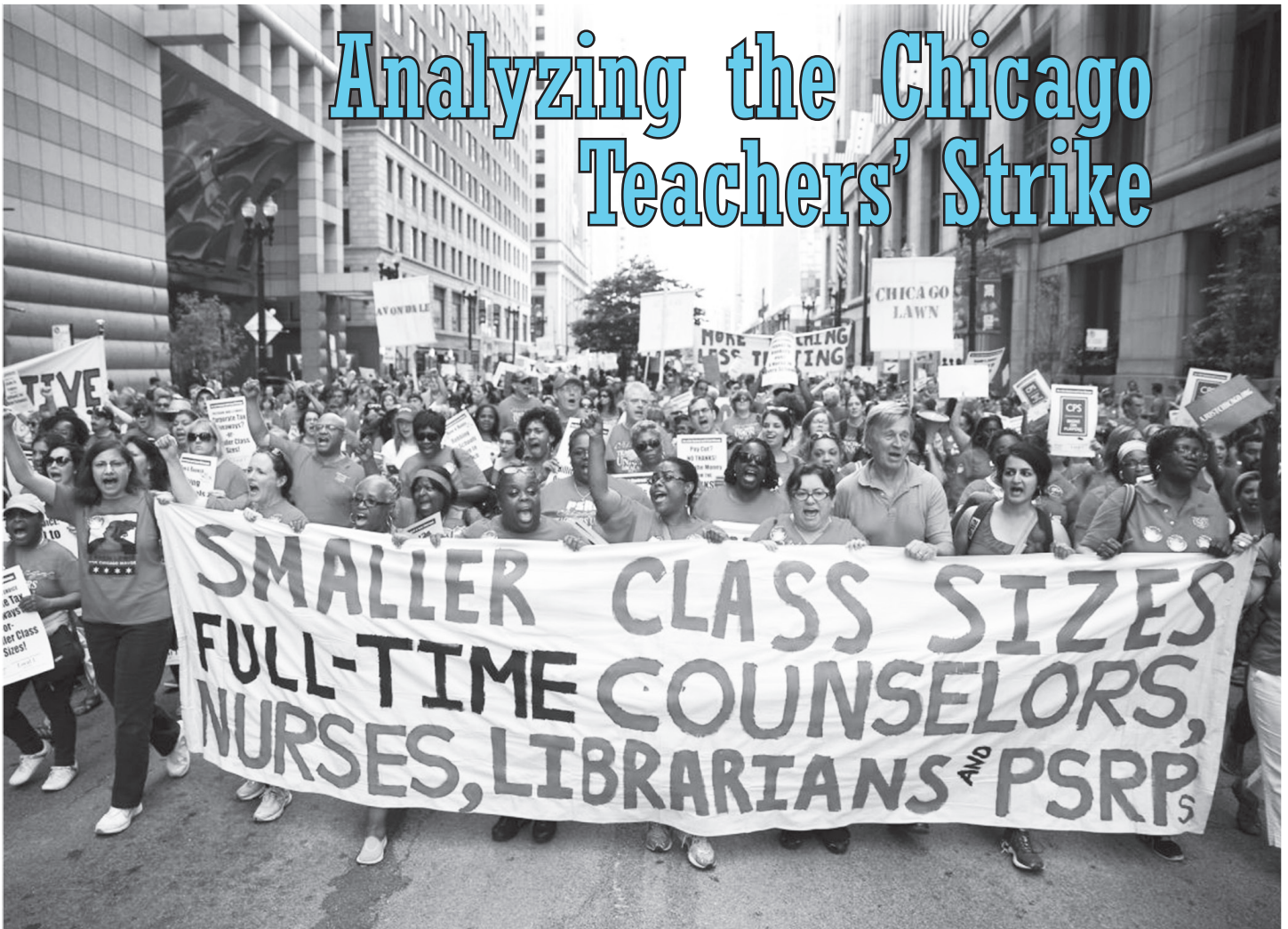


AGAINST THE **CURRENT** A SOCIALIST JOURNAL

Analyzing the Chicago Teachers' Strike



#MeToo in Japan

♦ CHIE MATSUMOTO

Moms 4 Housing Struggle

♦ ISAAC HARRIS

SNCC: Freedom Now to Black Power

♦ MARTIN OPPENHEIMER



A Letter from the Editors:

All the Wars: No End, No Point?

AS THE UNITED States and Iran lurch back and forth, toward war and then away and back again, the question inevitably arises: what's it all about anyway? Similar questions can be asked in retrospect about the 2003 invasion of Iraq that's produced such a massive catastrophe, the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan that's now one of the longest running sores in U.S. history, the bombing of Libya and the subsequent meltdown of that country, and other interventions large and small, direct and by proxy.

On top of all this comes the Trump-Netanyahu-Kushner "peace plan," the apartheid-annexationist blueprint for completing Israel's seizure of the Occupied Palestinian Territories — which also envisions stripping Israeli Arabs of their citizenship by the "transfer" of their towns to the proposed Palestinian Bantustan. This atrocity is discussed elsewhere in this issue. (See also, for example, "Yet Another Declaration of War on Palestinians," a discussion with Rashid Khalidi, January 29, 2020, www.democracynow.org.)

The considerable damage the post-9/11 military adventures have inflicted on U.S. society in physically and emotionally broken lives and families, trillions of wasted dollars, the rise of racism and cynical and vicious domestic politics, are dwarfed — by orders of magnitude — by the unbelievable civilian suffering and devastation of the countries where the wars are fought on the ground and from the air. It is difficult to imagine how Iraq, Syria or Yemen could be put back together if those wars were over right now, let alone the fact that they're not ending any time in the short-term future.

The U.S. drone assassination of Iran's top general Qassim Soleimani at Iraq's Baghdad airport was followed by the Trump administration's ever-shifting lying pretexts about an "imminent threat," Iran's retaliatory missile strikes on U.S. bases in Iraq, its shutdown under murky circumstances of the Ukrainian civilian Flight 752, and the all-but-final collapse of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, the Iran nuclear agreement). [On these events, see "Remembering and Forgetting: No to War with Iran!" posted January 15 at <https://solidarity-us.org/>.]

The Soleimani assassination and Trump's "Middle East peace plan" appear to fit with the U.S. effort to build an anti-Iran alliance between Israel and the Arab Gulf states, along with maintaining a U.S. political-military presence that constrains Russian and Chinese regional influence. But it's far from clear where this will lead.

It must be clear that the foremost responsibility of the left, along with sane people in general, to do everything in our power to *stop the U.S. imperialist campaign against Iran*. It's not just the off-and-on war threats that must end, but especially the sanctions that cripple Iran's economy, drive its people into poverty, and inevitably lead to further "asymmetric" conflict through cyber attacks and proxy militias that raise the potential for catastrophe.

Yet we also need to figure out what lies behind this cascading sequence of military-political interventions, adventures and disasters. How does it come about that Donald Trump, after campaigning on the pledge or pretense to bring troops home from "endless Middle East wars," winds up sending more into the quagmire?

