-based violence and femicide rates in the world and also has to face draconian anti-abortion laws.

In addition to cultural machismo, another major factor contributing to gender-based violence has been the growth of organized crime. As the director of the Honduran women's rights organization *Las Hormigas* (The Ants), Eva Sánchez, explains:

"Within organized crime, the body of a woman is used for taking revenge. It's said that if you murder a woman it settles the account."

Political upheaval is also identified as endangering the physical safety of women.

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REVIEW

Syria's Unfinished Revolution

By Ashley Smith

Syria After the Uprisings:

The Political Economy of State Resilience

By Joseph Daher

Haymarket Books, 2019, 386 pages, \$29 paperback.

PERHAPS MORE THAN any other recent question, the Syrian Revolution confused and divided the international left. Many dismissed the revolt as a “color revolution” orchestrated by the United States, and some became willing spokespeople for Bashar al-Assad’s regime, recycling its talking points and conspiracy theories.

Syrian revolutionaries, principled leftists, and honest journalists have countered these lies in countless articles and books. Among this vast literature, Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila al-Shami’s *Burning Country*, Yassin Al-Haj Saleh’s *The Impossible Revolution*, Gilbert Achcar’s two volumes, *The People Want* and *Morbid Symptoms*, and most recently Sam Dagher’s devastating account of Syria’s sadistic dictatorship, *Assad or We Burn the Country*, should be considered essential reading.

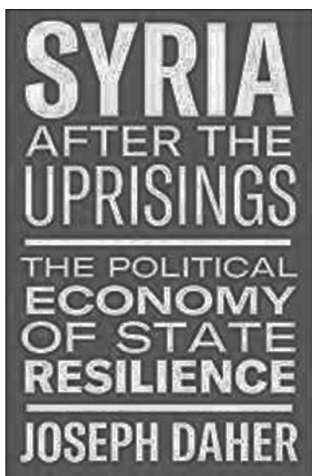
Together these provide socialists with both an understanding of the Syrian Revolution and a methodology for how to stand in solidarity with it and similar struggles against oppressive states, regardless of which imperial power’s sphere of influence or “camp” they are in.

Joseph Daher’s new book, *Syria After the Uprisings*, is perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive explanation of the nature of the Syrian state, the causes and character of the revolution, and the reasons for its defeat and, in the words of the book’s subtitle, the “state resilience” of Assad’s regime.

The Patrimonial State

Daher rejects analyses that obscure the reality of the revolution by characterizing it, in the rhetoric of the regime, as a geopolitical struggle between states or even worse a mere conflict among religious sects and

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ethnicities. Instead, from a Marxist vantage point, he argues that any account of the revolution must analyze the “political and socioeconomic dynamics at the root of the conflict.”

That must begin with a precise understanding of the regime created by Hafez al-Assad and ruled by his son Bashar and the economy it oversaw. Drawing on Gilbert

Achcar’s account of state formation in the Middle East and North Africa, Daher classifies the Assads’ regime as a patrimonial state; the family essentially owns the state and enriches itself and its cronies through state and private capitalist ownership of the means of production.

It constructed the regime around a nucleus of their co-religionists in the country’s Alawite minority in the petty bourgeoisie and the military’s officer core. It also incorporated a layer of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of all sects and ethnicities through state contracts and employment in the state bureaucracy.

The regime has ruled the country with an iron fist, creating what Syrians call a “kingdom of silence” that denied democratic liberties, banned all opposition parties and independent unions, and jailed, tortured and killed anyone that stood in its way. But it did not rule by force alone.

As Daher shows, the regime developed elaborate mechanisms for incorporation of sections of the population through the Baath Party, the religious establishments of all sects, state-controlled unions and peasant associations, and provision of state services.

It also used anti-imperialist rhetoric to rally popular support, even while it pursued back channel relations with the United States and Israel.

It perfected a strategy of divide and rule, playing sects and ethnicities off one another to prevent united popular opposition. The regime postured as protectors of Alawites and other religious minorities against the Sunni majority, while it similarly manipulated the division between the country’s Arab

majority and oppressed Kurdish minority.

Neoliberalism Stokes Grievances

All these mechanisms created what appeared to be a stable regime. But upon his succession to his father’s rule, Bashar al-Assad implemented market reforms, winning praise from Hillary Clinton and the International Monetary Fund but compromising the regime’s structures of incorporation.

He conducted crony privatization of state companies to his friends and family, cut state employment and services, and opened Syria to the world economy. While these measures enriched the increasingly Allawi elite base of the regime, they impoverished workers and farmers and cut off avenues for advancement for sections of the middle class, especially students.

Like the other regimes in the region, Assad’s state was sitting upon a volcano of pent up political and economic grievances. Daher notes, “The absence of democracy and the growing impoverishment of large parts of Syrian society, in a climate of corruption and increasing social inequalities, prepared the ground for the popular insurrection, which thus needed no more than a spark.”

The Popular Revolution

The Arab Spring provided that spark, detonating a multi-class revolt in Syria. It included a small section of the bourgeoisie, a larger layer of the middle class students, and poor mostly Sunni workers in provincial cities and the suburbs of the main cities like Aleppo. These class forces staged massive demonstrations throughout the country.

Daher engages in no romantic portrait of this uprising, but a balanced one, pointing to its strengths as well its weaknesses and flaws. He notes that while the protests were concentrated in the Sunni population, the rising included all sects and ethnicities, promising unity against the regime through the slogan, “The Syrian People Are One.”

The movement initially raised modest demands for reform, but when faced with massive state repression turned revolutionary, calling just like all the revolts in the Arab Spring for the downfall of the regime. The movement advanced demands for democracy, equality and women’s rights.