Why has the United States doubled and tripled down on a war in Afghanistan, which U.S. generals — as revealed in "the Afghanistan papers" — have long known is unwinnable? Why is Washington inextricably committed to "our strategic partner" Saudi Arabia, a leading financier of jihadi fundamentalism and perpetrator of gruesome

murders of dissidents globally as well as at home, long after Western dependence on Saudi oil has ended?

There's a bigger strategic puzzle. The most significant emerging rivalry in today's world is the contest between the United States and the rising power of China for regional and global domination — fought out in the arenas of trade, technology, naval power, political intrigue and muscle on multiple continents. How do intractable U.S. Middle East interventions help it face off with China now and in years to come? Don't they soak up resources and drain political capital that are needed for the main imperial struggle?

For another thing, the United States rules a global financial system that dominates, paralyzes and extracts profits from huge swathes of the global South, without the need for direct military intervention. If anything, financialization is the cutting edge of today's imperialism. Trade agreements are also important, and highly exploitative of the less affluent countries, but these are no longer primarily enforced by gunboat diplomacy or expeditionary forces.

Again, what then are the wars for? No one simple answer is adequate, but we'll suggest a number of important, at least partial explanations.

Improvisations of "Empire"

One response that's accurate as far as it goes is that U.S. interventions and military bases all over the world are all about maintaining "the empire." True, but this leaves unanswered the question of the empire's underlying interests and imperatives. It's a blurred picture.

In the earlier period between the 1990-91 first Gulf War (triggered by Iraq's takeover of Kuwait) and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the common antiwar slogan was "No Blood for Oil," pointing to control of that critical resource and the flow of revenues from it as the basic cause and prize of war.

This of course is crude (no pun intended) materialism — and a certain dose of it remains essential. As the saying goes, Iraq would not have been invaded and occupied, nor would Iran's elected, secular and moderate nationalist government been overthrown by the 1953 CIA coup, nor would there be the forty years of hostility following the 1979 Iranian revolution, if these countries produced palm oil instead of petroleum.

But U.S. dependence on Middle East oil was becoming a thing of the past already before the Iraq invasion, let alone today when the vaunted fracking and drilling boom has made the United States "energy independent" as Trump boasts, and expected to be a net energy exporter this year.

continued on the inside back cover

AGAINST THE CURRENT

March / April 2020 — Volume XXXV, Number 1

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<https://www.ctulocal1.org>

Above: Oakland, California demonstration in support of Moms 4 Housing.

SNCC article: The "Freedom Movement" posters were designed by Danny Lyon for SNCC in 1963.

snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/

Back Cover: Reuters/Yuri Gripas

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 anti-bureaucratic 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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Stigmatizing Foreign-Born Dependency: The Public Charge Rule

By Emily Pope-Obeda

SINCE THE 19TH century, federal immigration policy has centered on determining which immigrants are “desirable” or “beneficial” to the nation. The “dependent” immigrant has been one of the most contested subjects in immigration policy across American history. In thousands of individual cases, the meaning and boundaries of the category “likely to become a public charge” and the accompanying “becoming a public charge within five years of entry” have been fiercely debated.

Although it has received less attention in recent years than immigration control around rationales of crime or unauthorized border crossing, the use of the immigration bureaucracy to police poverty and dependency among foreign-born residents has been an enduring feature of the state.

For roughly a century and a half, the question of what constitutes the “description of a man [or woman] likely to become a public charge,” has been central in immigration enforcement, both for barring migrants at the point of entry, and for enacting post-entry removals.

In 1928, the attorney for Russel Conrad submitted a brief in his client’s deportation case, arguing against a number of the claims of the government, including its application of the “likely to become a public charge provision.”

Conrad, who was identified by the government as being a 33-year old Canadian native of the “Dutch race,” was accused of having sustained an extramarital sexual relationship with an American-born woman. After traveling from Detroit to Windsor, Canada with her, he was arrested upon reentry and charged with having imported a woman across the national border for “immoral purposes.”

But amidst the attorney’s attempts to defend his client’s sexual activities lies a remarkably revealing set of statements about the additional accusation that Conrad was “likely to become a public charge.”

His lawyer focused extensively on the

Emily Pope-Obeda is an assistant professor of History at Lehigh University. Her research focuses on migration and migration control, race and ethnicity and labor. She is currently working on a book on deportation practice in early 20th century America.

physical qualifications Conrad possessed to be a productive laboring member of society, citing his age, weight, and health record.

Furthermore, he explained, Conrad came from a “people noted for their thrift and virtues and economy” and was “willing and able to do any honest labor no matter how arduous the task might be.” He went on to query, “Is this the description of a man likely to become a public charge?”

The attorney’s efforts to portray Conrad as the perfect, compliant, able-bodied wage-laborer were telling enough. But what followed this question was even more striking and named the tacitly accepted policy among immigration officials regarding the use of the “likely to become a public charge” provision.

He stated: “I understand that this is a charge used largely by the Department to cover that class of cases where the general good of the nation will be best served by the deportation of an individual.”¹

Draconian Interpretation

Ninety years after the case of Russell Conrad, the Trump administration proposed the most draconian interpretation of that clause the government has ever taken. In late January 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Department of Homeland Security, et al. v. New York, et al.*, allowing the government’s new public charge rule in immigration proceedings to take effect.

The rule, initially scheduled to take effect on October 15, 2019, had been stopped by multiple federal injunctions, but as of January 27th DHS has been permitted to implement the rule everywhere except the state of Illinois (where a new, more limited injunction still holds).²

The new rule, originally announced in October 2018 and made final in August 2019, directs the inadmissibility (both for those seeking entry or those seeking adjustment of status to receive a green card) of potential immigrants based on a variety of expanded criteria. It adds a range of public benefits as grounds for inadmissibility which have never before been deemed as evidence of likelihood to become a public charge (LPC).

Immigrants will be assessed for inadmissibility under the new rule based on a

“totality of circumstances,” to include not only their employment, assets, credit report and access to private medical insurance, but also their age, health, education and language proficiency.

While the existing guidelines for LPC status have been applied only to those individuals primarily dependent on cash assistance or long-term institutionalization, the new criteria would be far more encompassing, covering recipients of an array of benefits, including healthcare, housing, and food assistance, such as SNAP, Section 8 housing, or Medicaid.³

While much of the critique of the Trump administration’s immigration decisions has focused on his policies toward undocumented or otherwise unauthorized immigrants, the new rule targets so-called “legal” immigrants (although it exempts refugees, asylum-seekers, or U or T visa holders).

In addition to those seeking entrance to the United States, it will also apply to nearly 400,000 immigrants seeking to adjust their status, according to DHS. Immigrants who have used the designated benefits for 12 months within any given 36-month period (with each benefit counting separately as its own month) will be considered public charges under the new criteria.

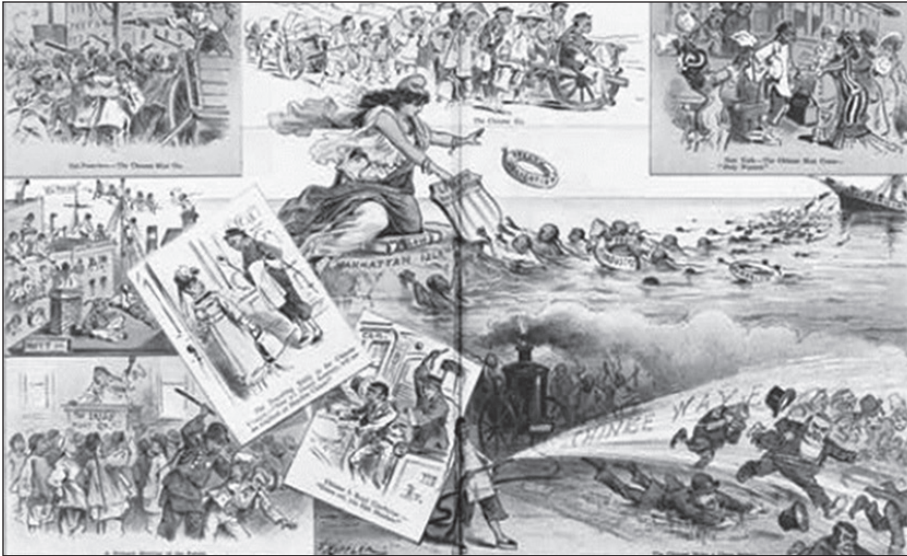
There are very few benefits not included in the ruling, some of the notable exceptions include benefits received by active duty military members, Medicaid for pregnant women or children under 21 years of age, and emergency medical care.⁴

Devastating Consequences

While the case has yet to be decided on its merits at the highest level of appeal, the Court’s January ruling determines that the injunction delaying its application will be lifted. The news comes as a devastating blow to immigrants and immigration rights activists around the country, who have condemned the rule as a “wealth test” for immigration.

Advocates have deemed the new law both a distortion of the original legal intent of the “public charge” provision in immigration law, and a cruel and calculated attack on working-class immigrant communities.

The ruling will not only lead to increases in barred admissions and deportations, but



A montage of racist cartoons in the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). The demonizing of immigrant communities goes back long before Trump's Muslim ban and anti-Mexican "criminals, drug dealers, rapists" rant. Courtesy Library of Congress

as many advocates have pointed out, it will (and already has) dissuaded many immigrants from seeking needed assistance.

An Urban Institute study found that roughly one in seven immigrant adults reported their family had decided not to participate in a benefit program out of fear of risking their status in the future.⁵

For the Trump administration, this ruling has been hailed as a victory. When the rule change was announced in August, Acting Secretary of Homeland security Ken Cuccinelli fielded questions about its inconsistency with historic American practices and values. His responses garnered significant controversy, particularly when they challenged a much-cherished stanza of American poetry.

While many would be unable to cite its source or author Emma Lazarus, the lines inscribed upon the base of the Statue of Liberty "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" — are among the most recognizable words of poetry for many Americans.

When asked whether these iconic lines were part of the "American ethos," Cuccinelli responded "They certainly are: 'Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge... That plaque was put on the Statue of Liberty at almost the same time as the first public charge was passed — very interesting timing."⁶

The declaration of the United States as a "nation of immigrants" is among the most frequently parroted ideals of the nation, despite its attendant erasure of indigenous peoples and the forced migration of enslaved Africans. Nearly as ubiquitous is the idea of America as a land of opportunity, where the impoverished of the world might find a new start and economic advancement.

Yet such an ideal has been under siege in immigration law from the start. The sentiment behind Cuccinelli's words is callous and discriminatory, but his point regarding the timing is factually true — when Emma Lazarus penned these momentous lines in 1883, with their symbolic embrace of the poor, the United States had only a year earlier instituted the first public charge criteria in immigration law.

"Public Charge" in History

The "public charge" provision was enshrined in federal immigration law at its very inception, and has been a major force in immigration control ever since. In 1882, the law initially excluded "any convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge."

Within a decade that had expanded, with the 1891 Immigration Act adding a clause for "any person likely to become a public charge." In 1903, a provision was added allowing for deportation within five years of entry for those who had become a public charge since their entry — but notably, only in cases where it could be proved that they had become charges for "causes existing prior to landing," which severely limited the numbers who could be removed. Immigrants were required to affirmatively prove that their conditions had arisen subsequent to entry.

Throughout this period, decisions at the point of entry about an individual's likelihood to become a charge were made based on whether they arrived with money (and how much), whether they had an occupation and viable job prospects, and whether they seemed to be able-bodied and physically healthy.

In addition to single women, who were

often assumed to be unable to support themselves by their own labor, those with weak, disabled or otherwise "non-productive" bodies were frequently restricted on this basis.

The clause for post-entry deportations for public charge status was primarily used for those institutionalized in facilities such as hospitals or asylums, rather than those who merely availed themselves of various forms of social benefits.

As historians have noted, those who had become dependent as a result of economic conditions during the 1930s Great Depression were not technically removable, even when reliant on public assistance — leading to the widespread use of non-official "repatriation" efforts to enact mass removals of Mexican immigrants during the period.

In spite of the on-paper limitations to its application, early 20th century immigration authorities made eager use of the provision, often enforcing it with a vigor that did not necessarily match the legal intent of the law. The numbers of removals for the LPC clause were high in proportion to the overall removals during the period, especially in the 1910s and 1920s.

In 1921, for instance, more than a quarter of all post-entry deportations — 1293 out of 4517 total — were conducted on the basis of the charge.⁷ And for much of the period, exclusions at the point of entry for LPC comprised a majority of those barred from entry. Still, in the first decades of the century barred and deported immigrants still made up only a very small percentage of the total admittances to the country.

The Uses of Immigration Law

Over the course the 20th century, although still used in significant numbers to bar and deport immigrants, the public charge provision still did not apply to most kinds of relief and government assistance. Through the 1960s, both authorized and unauthorized immigrants were eligible for federal public benefits.

In the 1970s, undocumented immigrants were gradually restricted — from SSI in 1972, Medicaid and AFDC in 1973, Food Stamps in 1974, and federal unemployment insurance in 1976. Under the 1996 "welfare reform" legislation, lawful immigrants lost access to certain federal public benefits for the first time.

Yet even under the most recent prior government issuance in 1999 of a definition of the public charge, most benefits would not render an individual vulnerable to inadmissibility. Instead, it defined a "public charge" explicitly as someone who was "primarily dependent on the government for subsistence," either through cash assistance or long-term institutionalization.

In view of this long history of criminalizing immigrant dependency, it's unsurprising

that the Trump administration is taking this a step further — changing perhaps from the spirit and letter of the original law, but not necessarily from the social functions it has served over time.

So what has the LPC meant, as a historically enduring feature of American immigration policy? The evolution of the “public charge” provision in immigration policy clearly illustrates a central reality of American immigration history.

Immigration serves an indispensable role in modern capitalism by ensuring the ready supply of low-wage labor. But at the same time, immigration law has evolved to serve business interests by ensuring that those who do not fit the labor needs of the nation can be readily expelled.

The image of the able-bodied, independent (male) immigrant has been a staple of American discourse. Those who deviated from this idealized body that would give to the economy without demanding from the state have long been unwelcome in the country.