To cohere the uprising, activists created Local Coordination Committees and Local

Councils. While these represented attempts to build an alternative to Assad's state, they were not based in workplaces, and their leaders were often unelected but instead self-selected, frequently made up of activists from middle-class sectors.

The revolution stumbled over the deep divisions that the regime has used against the population. Thus, Daher documents how some Sunnis raised sectarian slogans toward Allawis and how some Arabs rejected Kurdish demands for self-determination.

Forced Militarization

The regime rejected the uprising's demands for reform and tried to crush it with the full might of its police and military. The revolutionaries had no choice but to arm themselves in self-defense, but when they did so they encountered several problems, which Daher argues they were never able to overcome.

They created the Free Syrian Army (FSA) largely out of local volunteers and thousands of deserters from the military who brought with them guns and materiel. The combination of the popular revolt and the FSA enabled the liberation of whole sections of the country.

At the beginning the FSA was non-sectarian and committed to democracy and liberation. But it never became a centralized military force and lacked internal sources of funding. Desperate for help, they turned to external forces among the Gulf States, Turkey, and the expatriate formations they sponsored like the Syrian National Council (SNC) and its successors.

The FSA's dependence on these international actors exacerbated internal divisions within the revolution. These did not share the democratic aspirations of the revolution but pursued their own geopolitical and sectarian aims.

The SNC, sponsored by Qatar and Turkey, was dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood which adopted sectarian policies toward Allawis and bigoted ones against Kurds. Similarly, Saudi Arabia strengthened other Islamic fundamentalist currents in the resistance hostile to religious minorities and the Kurds.

As Daher notes, "the failure to constitute an independent and organized social and political force with some forms of centralization created a vacuum in which other internal and external actors were able to intervene and instrumentalize the opposition, armed and civilian, to the detriment of the protest movement."

Resilience of Assad's State

Despite losing whole swathes of the country to the revolution, Daher shows, Assad's state never cracked. Its clientelism retained the loyalty of most of the bourgeoisie of all denominations, and those sec-

tions that did break with it fled the country.

The regime also maintained the allegiance or at least passivity of most of the professional middle class employed by the state. Though they chafed at the dictatorship's suppression of their rights, they balked at risking their stable lives to join the revolution and the impoverished working class that drove it forward.

Thus the regime's ruling class base and state bureaucracy held firm. Incredibly, the state managed to provide services throughout the country for the duration of the conflict.

On top of all this, the regime's military officer core, which was predominantly Alawite but also included Sunnis, remained rock solid. It did lose tens of thousands of Sunni rank-and-file soldiers, and it did not trust those that remained. But the Air Force never wavered, and Assad used it to relentlessly bomb the FSA and civilian revolutionaries.

Weaponizing Sectarianism

With the state and its ruling and middle class base intact, Assad tried to divide the uprising along sectarian and ethnic lines. From the beginning he portrayed the revolution as a foreign-sponsored Sunni Islamic fundamentalist threat to the country's religious minorities.

He postured as their secular defender. Of course this was a lie, and Daher exposes it; the regime had long sponsored quietist versions of all the conservative religious establishments and, even worse, welcomed jihadists to use Syria as a base of operations against the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Assad even released key jihadist leaders from his dungeons with the hope that they'd form militias that would break the original multi-sect and multi-ethnic unity of the revolution and threaten religious and Kurdish minorities. Once they did exactly that, he could claim that he had no choice but to conduct his own war on terror against them.

With the rise of ISIS, the bastard offspring of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Assad had his perfect alibi. But Assad never conducted a war against it nor the other Islamic fundamentalist forces, but instead relentlessly attack the revolutionaries.

Dividing Arabs and Kurds

Daher further shows how the regime exploited the Arab force's failure to defend Kurdish rights to self-determination to split a possible united front between the two groups. He shows how the regime had long manipulated this division.

It had allowed the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to base its operations against in Turkey in Syria on the condition that it never raise demands to advance the interests of Syrian Kurds, and then expelled the

group in 1998 to curry favor with Turkey. It thus cynically postured as an advocate of the Kurds abroad, while it denied them language rights and citizenship at home.

The PKK eventually formed a Syrian sister group, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which suffered brutal repression at the hands of the regime. The Syrian revolution provided Kurds the space to rise up and the PYD eventually established itself as their movement's hegemonic party.

To prevent Arab and Kurdish unity, Assad ceded territory to the PYD where they established their semi-autonomous area called Rojava. While this achievement was unimaginable without the Syrian revolution, the PYD never extended solidarity to the revolution, preferring to consolidate their own one-party state.

Daher argues that however progressive it was on some questions, especially women's rights, it was not democratic or inclusive. In actual fact, it was viewed by Kurds and especially Arabs in Rojava more as a lesser evil compared to Assad and his Islamic fundamentalist opponents.

Imperial & Regional Powers Intervene

The regime, though, would probably have fallen if not for the intervention of imperial and regional powers, particularly Russia, Iran and its proxy force, Hezbollah. Each did so for different reasons and aims.

Russia, argues Daher, was primarily concerned with preserving its relationship with its historic ally in Syria, retaining and modernizing its sole naval base in the region, using the deployment of its forces to drum up weapons sales, and project itself as a power in the region and internationally against the United States. It backed up the regime with its air force, overwhelmingly targeting the revolutionary forces.

Iran backed Assad to secure another ally in addition to Iraq, to form an axis of states aligned with it against the United States and the Gulf monarchies. Daher shows how it invested massive sums of money, helped the regime build militias to substitute for Syria's unreliable army, and deployed Hezbollah to back these up, enabling the regime to turn the tide on the ground.

The United States, Gulf monarchies and Turkey intervened as well, each with their own imperial and regional aims, none of which served the interests of the revolution.