Global capitalism relies upon the mobility of impoverished foreign labor — created in no small part by the American subordination and destabilization of foreign economies — and then enacts mechanisms to punish the impoverished poor who do exactly as the economic system dictates they must in order to survive.

As President Johnson stated in signing the 1965 Immigration Act, which fundamentally restructured American immigration in the decades that followed, the test for future immigrants would be: “Those who can contribute most to this country... will be the first that are admitted to this land.”⁸

By stripping one of the last vestiges of government obligation to its non-citizen residents, the administration is further solidifying a system of profit maximization from foreign-born labor to which politicians have long aspired — a system where immigrants can only contribute, but not withdraw from the state (upon penalty of expulsion).

As political debate in Europe becomes increasingly dominated by anti-immigrant, racist rhetoric, there too dependency and public benefits have become central facets of nativist claims.

Even in those nations where the idea of a robust network of social benefit programs has been historically prized, the line is being drawn ever more firmly, delineating that the benefits of membership in a society are to be enjoyed exclusively by citizens.

Racialized Enforcement

In addition to punishing immigrant poverty, the new rule, as critics have pointed out, will disproportionately impact people of color as well as people with disabilities, furthering the existing discriminatory impacts

of American immigration policy.

The new rule, while a sharp legal departure from precedent, is not quite as acute a turn from the sentiment (or the on-the-ground enforcement) of previous policies, which have long stigmatized foreign-born poverty, and created a racialized and gendered association between certain migrant groups and the idea of “dependency.”

Alongside the anti-Black welfare rhetoric which has existed for many decades, the idea of immigrant poverty and the depiction of immigrants as “takers” has been a consistent feature of the discourse linking dependency to communities of color.

The public charge provision in immigration law has always had a racial dimension, even while the clause itself did not designate racial criteria. The overzealous application of the law frequently operated along racial lines, and Mexican and Afro-Caribbean immigrants have often the most vulnerable to poorly-substantiated charges of dependency.

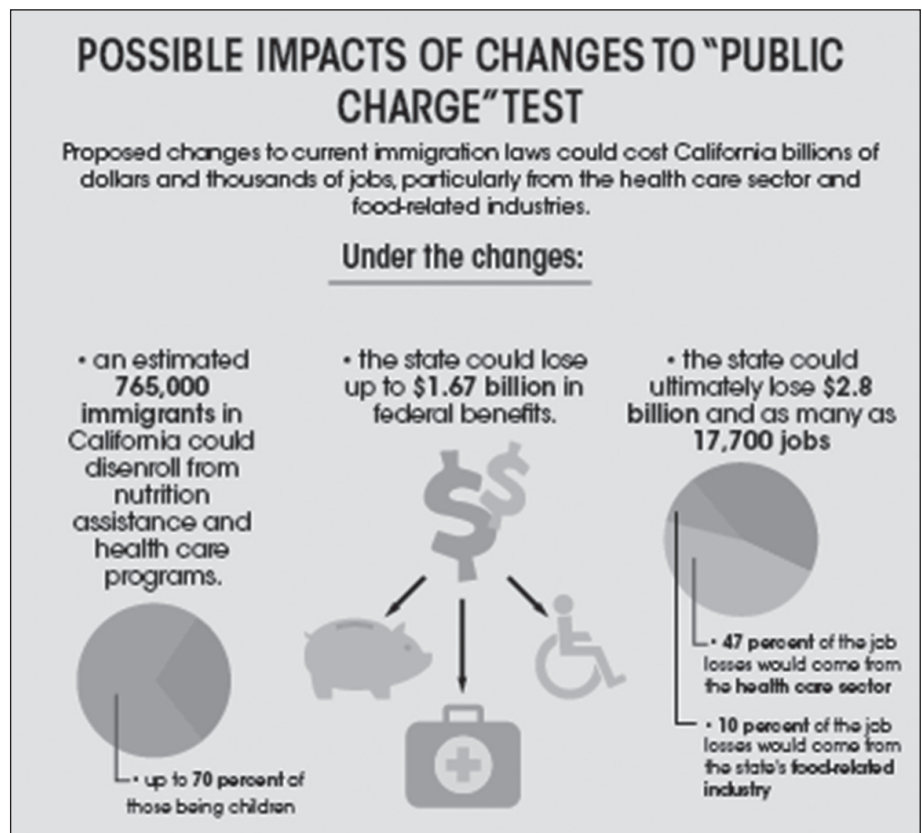
Because the vague language of the charge left so much room for discretion, it allowed local examining officials on the ground, medical inspectors, and institutional employees to determine eligibility for the provision around their own prejudices.

In doing so, they furthered popular presumptions about the connections between

race and dependency. As Natalia Molina explains about the targeting of Mexican immigrants for deportation in the early 20th century: “The LPC charge... was another mechanism for marking Mexicans as outsiders. Just as the welfare state was being solidified under President Franklin Roosevelt, the LPC label reinforced stereotypes of Mexicans as charity seekers, dependent and underserving of state resources...”⁹

The continued power of those stereotypes could be seen in one of the most notable controversies over the extension of public benefits to immigrants — the fight over Proposition 187 in California. Among other provisions Proposition 187 set out to bar undocumented immigrants from access to welfare and other non-emergency services. It passed on the ballot, and although subsequently overturned by the courts was an important predecessor of the 1996 laws which would bar federal welfare benefits to most lawful immigrants who had lived in the United States for less than five years.

As scholars and advocates have noted, Prop 187 was deeply motivated by racist perceptions about recent immigrant populations, particularly those from Mexico. As Robin Dale Jacobson argues, in the rhetoric around Proposition 187 Mexicans were “raced as takers,” and understood to



Poster from UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the UC Berkeley Labor Center and California Food Policy Advocates shows impact on California economy of the “public charge” provision denying permanent residency and green cards to legal immigrants who receive public benefits, including nutrition assistance and health care. The chart does not calculate what this means in terms of public health for the immigrants or their neighbors.

be “lacking independence,” making them “anti-American” in the eyes of many.¹⁰

Gender Coding

Debates over immigrant benefits have not only had deeply racial overtones throughout history. They have also been intensely gendered. Historically, dependency — both foreign-born and domestic — has been coded as a female trait (and subsequently deemed all the more threatening when occurring among men).

As Margot Canaday explains of the early public charge provision: “Most fundamentally, the clause was a feminized provision that was commonly used against women... single women were almost by definition public charge aliens.”¹¹

In a system in which self-sufficiency and self-government were seen as the purview of men, dependency was seen to be the natural state for women, rendering them automatically suspect as potentially productive laboring immigrants.

Because a “desirable” immigrant and potential future citizen was constructed as an able-bodied male body who would be able to appropriately sell his labor power, those who for varied reasons did not conform to this image were seen as potential hindrances to the efficient functioning of migration under modern capitalism.

Throughout history, claims about female dependency have also intersected with racist anxieties around immigrant birthrates and successive scares about the “unrestrained reproduction” of women of color. During the early 20th century, black immigrant women, particularly from the

Caribbean, were often put into deportation proceedings for likelihood to become a “public charge” in which authorities focused on their sexual improprieties, illegitimate pregnancies or “loose morals.”