Contrary to conspiracy mongers on the left, U.S. strategy never aimed for regime change, but for regime preservation — at first aiming to replace Assad with one of his generals, only to abandon that goal to focus entirely on bombing ISIS and backing the PYD and its Syrian Democratic Forces as its proxy ground forces in this fight.

Israel barely lifted a finger against the regime, only demanding U.S. action to stop

Assad's use of chemical weapons and to attack Hezbollah, which it views as a threat to its colonial project. It did not object to Assad retaining power, because as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated, "We haven't had a problem with the Assad regime, for 40 years not a single bullet was fired on the Golan Heights."

Qatar backed the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood in the hopes of projecting itself as a regional power in competition with Saudi Arabia, which supported other fundamentalist elements in the expatriate and internal forces. Both hoped to weaken Iran as a regional power

Turkey, which had had established elaborate economic relationships with Assad's regime, broke with it and backed Islamic fundamentalist forces, but after the rise of the PYD completely shifted its focus to a monomaniacal focus on destroying Rojava, which they feared would become a base of operations for a renewed struggle for Kurdish self-determination.

Now with the Syrian Revolution defeated, the regime has retaken most of the

country and stands poised to take of advantage of Turkey's invasion, greenlighted by both Russia and the United States, to force the capitulation of the PYD.

The price of Assad's counterrevolution is nothing short of catastrophic — the destruction of whole cities and neighborhoods, the death of 2.3 million people, the displacement over 12 million people, half the country's pre-war population, and the expulsion of 5.5 million refugees into wretched conditions mostly in the region's other countries.

The regime has begun to implement a "shock doctrine with sectarian characteristics" to rebuild Syria. It has distributed reconstruction contracts to its loyal bourgeoisie, especially among the Alawites, to redevelop land seized from the mostly Sunni populations that fled, for housing and shopping areas for the elites.

Opening an Epoch of Revolution

Assad's victory in no way guarantees stability. As Daher argues, "the conditions that led to the uprisings are still present, and the regime is very far from resolving them

and indeed has actually deepened them. Damascus and other regional capitals believe that they can maintain their despotic rules and orders at all cost by the continuous use of massive violence against their populations. This is doomed to fail, and new explosions of popular anger are to be expected, as demonstrated by new and massive protests in Sudan and Algeria."

The missing element in this longterm revolutionary process, though, is the subjective force, the organizations, parties and unions armed with politics to lead the struggle for democracy and equality. But as he notes, the "revolutionary uprising of 2011 with its vast documentary archive, will remain in the popular memory and be a crucial resource for those who resist in the future."

Daher's book is part of that archive and should be read by activists and socialists not only in Syria and the Middle East and North Africa, but throughout the world. It can help political forces learn lessons from the last wave of revolts so that they have a better chance for victory next time. ■

Latin America's Cauldron — continued from page 37

In the aftermath of the Honduran coup of 2009, for example, the feminist struggle in general was criminalized, and women who participated in anti-coup demonstrations were subject to torture and rape.

Conclusion

Both titles have their merit and are contributing a unique perspective to any discussion centered around Latin American movements. *Making the Revolution* may hold more interest to Latin American scholars or history buffs, but rather than being stale, this book should be of importance to the left in general for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, as the editor Kevin A. Young correctly points out, "there is value in simply uncovering hidden histories of resistance to oppression." He goes on to quote historian Jeffrey Gould:

"In a world in which the very idea of fundamental social change has become chimerical, where elementary forms of human solidarity seem utopian, past examples of solidarity, courage, and creativity should be excavated and remembered."

I would agree with this notion; we live in a capitalist society and it is certainly not in the interest of the ruling elite to promote this kind of analysis. It is therefore upon us to record, learn and disseminate this alternative history.

Secondly, Young argues that these past struggles for emancipation hold valuable lessons, both inspiring and cautionary. I would add that there is nothing wrong with simply

paying homage to historical social activists, so that they and their deeds remain present in our collective memories.

Voices of Latin America obviously took a very different approach. I think it is an extremely helpful tool for people who want to understand what is happening across the various social movements on the left in Latin America right now, and may even help as a guide for activists engaged in similar struggles in this country. It is also rather suitable as a reference book, if one were interested in just certain aspects of movements more than others.

I think where both *Making the Revolution* and *Voices of Latin America* fall a little short, however, is in providing suggestions on how to potentially combine all the different struggles. Neither one has an actual conclusion tying it all together. *Making the Revolution* only provides conclusions for each chapter, but nothing overarching. *Voices of Latin America* does not provide any.

I am mentioning this because, as socialists, we realize that all the struggles of the different social movements are systemic ones. You don't have to scratch far beneath the surface to see that they all point to the same underlying mode of production. The common denominator is capitalism.

If we are serious about overcoming capitalism in an era where a vanguard party concept seems both obsolete and pretentious, we must find other ways to unite these struggles and take them out of their respective silos. ■

Mobilization & Repression

AT THE END of last November, at the initiative of the Student Action Committee, Solidarity Marches were organized in more than 50 cities in Pakistan (and the territories it administers) by the Student Action Committee, a young movement in the midst of radicalization and supported by teachers. The SAC brings together many organizations, some of which have been joined by other local movements and unions.

Their demands were directed at the government and university administrations. Following the mobilizations, the police selected several leftwing figures to arrest and charge with "subversion."

These included Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq and Alamgir Wazir. Also charged was Iqbal Lala, father of Mashal Khan, the student lynched at Wali Khan University, Mardan. (Mashal Khan was killed by an angry mob in 2017 over false allegations of posting blasphemous content online. Actually he had been denouncing university mismanagement and had led protests against it.)