The hearing and conclusions of the officials in the 1924 case of Hilda Christian, a 25-year-old black immigrant from Antigua, centered around her perceived promiscuity and reproductive threat, although the case was officially decided on the basis of her status as “likely to become a public charge.”

The officer in charge of her case explained that “Since this alien has had two illegitimate children she has shown a propensity to disregard the moral law and consequently it is probable that she may have another illegitimate child and at such time would undoubtedly again become a public charge.”¹²

Although there was no evidence that she was unable to support her current children, the presumption that she would have another — a presumption which revealed official’s beliefs about black women’s unrestrained reproduction — was enough to condemn her to removal.

Christian’s case, along with many others like it, have demonstrated the power of the state to condemn and castigate immigrant women’s sexuality through ostensibly neutral criteria for deportation such as the LPC provision.

What Comes Next?

As the public charge rule continues to work its way through the courts, we have yet to see what the impact of this major departure from legal precedent around the

use of the LPC provision in immigration law, although it is clear that it has already begun to harm immigrant families who are too afraid to seek needed support.

We can certainly see the continuation and exacerbation of a longstanding racist discourse around immigrant dependency and access to public benefits, which sharply highlights the cold economic logic behind our immigration policy. ■

Notes

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12. File 55,227/788, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration.

Siwatu is Free!

SIWATU SALAMA-RA, A Detroit community and environmental justice organizer who served nine months in prison before her felonious assault conviction was overturned last year, is free. Because Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy’s office refused to drop the spurious charge, Siwatu made the difficult decision to accept a misdemeanor plea of “brandishing a firearm” that carries a 90-day sentence — enabling her to go free for time already served.

While in prison, Siwatu was forced to give birth while shackled and then removed from her newborn son. The conviction was overturned due to errors by the trial judge.

Siwatu’s case began in 2017 when she defended herself, her mother and her daughter from vehicular assault by pointing a legal, unloaded, licensed weapon. Despite the lawful defense of herself and others, she was convicted on a felony firearm charge that carried a two-year prison term.

Siwatu and her Freedom Team remain unwavering in support of her innocence,



Regarding her plea deal that ends the case, the Freedom Team stated: “Though this is not the just vision of freedom we were working toward, we cannot risk Siwatu being separated from her family and her community again. This ends a nearly three year ordeal. And we stand here on this day, with our sister liberated because of all of you, because of the love of this community, and your unwavering support to Siwatu and her family.”

In Siwatu’s own words: “This was an

extremely difficult decision to make because I should have had the right to defend myself and my family from an attack, but instead I am now defending us from state violence. After experiencing the blatant injustice of this courthouse firsthand, there is no evidence that a just process is possible here. Therefore it is not worth going through another unfair trial and risking being separated from my babies ever again.

“I am a living example of how prosecutors weaponize Felony Firearm and other heightened charges in order to corner people into taking plea deals, regardless of their innocence. This vicious system must come to an end, and we have a lot of work to do.”

Siwatu is now committed to working with and for imprisoned women to ensure that no pregnant person at Huron Valley ever lives through the kind of hardships she faced. She will fight for an end to the prison industrial complex, and continue to link this work to the environmental justice and climate justice movements that raised her. ■

“A Matter of Life and Death”

Moms 4 Housing Struggle in Oakland

By Isaac Harris

FOR DOMINIQUE WALKER, facing homelessness was “a matter of life or death.” So she decided to take matters into her own hands.

Fed up with suffering from homelessness while working multiple jobs and caring for their children, Dominique and her friend Sameerah Karim began occupying a vacant, investor-owned house on Magnolia Street in West Oakland on November 18, 2019.

In the following months they formed the group Moms 4 Housing, orchestrated a successful media campaign, and galvanized scores of activists during a “Week of Action” for housing organized by the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE). They emphasized their occupation was nonviolent. (See <https://moms4housing.org/>.)

After community pressure and legal work by activists, the Alameda County Court held an eviction hearing. Carroll Fife, director of Oakland ACCE, pointed out that “the housing courts’ work is basically a mill to grind people down and send them out to the streets.”

That’s the law. So it was no surprise on January 10 when Judge Patrick McKinney concluded Moms 4 Housing had “no valid claim of possession” and gave them five days to move. The corporate landlord then offered the women two months’ rent at a shelter. They wanted a permanent home, not another round of shelters, and refused.

Knowing the sheriff would have to carry out the order by January 15, two days beforehand the moms made sure their children had places to stay. With the imminent threat of eviction, Moms 4 Housing rallied hundreds of supporters to the home that evening through a rapid response text messaging system. The sheriffs’ office did not make an appearance that night.

But before dawn on January 14 the sheriff and his troops arrived at the home in riot gear, with rifles, armed vehicles and even a robot to check for possible explosives.

The squad broke down the front door and a second one with a battering ram,

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arresting Tolani King, Mistry Cross and two supporters. All were later released on bond.

Although told they could retrieve their belongings the following morning, when the moms arrived they found their things strewn on the curb.

The Housing Crisis

The Moms 4 Housing struggle highlights the depth — and absurdity — of the nation’s housing crisis, especially in the Bay Area, where people live in tent encampments down the block from empty investment properties. It is estimated that in Oakland there are four times as many empty homes as there are people without homes.

Dominique herself was well acquainted with the problem. When she moved from Mississippi back to Oakland, her hometown, she got a job as a community outreach coordinator for ACCE. But she struggled to secure permanent housing for herself.

About her experience canvassing West Oakland to offer legal services to people facing displacement, she said, “It seemed like we were a little bit too late because out of a whole sign-up sheet of information we had, 90% of those people were already homeless. And they were working folks... Just blank on the addresses.”

That’s when she realized: “Hey this is not just me, it’s everybody. It’s especially folks that look like me. Mothers and children, and families out on the street. It was a tipping point for me.”

Dominique also noticed the prevalence of vacant homes in the neighborhood, including the one where she and Sameerah moved in. Owned by Redondo Beach-based Wedgewood Inc., a “leading acquirer of distressed residential real estate,” the property had been sitting empty for more than two years. In addition, Dominique had encountered a man running scams out of the house — taking renters’ deposits without following through on a lease.

Higher rents (and higher profit for the property owner) effectively create an income requirement for people to access

housing. “Because if you are hard-working and the wages aren’t enough, does that mean you deserve to be on the street?” said Dominique. “Shelter is a human right, it is a basic need.”

But under capitalism, the primary purpose of housing is to provide a return on investment for banks and landlords, not to provide shelter for those who need it. Dominique stressed, “I think it’s a moral crisis. It’s capitalism, it’s greed that are keeping people on the streets.”

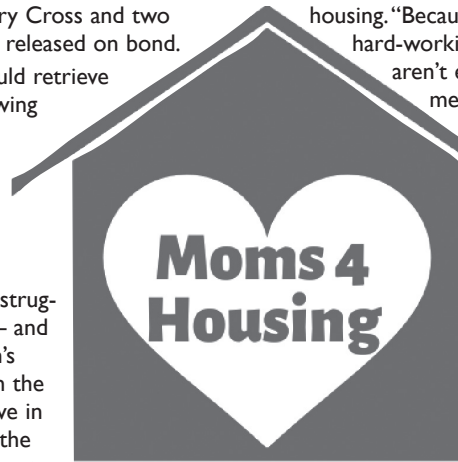
Exploitation and Struggle

Wedgewood Inc.’s invasion of this part of the town follows a long history of West Oakland’s exploitation at the hands of the real estate industry.

By the late 1940s, the once-diverse neighborhood was becoming increasingly segregated, as one of the few places where Black residents were not excluded from buying and renting homes. But at the same time, racist banking practices deemed the neighborhood “high risk” for capital investment and made loans for home repair unavailable.

As a result, residents suffered from overcrowding and the physical decline of homes in the area. Believing that this “blight” would hurt property values for downtown real estate, the business class that dominated Oakland politics in the 1950s pushed for federal “urban renewal” programs that displaced thousands of people from West Oakland.

Centers of neighborhood culture also suffered, including the strip of jazz clubs, barber shops and restaurants along Seventh Street that was razed for construction of the above-ground BART tracks. Other visible examples of this devastation are the three highways that destroyed entire blocks of homes and sliced up the neighborhood





— leaving the Moms 4 Housing home stuck between the 880, 580 and 980 freeways.

Residents at the time did not sit idly by. Tarea Hall Pittman and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fought for the rights of people displaced by another redevelopment project known as Acorn, and called for the construction of public housing alongside the proposed industrial and commercial land uses.

Today, West Oakland is experiencing the latest form of redevelopment: gentrification. Corporate landlords like Wedgewood are driving these changes. Dominique commented, “A lot of people [are] jacking up rents and buying houses and flipping them for all these amounts that people I know can’t afford to pay, people that are originally from Oakland, that built the culture in Oakland. The culture isn’t the same.”

The resulting displacement, which has disproportionately affected Black families, hits home for Dominique. “Even my own family, they are in Benicia, Vallejo, Sacramento, Antioch, Stockton — and we’re off in Oakland... I grew up in East Oakland and the family I had in West Oakland, they don’t live here anymore.”

Our Path Forward

But Moms 4 Housing has shown that by building a mass movement of both unhoused and housed people, we can reclaim housing as a social good. Dominique emphasized that the house occupation has been a collective project: “From this particular block, I’ve seen

so much support. Folks have brought food, donations, asking what we need, welcoming us to the neighborhood...”

She also helped organize the March for Housing Now last November 23, which united over 200 supporters from housing, labor, and faith groups. The march began at Mosswood Park, where dozens of unhoused people live in tents, and ended at MacArthur Commons, a shiny new market-rate development where studio apartments rent for over \$2,500 per month.

Just like Wedgewood, MacArthur Commons’ landlord is sitting on vacant units while offering six weeks rent-free, desperate to attract renters at the high price point.

The Moms 4 Housing occupation helps us imagine alternatives to this dystopian capitalist housing market.

Dominique was inspired by her time in Mississippi, where she took part in Cooperation Jackson, a working-class organization led by people of color, which describes itself as a “solidarity economy... anchored by a network of cooperatives and worker-owned, democratically self-managed enterprises.” There, she worked on a farm where “we let folks do volunteer work and take food and they don’t have to pay — just volunteer and it’s free.”

She envisioned the house as a site for further cooperative living and community solidarity. “Right downstairs there is a whole other unit a family could stay in, with plumbing, so our goal is to fix this up and a couple of families could live here.”

Moving from housing to commerce, Dominique said she believes that in West Oakland, “we also need to have some co-ops to combat capitalism. Even old-school bartering, the community needs to get back to that because we all have skill sets that we can offer and trade... I can braid somebody’s little girl’s hair and babysit.”

Moms 4 Housing has inspired Oakland to reject an attitude of resignation to the moral crisis around us. They forced Mayor Libby Schaaf, who claimed she didn’t condone “unlawful acts,” to negotiate with Wedgewood.

Wedgewood buys, renovates and then sells foreclosed homes primarily on the West Coast, but operates in 18 states. The company was shamed into offering the Magnolia Street home to the Oakland Community Land Trust at its appraised value and to turn it over to the moms — but that might cost more than half a million dollars.

Wedgewood also agreed to change the way it does business by letting the city of Oakland and non-profit housing organizations have the right to purchase any of their homes at market rate (“right of first refusal”). Mayor Schaaf’s boasting that this will take those homes out of a speculative market, however, seems an overstatement.

Homelessness is not inevitable in a wealthy society, but we must confront the landlord class, the politicians they control, and capitalism itself to ensure that homes are places for people, not for profit. Housing is a human right! ■

Why the Populist Upsurge?

By Val Moghadam

FOR AT LEAST a decade scholars, pundits and activists have observed and commented on the upsurge in electoral victories by right-wing populist movements and political parties (which I'll call here RWP).

Initially, much of the commentary pertained to European countries including France, Italy, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden, with studies identifying common grievances and demands — immigration, welfare cuts, the refugee crisis of 2015 — but also differences in approaches to women, the family, and sexuality.¹

Some of the right-wing populist parties were formed in the 1990s but most came to win elections in the new century: Australia's One Nation, Austria's Freedom Party, the Danish People's Party, the Finns Party (previously called the True Finns), France's Rassemblement National (formerly Front National), Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD), Italy's League (formerly Northern League) in coalition with the hard-to-define Five Star party, the Party for Freedom of the Netherlands, and the Swedish Democrats.

RWP now has become a global phenomenon, encompassing movements, parties, and governments in the global South as well as in the global North. Countries with RWP governments include not just Poland and Hungary in Europe but also Turkey, Israel, India, the Philippines, Brazil, and the peculiar case of Trump's USA.

In Britain, the RWP message of two anti-European Union (EU) parties — the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Brexit Party — was appropriated by the Conservative Party under a faction led by Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Jacob Rees-Mogg. After the parliamentary election of December 12, 2019, Johnson's British version of Trump's "America First" mantra is being implemented.

Populism of various progressive as well as reactionary strains is hardly a new political phenomenon; it has appeared in the United States, Russia, and Latin America at different times and in different forms since

the 19th century. Contemporary RWP, too, is varied.

In Poland and Hungary, RWP appeals to voters fed up with the neoliberal economic policies of past governments. Hungary's Victor Orbán and his ruling Fidesz party, and Poland's Jaroslaw Kaczynski and his ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party have increased social spending.

In contrast, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro wants neoliberal economic reforms after the regulations and social spending of his predecessors from the Workers' Party, Ignacio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. France's Marine Le Pen rails against "savage globalization," but Israel's Netanyahu and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan have no quarrel with neoliberal capitalist globalization.²

Right-wing populist movements are gendered, in that their leaders and founders are mostly men and their discourses and tactics often evince a problematical form of hypermasculinity. Typically, their notions of femininity and of women and the family are traditional and would strike feminists as dangerous, but such notions do resonate with a certain section of the female population.

Conservative and right-wing parties and movements have not been devoid of women supporters. Indeed, some RWP parties in Europe (notably France) are led by women; those and other RWP parties promote women's rights and gay rights against what are seen and portrayed as intolerant attitudes and practices of immigrant (particularly Muslim) communities.