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan commented: "Students have the right to oppose fee hikes and budget cuts to higher education, and to call for an end to unnecessary interference by security forces on campus, for functional anti-harassment committees with student representation, and above all, for the restoration of student unions. HRCP stands in solidarity with all students taking part...." ■

REVIEW

The Expansive Power of Gulf Capitalism By Kit Wainer

Money, Markets, and Monarchies:

The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East

By Adam Hanieh

Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. 2018. 269 pages + references and index, \$32.99 paper.

ADAM HANIEH HAS produced a compelling and well-documented account of the modern evolution of capitalism in the Persian Gulf. Skillfully utilizing the Marxist categories of class, state, and mode of production he situates the role of Gulf capitalists, organized around the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), within the larger global capitalist economy. His concluding chapter ties the economic trends he details to an analysis of the political crises of the past decade.

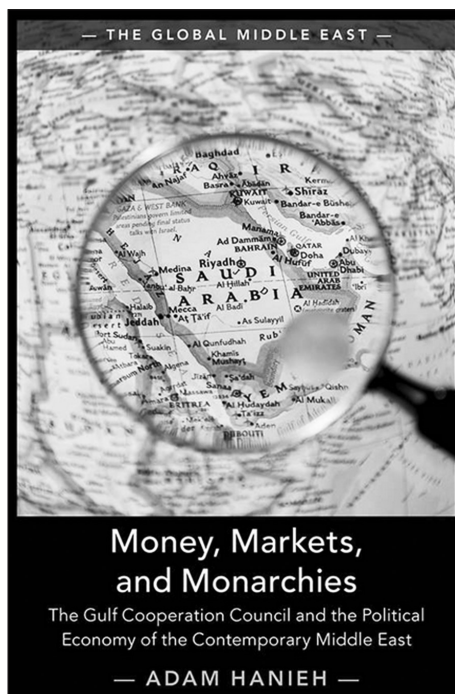
In the first two chapters Hanieh shows how hydrocarbon wealth has tied the five states of the GCC — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman — to various sectors of the world economy.

Hanieh insists on a multi-spatial analysis in which the Gulf is seen not as a distinct region, but one closely tied to other regions and to global manufacturing and finance. “Ranging from banking, industry, technology, and real estate across Western Europe and North America, through to farmland, retail chains, and manufacturing plants in some of the poorest places on the planet,” he writes, “Gulf investments are encountered in virtually all countries and economic sectors.” (1)

Hydrocarbon exports have generated trillions in disposable wealth within the GCC countries. Saudi investors, for example, use petrodollars to buy U.S. Treasury bills in exchange for U.S. commitments to buy Saudi oil and sell weapons to the kingdom. Saudi purchases of U.S. Treasury bills have strengthened the U.S. dollar, allowing the Treasury to print more currency without triggering inflation, and have kept bond yields — and consequently home mortgage rates — in the United States low.

GCC surpluses also flow into the City of London, currently the world’s largest banking center. Loans from London banks have fueled the extraordinary construction boom in the Gulf. Yet deposits from GCC nationals

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in London banks exceed GCC borrowing.

The City of London is thus a net borrower from GCC countries, although it’s a net lender to the United States. Thus GCC surplus capital has bolstered the role of London banks in the world economy and helped the United Kingdom maintain its position as a major imperialist power.

Gulf States and Gulf Capitalism

Within the GCC nations, Hanieh argues that the state plays an integral role within the economy. He rejects analytical efforts, viewing state intervention in the region as an impediment to private-sector growth.

He demonstrates how interconnected the state is with the capitalist class. Thus he does not find the concept of the “rentier state,” where the state operates as a major capitalist that generates income through “rents” (eg., oil drilling concessions, or user fees), applicable to the GCC economy.

Instead, he explains, “[T]he Gulf state is — as in all capitalist societies — a class state, not a neutral or parasitic institution severed from the social relations of production and accumulation or one that ‘crowds out’ the private sector.” (67)

To illustrate his point, Hanieh details the role of the state in the development of key industries within the Gulf. The availability of low-cost hydrocarbon fuels has stimulated

the growth of energy-intensive firms producing aluminum, steel and cement.

The GCC now hosts some of the largest smelters in the world. The six primary smelters in the region are state-owned but downstream manufacturers of cable and other supplies are private. Thus the state and private enterprises are intertwined. (71-72)

The state also boosts Gulf capitalism by passing repressive labor legislation. A small number of investment firms control a great deal of construction within the GCC countries. What makes construction companies so profitable is the large supply of cheap labor from South Asia.

“A variety of mechanisms give GCC construction companies considerable power over these workers, including the denial of mobility between jobs, the withholding of workers’ passports, and extremely restrictive laws that ban migrant workers in the Gulf from forming unions, going on strike, or engaging in any kind of political protest ...” (81)

GCC capital and Gulf states have also become significant players in the global food economy. Although Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates export food to the other three GCC member nations, the region is a net importer.

Responding to rising food prices and reduced imports from Russia, India and Argentina, Saudi and UAE investors along with the Saudi and UAE governments have purchased agricultural lands throughout the world. They have therefore enmeshed themselves in the global politics of food and food insecurity.

The globalization of food production and distribution led to increased inequalities and food riots in at least 25 countries in 2007-2008. Most writings on food insecurity have assumed capitalist systems of food production and distribution and have also assumed that solutions, even those emphasizing access to food for all, must be based on modern developmentalist and market-based strategies. (112-114)

“[P]aradoxically, in other words, the policies associated with achieving food security act to deepen the food insecurity that arises from the current world order.” (114)

Privatization and Inequality

The Saudi state and Saudi investors insist upon local policies which protect property

rights and liberalize exports when considering where to purchase lands. However, revolts by threatened or displaced farmers in poorer countries forced Saudi Arabia to reorient over the past decade toward wealthier countries with stronger protection for private property. These include Poland, Ukraine, Brazil, Canada and western states in the United States. (121-123)

Although Gulf states have been important partners for GCC capitalists, the entire Arab world has come under the influence of neoliberalism.