Populist Grievances

Populism is not an ideology in itself but rather a discursive style and political strategy, usually appearing during periods of political polarization, leading to an "us versus them" approach to grievances and mobilizations. Populist leaders appeal to "the people," "the real people," "the silent majority" and similar terms for a political base.

Across many Western countries, galvanizing issues are economic deprivation, immigration, refugees, integration, law and order, terrorism and the perceived loss of culture.

With the share of foreign-born residents now ranging from 11%-17% in Germany, France, Sweden and the Netherlands, there is pressure on welfare spending, and the

2015 migration crisis added to anxieties.

As such, the populist appeal may reflect the popular will for a more participatory democracy when capitalist globalization and neoliberal states have enabled gross income inequalities, periodic financial crises, wars, unemployment, precarious forms of employment, and welfare cuts.

Exploring Trump's appeal in 2016, sociologist Arlie Hochschild writes of American voters who feel dispossessed and are angry about how mainstream politicians have ignored them or ridiculed their culture and religiosity. Many also see their economic woes and the end of the "American dream" tied to free trade agreements, immigration, and security concerns.³

Who votes for populist parties and leaders? A study of who voted for Brexit in 2016 showed how Britain was divided along economic, educational and social lines.

The poorest households, with incomes of less than £20,000 per year, were much more likely than the wealthiest households to support leaving the European Union, as were the unemployed, people in low-skilled and manual occupations, people who felt that their financial situation had worsened, and those with no qualifications.

Groups vulnerable to poverty were more likely to support Brexit.⁴ The strongest driver was educational inequality: "Groups in Britain who have been 'left behind' by rapid economic change and feel cut adrift from the mainstream consensus were the most likely to support Brexit."⁵

In the United States, Britain and elsewhere, material and cultural interests alike have galvanized such voters. In turn, voters resonate with the RWP parties and leaders calling for a welfare state for their "own people" first.

Populist leaders exploit capitalist contradictions and societal frustrations to attain or remain in power. They may deploy "the people vs. the elites" rhetoric, but in many cases such rhetoric and accompanying political moves reflect intra-elite competition and contention rather than an alternative democratic agenda that genuinely benefits the people.

In general, the rise and spread of right-wing populism expresses political, economic and cultural grievances, anxieties

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“Alternative for Germany” on the march: anti-immigrant, xenophobic, with a whiff of neo-nazism.

and demands, which right-wing leaders can exploit to gain political power. In this way, they echo Marx’s brilliant analysis of the rise of a reactionary demagogue in the wake of failed revolutionary hopes, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Populism’s Dark Side

Populism’s darker version expresses hostility and antagonism toward “others,” usually minorities or foreigners or “alien ideologies.”

Across countries experiencing RWP, antagonism is directed toward Muslims who cannot or will not assimilate or are blamed for terrorism (Europe); toward Palestinians and their continued demands for statehood and Arab-Israelis who demand equality (Israel); toward Mexicans and Central Americans who migrate or seek refuge in large numbers (USA); toward the European Union for its intrusive regulations (Brexiters in the UK); toward Kurds and their continued demands for equality or autonomy (Turkey).

Both milder and more extreme versions of RWP hostility are also found within Islamist parties and movements, whereby “the Muslim people,” “Islamic values,” or “the land(s) of Islam” are to be protected (either peacefully or militantly) against Western, Christian, Jewish or secular influences. In India, RWP extremism entails the defense and promotion of “Hindutva” against Muslims and Islam.

When populist protests have erupted across the globe, in some cases it is difficult to distinguish right-wing and left-wing inclinations. The *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protests in France exemplify this.

They were triggered by French president Emmanuel Macron’s introduction of a fuel tax, something generally approved on the left and by environmentalists. Yet the underlying grievances pertained to the president’s unilateral decision-making, growing income

inequality in France, and changes to France’s longstanding and very generous social contract.⁶ Similar grievances are observed in other countries where protests have erupted: Chile, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq.

Whither Left-wing Populism?

In many accounts, RWP has grown among those who have felt left behind by the mainstream parties that have adopted neoliberalism and disregarded the economic difficulties or cultural concerns of many ordinary citizens. Across the RWP landscape, however, there are national or even local specificities that need to be considered when explaining the upsurge.

In the UK for example, the Labour Party’s loss of many seats in its heartland to the Conservatives was not the result of Labour’s neglect of its traditional working-class base but rather the leadership’s very difficult political position, given that the party’s membership was roughly split on whether to remain or to leave the EU.

The ambiguity on Brexit cost the party and its left-wing leader Jeremy Corbyn numerous parliamentary seats and the party’s potential to offer a socialist alternative to the status quo. (Corbyn was himself the target of a vicious smear campaign since his election as party leader in 2015, and spurious charges of anti-Semitism dogged the Labour party, both of which likely played a role in the party’s defeat in the December 2019 general election.)

Yet the picture is not completely rosy for the victorious Conservative Brexiters, who will have to contend with a revived nationalism — of the left-wing variety — in Scotland, where the pro-EU Scottish National Party (SNP) won overwhelmingly and its leadership plans to hold another referendum on independence.

As early as 2014, Alasdair Rankin, SNP Councillor for Edinburgh, wrote in *The*

Economist magazine of “alienation after more than 35 years of neoliberal economic policy and directives from London.”⁷

A likely constitutional crisis also is impending with respect to Northern Ireland, where the nationalist Sinn Fein is popular and the many voters who prefer to remain in the EU look to a possible unification with the Republic of Ireland.

Left-wing populism, therefore, can be the alternative to the right, and it sometimes takes a nationalist complexion even as it demonstrates a preference for inclusion in a broader community and a robust capacity for internationalism.

In Argentina, the left-wing populism of Nestor Kirchner emerged from the wreckage of the 1998-2002 financial crisis and depression. This was accompanied by a wave of left-wing political parties being voted into one Latin American country after another, in what was called “the pink tide.”

Left-wing parties or movements that emerged from the 2008 financial crisis and ensuring Great Recession include Spain’s Podemos, Greece’s Syriza, and in Italy the contradictory Five Star movement.

Podemos, which did quite well in the 2016 general election, has called for nationalizing industries, hiking business taxes, raising the minimum wage, imposing a maximum salary, limiting the working week to 35 hours, reducing the retirement age to 60, and a referendum on leaving NATO.

In the United States, the Bernie Sanders’ primary campaign gained momentum in 2016, and if nominated he could very well have won the presidential election.

Thus far, left-wing populism has not fared well. The Latin American pink tide has receded. Syriza as a ruling party encountered a punishing debt repayment regime from Berlin, Paris, and Brussels, leading to internal rifts and loss of power in the July 2019 general election. In November 2019, Spain’s Podemos joined a coalition government with the Socialist Party, but the far-right Vox party became the third leading party, while the Catalan independence crisis remains unresolved.

Britain’s Labour Party (as noted) lost numerous seats in the December 2019 general election. And in the United States, Donald Trump’s “America First” populist rhetoric continues to appeal to his base — even as he reneges on his 2016 campaign promises to end U.S. involvement in Middle East conflicts and to allocate resources toward jobs for Americans in infrastructural projects.