Gulf state leaders and investors are now enthusiastic advocates of wholesale privatization of public services and real estate, at home as well as in other countries, Hanieh asserts (and in the process, eroding some of the historic privileges that GCC citizens had over immigrant labor).

GCC investors are deeply involved in real estate privatization throughout the Arab world. Egypt, for example, liberalized land-holding policies in the 1990s when former dictator Hosni Mubarak reversed the Nasser-era prohibition on rural tenant evictions. GCC capital has moved into Egypt and several Arab countries which have gradually abandoned Ottoman-era renter protections.

GCC capitalists often work in partnership with local investors, particularly Palestinian and Lebanese. As banks have also

been privatized, a market for residential home mortgages has blossomed throughout the region.

Encouraged by the European Bank for Research and Development and the World Bank, Arab governments have also undertaken the privatization of infrastructure and transport such as bus companies and schools. Egypt led the way with infrastructure reforms in 2010 followed by other Arab states. (164)

Hanieh does not view GCC investments in the Arab world as a form of subordination of Arab capitalism to Gulf interests. Quite the contrary, Gulf capital has aided the development of an Arab capitalist class, providing it with necessary financing. "In short, GCC financial circuits are not external to the national scale of other Arab countries but, rather, should be seen as internally related to processes of class and state formation across the entire region." (193)

GCC Capital and Political Turmoil

As oil prices dropped in the 21st century, GCC state leaders have pursued structural adjustment and privatization with even greater vigor. Saudi Arabia now employs global consulting firms to help downsize the state and privatize public services.

This has sparked some objections from middle- and lower-level government employees, who are losing coveted positions typically reserved for Saudi citizens. Many

Saudi citizens have had to accept lower-paying private sector work. Nonetheless, Saudi capitalists seem firmly behind the austerity measures.

Cuts in government spending have also led to a decline in government construction contracts. Consequently, the largely immigrant construction workforce has faced rising unemployment and the Saudi government has responded with mass deportations and immigration restrictions.

The political and historical import of Hanieh's economic analysis reveals itself starkly in the final chapter. He demonstrates the ways in which the patterns of Gulf and Arab capitalism, and the neoliberal redesign of the region, sparked the wave of protests in 2010-2011 known as the Arab spring.

This has also shaped the response of Arab states to the uprisings. In one gruesome example, Hanieh documents the ways in which Gulf investors are planning to reap billions from Syrian reconstruction contracts.

Hanieh's work requires some patience on the part of the reader. Much of the book explores complicated economic themes. However, it is worth the effort. He shines an important light on the workings of global capitalism and the international commonalities of neoliberal policies. Finally, his analysis helps us better understand the origins and patterns of political crises in the Middle East today. ■

Thanks to Our Readers!

AS OF DECEMBER 16, this year's fund appeal for **Against the Current** has brought in \$3385 and still going strong, as well as a good crop of holiday gift subscriptions. Thanks to our readers for your generous support!

As our letter to subscribers explained, our expansive view of the holiday season extends from Halloween through America's secular midwinter festival, Super Bowl Sunday. You can contribute by check or money order to:

ATC/Center for Changes
7012 Michigan Avenue
Detroit MI 48210

or online at <https://solidarity-us.org> by clicking on "Make a Donation."

Our next issue, March-April 2019 includes struggles honoring International Women's Day, a feature on the 50th anniversary of SNCC and an analysis of the 2018 Chicago Teachers strike.

This year is a critical one — from confronting the climate crisis and ethno-supremacist nationalism to the spectacle of the U.S. elections, as well as the resurgence of a socialist movement. Along with our readers we'll be watching — and participating!

A Chronicle of Struggle — continued from page 33

wretched of the earth, a chapter that should be studied and restudied. [In the tragic aftermath, the revolution collapsed in 1983 when Bishop and his companion Jacqueline Creft were assassinated along with other NJM activists in a violent factional coup, leading to the U.S. occupation of the island — ed.]

In the same year of 1979 the people of Nicaragua, led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), came to power on July 19 after the overthrow of the repressive regime of Somoza.¹⁵

Both revolutions opened the way to social democracy and substantial decolonization. And both governments were hated with much vitriol by the world-wide enforcers of social injustice seated in Washington, D.C., be they of the Democratic or Republican Party.

The fight for a social republic in the United States can only be enhanced by digesting the great social democratic experiments in Grenada, 1979-83, and Nicaragua, 1979-90. And as well, the ongoing effort toward social equality in Cuba must be addressed. This long history of struggle, with its triumphs and setbacks, is one framework in which to view the Congress of Black Writers, October 1968. ■

Notes

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2. Woods, 190.
3. Vincent Harding, William Strickland, and Robert Hill, "Introduction," in Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Revised paperback edition 1981, Howard University Press, Washington, D.C.), xv.
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5. Herman L. Bennett, "The Black Power February (1970) Revolution in Trinidad," in *Caribbean Freedom, Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, editors Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (First American Edition, 1996, Markus Wiener Publishers, Princeton, NJ), 549.
6. *Ibid.*, 555.
7. Harding, Strickland, and Hill, xiii.
8. Jorge Heine, "The Hero and the Apparachik: Charismatic Leadership, Political Management, and Crisis in Revolutionary Grenada," in *A Revolution Aborted, The Lessons of Grenada*, editor Jorge Heine (Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990, 1991), 219.
9. Arnaldo Hutchinson, "The Long Road to Freedom," in *Maurice Bishop Speaks, The Grenada Revolution, 1979-83*, edited by Bruce Marcus and Michael Taber (Pathfinder Press, New York, NY, 1983), 9.
10. Tony Thorndike, "People's Power in Theory and Practice," in *A Revolution Aborted*, 30.
11. *Ibid.*, 30.
12. Hutchinson, *Bishop Speaks*, 11.
13. Heine, *A Revolution Aborted*, 14.
14. *Ibid.*, 14.
15. For a popular account see *Adiós Muchachos, A Memoir of the Sandinista Revolution*, Sergio Ramírez (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2012).

REVIEW

Democratic Rights on the Barricades By Barry Sheppard

Lawyers for the Left

In the courts, in the streets, and on the air

By Michael Seven Smith

OR Books, New York/London, 2019,

258 pages, \$18 paperback.

Order from orbooks.com.

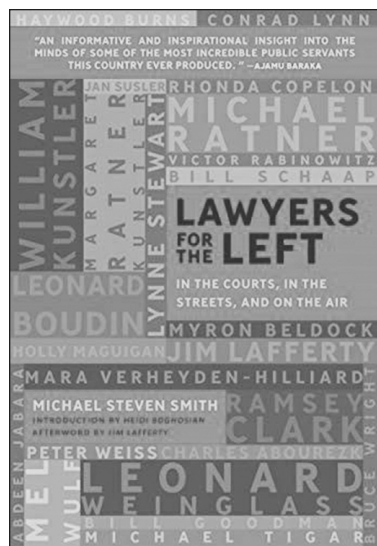
THIS IS A timely book. As Heidi Boghosian writes in her Foreword: "America is in a constitutional crisis. A haughty executive branch flaunts the rule of law. Nine jurists comprise a politicized Supreme Court that churns out cases along party lines. Lawmakers have lost what little backbone they had. Meanwhile, locally, law enforcement officers seem to gun down African American men and boys with complete impunity. It's no wonder that the public has lost faith in the justice system. Our system of checks and balances is in disarray.

"*Lawyers for the Left* is an antidote for those disillusioned by the rule of law's demise. It offers up a series of engaging and intimate profiles in integrity. The stories in these pages will give readers hope: they bring to life a healthy resistance by a special breed of lawyers actively taking on seemingly intractable problems."

The bulk of the book is a series of portraits of some of the most outstanding lawyers, from the 1940s up to the present, who have devoted themselves to defending those fighting for social justice on many fronts — labor, women, antiwar activists, Blacks, Latinx, religious minorities and many more, including socialists and communists — against attacks against them by the capitalist government.

Some of these portraits are in the form of essays, and others are interviews on a radio news program, *Law and Disorder*, that airs on station WBAI in New York. It was started by three lawyers, Michael Smith, Heidi Boghosian and Michael Ratner, themselves important "lawyers for the left," after George W. Bush launched the illegal invasion of Iraq with bipartisan support, and Congress overwhelming passed the Patriot Act that further eroded the Bill of Rights.

I learned a lot about these lawyers from



acknowledge that the main purpose of laws under bourgeois democracy is to defend capitalism and the capitalist ruling class. But they also recognize important parts of law that purport to recognize democratic rights that theoretically apply to all, and social gains that have been won by mass action from below.

The Bill of Rights itself was won by the masses in the First American Revolution (the War of Independence from Britain). The Constitution did not originally include these rights — they were amendments forced upon the "founding fathers" by the threat of farmers, workers and artisans to launch a new revolution to win them. Many of these rights originated in opposition to repressive practices against the population by the British.

All the lawyers profiled in the book agree that these gains can be used to legally argue against government assaults. And they recognize that the legal struggle is only one aspect of the general struggle for the issues and organizations involved and must be backed by mass actions.

But that doesn't mean that the legal struggles are not part, and a necessary part, of the broader struggles. And all the lawyers have dedicated their lives to being "lawyers for the left."

A Fighting Generation

Michael Smith, a '60s radical, pays tribute to the generation before him: Victor Rabinowitz, Leonard Boudin, William Kunstler, Conrad Lynn, Ramsey Clark and

the book, including what kind of people they were/are. This was especially true about those who were interviewed. There are details about the cases and issues, still important today. There is also humor — I found myself chuckling at certain parts. It's a good read.

Some of the lawyers profiled explicitly

Bruce Wright. "Their work began in the labor struggles of the '30s and '40s. In the '50s they defended those attacked by McCarthy and then went south in the early days of the civil rights movement." Their work continued in subsequent decades.

Rabinowitz was central to the work of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) in the 1960s and early 1970s. The NLG was formed in 1937, as an alternative to the conservative American Bar Association. It was itself the subject of attack during the anti-communist witch-hunt, and suffered at that time, but survived and remains important today. The book has much to say about the NLG and another organization, the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Rabinowitz and Boudin founded a law firm in 1944 that "became one of the outstanding progressive law firms in America." They argued several cases before the Supreme Court. Rabinowitz won a ruling in 1964 that the United States had no jurisdiction over Cuba's nationalizing firms owned by U.S. corporations.

I came to know Leonard Boudin, whom Smith correctly characterizes as "the great leftist constitutional defense lawyer of his time." There were three cases that Boudin won concerning the Socialist Workers Party that are referred to in the book that I was involved in, as a leader of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) and then of the SWP.

Early in 1963, the prosecutor in Bloomington, Indiana, said he was opening a grand jury investigation of two student organizations at Indiana University in Bloomington, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) and the YSA.

The background for this was a demonstration called by the FPCC during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, opposing Washington's threat of launching atomic war against Cuba and the Soviet Union for the latter's stationing of nuclear missiles in Cuba.

The YSA was an independent youth group in political solidarity with the SWP. The YSA chapter in Bloomington was instrumental in the formation of the campus FPCC, a national organization opposed to U.S. threats and actions against revolutionary Cuba.

The FPCC demonstration was violently attacked by rightist students and members of the far right John Birch Society in the city. Two in the mob were arrested, one

Barry Sheppard is the author of *The Party*, a two-volume firsthand account of the Socialist Workers Party.

for striking a cop and another for hitting a demonstrator. But the prosecutor then dropped charges against the goons, and opened the investigation against their victims.

I was the National Chairman of the YSA at the time, and immediately flew to Bloomington to help the Bloomington YSAers organize a defense committee to build support against the investigation.

When the prosecutor filed charges against three members of the YSA on May 1, 1963, under the Indiana Communism Act, passed during the McCarthyite witch-hunt, I consulted Farrell Dobbs, the National Secretary of the SWP, and he suggested I contact the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (ECLC).

The ECLC was formed in 1951 when the ACLU backed away from defending the Communist Party members in the McCarthyite witch-hunt. The SWP joined the ECLC's defense of the CP, to the surprise of ECLC leaders who hadn't expected Trotskyists to do that.

The ECLC proposed that I contact their chief counsel, Leonard Boudin, and said they would pay for his expenses. I did so, and he took the constitutional side of the case. The defense committee got wide support for its stated purpose to defend the YSA's right to exist and that it had the right to free speech and assembly, whatever one thought about the YSA's views.

I and other YSA leaders worked with Boudin in the course of the case, which was finally won with the Communism Act being struck down as unconstitutional in March, 1964.

Victories Over State Repression

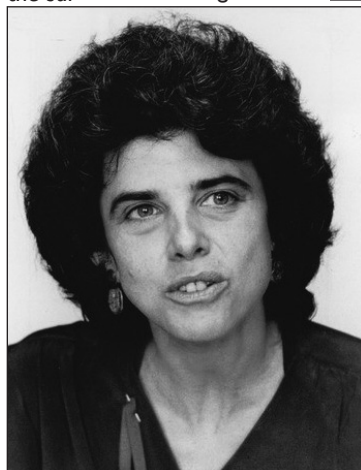
The second case concerned a lawsuit against the government. "Leonard Boudin litigated the case *Socialist Workers Party vs. Attorney General* in the [12-year] litigation that ended in a historic victory in 1986," Smith writes. "The case is extraordinarily important today."

Boudin wrote that "this lawsuit represented the first wholesale attack upon the entire hierarchy of so-called intelligence agencies that had attempted to infiltrate and destroy a lawful political party."

Further, "for the first time a court has really examined the FBI's intrusions into the political system of our nation and, in unmistakable language, has condemned the FBI activity as patently unconstitutional without statutory or regulatory authority. The decision stands as a vindication of the First and Fourth Amendment rights not only of the

Socialist Workers Party but of all political organizations and activists in the country to be free of government spying and harassment."

The third case concerned the political rights of soldiers. The background was the decision of the SWP concerning members who were drafted into the military during the Vietnam War. They would openly state that they would obey all orders, but would retain their rights as



Defense Committee that publicized their cases. In the mass antiwar atmosphere of the time, every one of them won their case.

Boudin, as the counsel for the GICLDC, took on one important case, where an SWP member succeeded in winning over some soldiers to form the GIs United Against the War in Vietnam at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. They succeeded in organizing an antiwar rally of 250 men in uniform on the base, for which they were thrown into the stockade.

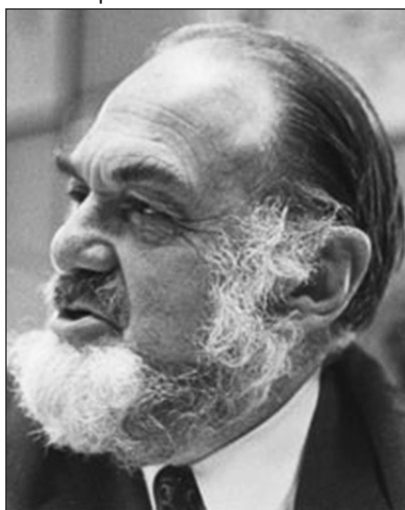
Their story gained wide support inside



Three constitutional lawyers per excellence: Leonard Boudin (above), Rhonda Copelan and Victor Rabinowitz.

"citizen soldiers" to free speech and assembly.

Once inducted, many were court-martialed for expressing their socialist and antiwar ideas to fellow soldiers. The SWP formed the GI Civil Liberties



and outside of the army. The literature of GIs United even found its way to Vietnam. An article appeared in the *New York Times*. Under this pressure, the charges were dropped.

"Denial Not an Option"

The book covers numerous other important cases involving the civil rights and Black Power movements, women's and LGBT rights, exposure of CIA crimes, torturers in other countries but tried in U.S. courts, and many more key issues.

There is a chapter on "Criminalizing the Communist Party" in the McCarthyite witch hunt. The Smith Act, which criminalized ideas, was used to imprison many CP leaders. Many CPers lost their jobs. More were harassed and otherwise persecuted just for their ideas. Movie screenwriters were blacklisted.

CPers and other socialists and union militants were driven out of the labor movement, with the connivance of the labor bureaucrats at the top. Other socialist and radical movements were swept up in the witch hunt, which penetrated other areas, including churches. It was a stain upon America.

The author notes that the Smith Act was first used to imprison leaders of the SWP in 1941. At the time, the CP defended the Smith Act and applauded its use against the SWP. Just a few years later, the Act was used against them. This time, in contrast, the SWP defended the CP, resurrecting the old socialist cry that an "injury to one is an injury to all."

Smith's Introduction to the book is important, bringing the fight up to the present time through the Bush, Obama and Trump regimes. He sums up:

"The central fact of our political and legal lives is the overwhelming power the corporate capitalist state has accumulated, especially since 9/11. In a previous era, during the time of fascist dictatorships, Antonio Gramsci wrote from his Italian prison cell that we need 'Pessimism of the intellect, but optimism of the heart.'

"My friend Peter Weiss, a former vice-president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, now in his 90s, added to Gramsci's resolve:

"Denial is not an option, Despair is not an option, Resistance is the only option." ■

Chileans amidst decades of an official “economic miracle.”

During this period, practically everything in Chile was ruinously privatized, including most essential services and pension programs. With popular anger rising and the official death toll already in the dozens, the elites are scrambling to figure out how to contain the mass movement with minimal reforms.

In Argentina, similar policies of Mauricio Macri's administration provoked large-scale street protests followed by the election of opposition candidate Alberto Fernandez with his vice-presidential running mate, former president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner.

Unavoidably, a system that builds prosperity for the few on insecurity and misery for the majority is going to produce revolt — and that's where the hope lies.

Lebanon, Iraq, Iran...

The eruption of popular revolt in the Middle East shows features that may portend a more promising future. As analyst Gilbert Achcar notes, “The events in the Arab region fit into (the) general global crisis, to be sure. But there is something specific about that regional upheaval” — the context that he calls “patrimonialism,” where “ruling families own the state, whether they own it by law under absolutist conditions or just in fact” and regard it as their private property.

When neoliberal reforms are applied in that circumstance, they “got their worst economic results in the Arab region of all parts of the world,” because “what you wind up getting is most of private investment going into quick profit and speculation” rather than key productive sectors including manufacturing and agriculture. That goes some way toward explaining the roots of the explosion in Syria, for example.

Today reform struggles in Algeria, Tunisia and Sudan continue — and most promising in the case of Sudan, a coherent leadership has come forward in the form of the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), beginning in 2016 as an underground movement of teachers, journalists and doctors which Gilbert Achcar says has now “developed into a much larger network involving workers’ unions of all sectors of the working class.”

Importantly, the SPA doesn't have illusions about either the Sudanese military or Islamic fundamentalism, the two poles of counterrevolution. It's the crucial element of political leadership that doesn't yet exist in most of the other regional struggles, exciting as they are.

There's a revival of democratic protest in the face of severe repression in Egypt — but the most explosive new developments are breaking out in a trio of countries, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. In each case, economic deprivation, government neglect and corruption are the driving issues. What's amazing is how sectarian divisions, which in conventional accounts were postulated to be permanent and overriding, are being transcended.

Lebanon's 75-year political system entrenches a three-part division of power where the presidency is held by a Maronite Christian, and the prime minister and parliamentary speaker positions respectively by a Sunni and a Shia Muslim. Supposedly, such a division of power was the only way to preserve the unity of a country dominated by communal loyalties. That colonial-derived sectarian

arrangement hasn't been updated for today's more modern society, let alone for the neoliberal era.

Instead, activists say that the result has been a carveup of state functions into sect fiefdoms, all with self-enriching bureaucracies at the expense of horrendous inefficiency and incompetence — symbolized for many Lebanese in piles of uncollected garbage. The situation is made even worse, of course, as international lenders are pressing down on Lebanon for expedited debt payments. People in every community are rising up, not against “the other guys” but rather against “their own” communal rulers.

Most dramatic perhaps, that includes folks in the Hezbollah in southern Beirut protesting against the “Party of God,” long respected for its role in resisting Israeli aggression and as a champion of the poor Shia population. And throughout the country, people formed a mass human chain to proclaim that Lebanese of all communities refuse to be divided by confessional loyalty or by region. This may be the opening of a genuine Lebanese political revolution.

In Iraq, the catastrophic 2003 U.S. invasion overturned the Sunni-dominated Saddam Hussein regime and brought the country into the sphere of influence of the Shiite Iranian regime. But the heavy-handed tactics of Iran and its client militias in Iraq have brought it, along with the Iraqi regime itself, into disrepute with wide parts of the Iraqi population, including Shiite centers in the south.

One of Iraq's leading Shia clerics and political figures, Moqtada al-Sadr, is spearheading a demand that Iran get out of Iraq's affairs. Sadr is the effective leader of Sadr City, a vast concentration of a mostly poor Shiite population in Baghdad. And in the south, Iranian-backed militia forces have reportedly been the most vicious in cracking down on protests. Again, ostensible sectarian loyalties are being cracked by social contradictions.

Inside Iran, a combination of regime mismanagement and corruption, brutal U.S. economic sanctions, and catastrophic drought — more and more, a common factor in many of these crises — led to an uprising around the country triggered by an increase in gasoline prices that many people stretched to the limit simply can't afford. It's a revolt that's likely to run deeper than the Green Movement protests against the regime's blatant electoral fraud in 2009 — and by accounts that have come out despite the cutoff of internet service, violent repression has already caused hundreds of deaths particularly in the southwest region.

Socialists must be absolutely clear *both* in condemning brutal U.S. imperialist sanctions that are crushing Iran's economy and immiserating its people, *and* in our solidarity with the people resisting a murderous regime that doesn't hesitate to gun them down in the streets. Nothing progressive can come about through either through externally manipulated regime change, or illusions about the rulers of the Islamic Republic.

The outcome of all these developments is impossible to predict but they have the potential to reshape the contours of Middle East politics. And they're part of a growing global phenomenon of protest and revolt against unjust and increasingly unbearable conditions. The price of resistance as we've seen can be very high, but for hundreds of millions of people life offers no other choice. In so many places, hope is in the streets. ■

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IN THE 2019 auto contract fight, what was won and lost? And what's the fallout from the UAW's spreading corruption scandal? Read Dianne Feeley's analysis in this issue — and stay informed with your subscription to *AGAINST THE CURRENT*, follow our website <https://solidarity-us.org> and Facebook page SolidarityUS.