What Is to be Done?

Left and right populists alike are suspicious of traditional institutions, on the grounds that they have been either corrupted by elites or left behind by business elites

and technological change.

This suggests not only that neoliberal globalization has produced a critical mass of disaffected voters and politicians but that liberal democracy itself is in crisis, unwilling or unable to tackle the policies that have given rise to the problems and the backlash.

There is no shortage of left-wing alternative programs, parties, and movements. What is lacking is a coordinated, concerted effort to unite leftists, socialists and progressives around a common platform and agenda.

For some pundits, today's right-wing populism has echoes of the 1930s (the crimes of fascism and the tragedy of the runup to World War II). Personally, I do not see analogous historic conditions.

There does not exist a large socialist/communist movement and working-class base that the bourgeoisie would find threatening in any way. Capitalism, unfortunately, remains in a secure position, despite all the movements and uprisings of the past decade. The challengers to U.S. hegemony, notably China, are themselves capitalist states.

Thus, in the same way that Marx analyzed the 18th Brumaire, 1851 coup of Louis Bonaparte, there is something farcical about many of the leaders of RWP parties and governments. If history is our guide, these

parties and governments may serve only to reinforce the capitalist world order, as is the case with Trump, Johnson and other RWP leaders.

Seeking an alternative, in July 2019, DiEm25 (Democracy in Europe Movement 2025), the pan-European movement formed by former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, forged an alliance with Britain's Labour Party to seek changes to EU policies, and DiEM25 planned further alliances through a new initiative called the Progressive International.

Potential allies could be the Green parties in the EU, many of which — from the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium — won additional seats in the European Parliament after the May 2019 elections.

Some Green parties have expanded their platform beyond environmental issues. In the Netherlands, tax avoidance by multinational corporations is a signature issue. In the United States the Green Party opposes militarism and war.

Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez attack the rich and privileged in a way that used to be taboo in mainstream U.S. politics. A 2018 article in *The Economist* magazine, citing Gallup polls, reported that some 51% of

Americans aged 18-29 had a positive view of socialism. In the 2016 primaries more youth voted for Bernie Sanders than for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump combined.

Almost a third of French voters under 24 in the 2017 presidential election voted for the left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Melançon.⁸ And we have seen the rise of youth-led climate justice movements, including Sunrise and Extinction Rebellion.

But trade unions need to be revived and to take a stronger role in helping to build a progressive coalition. Indeed, working with progressive political parties, unions could play an important recruitment and bridging role by organizing workers and providing political education to their members (including those who have veered to RWP) while also challenging the overweening power of capital to set the terms of the labor-capital relationship.

In the absence of “the party” of the past, we need an International that would reflect the democratic spirit of the World Social Forum as well as the strategic vision and mission of the socialist movement's revolutionary internationalism, with a job-creating green social-welfare model that also recognizes the right of people to health and leisure.

An alternative to the rise and spread of RWP would require coalition building within and across countries, as well as a common platform that would be attuned to national specificities. Such a coalition and agenda arguably could attract citizens previously drawn to Right populists. We need the optimism and the will to move in that direction. ■

The Torture of Chelsea Manning



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, last November sent a scathing letter to the U.S. government last November condemning the continuing imprisonment of whistleblower Chelsea Manning. The letter was made public in late December and reported by *The Guardian* (London) on December 31, 2019.

Manning has been held since last May 16 for refusal to testify to a grand jury pursuing the federal government's charges against Julian Assange. An army computer specialist, she previously served seven years of a 35-year sentence for disclosing U.S. atrocities in Iraq until her sentence was commuted by president Obama.

She faces imprisonment (and fines of \$1000 per day) until the grand jury term expires in November. As reported by *The Guardian*, Melzer's letter says Manning's conditions represent “an open-ended, progressively severe measure of coercion fulfilling all the constitutive elements of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

Melzer writes: “The practise of coercive deprivation of liberty for civil contempt ... involves the intentional infliction of progressively severe mental and emotional suffering for the purposes of coercion and intimidation at the order of judicial authorities.”

During her seven-year incarceration, Manning suffered severe stress that caused her to become suicidal. In the present situation, pointing out that “victims of prolonged coercive confinement have demonstrated post-traumatic symptoms and other severe and persistent mental and physical health consequences,” Melzer states that her detention “is not a lawful sanction but an open-ended, progressively severe coercive measure amounting to torture & should be discontinued & abolished without delay.”

Manning's lawyers have argued that her detention is “for refusing to comply with a grand jury is pointless, punitive, and cruel” and warned that she is not likely to change her mind.

A petition for the immediate release of Chelsea Manning is online at <https://action-network.org/petitions/sign-the-petition-free-chelsea-manning-now>. ■

Notes

1. See Susi Meret and Birte Siim, “Gender, Populism and Politics of Belonging.” In B. Siim and Monika Mokre (eds.), *Negotiation Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013); Susi Meret, Birte Siim and E. Pingeaud, “Men's Parties parties Women Leaders. A Comparative Study of the Rightwing Populist Leaders Pia Kjærsgaard, Siv Jensen and Marine Le Pen,” in G. Campani and G. Lazarides (eds.), *Understanding the Populist Shift* (London: Routledge, 2016).
2. I discuss these developments in more detail in my forthcoming book, *Globalization and Social Movements: The Populist Challenge and Democratic Alternatives* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).
3. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right* (New York: The New Press, 2016). See also William A. Galston, William A. “The 2016 US Election: The Populist Moment,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2017): 21-33.
4. The study by Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath is available at <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities>. See also Paul Lewis, Sean Clarke and Caelainn Barr discuss a study by *The Guardian* (UK) on how populist parties have managed to reduce poverty and income inequality, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/07/revealed-populist-leaders-linked-to-reduced-inequality>.
5. Goodwin and Heath, *ibid*.
6. For details, see Jeremy Harding, Jeremy, “Among the Gilets Jaunes.” *London Review of Books* (21 March 2019): 3-11.
7. Letter to the Editor, *The Economist*, Aug. 2nd, 2014: 12.
8. *The Economist*, “Millennial Socialism,” Feb. 16, 2018: 9.

From Climate Denialism to False Solution: The Fallacies of Geoengineering

By Ansar Fayyazuddin

For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. (Karl Marx, Grundrisse, Penguin Classics Edition 1993, 410)

THE GENERIC TERM “geoengineering” has come to denote a battery of hypothetical technological interventions to mitigate climate change. It is coming into vogue as the increasingly dire predictions of climate disaster make us desperate for a solution. Yet it is precisely in these moments of desperation and panic that we cannot lose our capacity for clear thinking and become susceptible to the specious promises of a miracle cure.

There is broad consensus that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must be reduced drastically in order to avert an even greater climate disaster than what we are on target to hit. Yet GHG production has not gone down and, despite the righteous rhetoric of the supposedly enlightened members of the political class, nothing of any significance is being done.

Even the simplest strategies of GHG reduction are not pursued. Public transportation remains utterly inadequate and unaffordable for many.

In New York City, for instance, Mayor de Blasio has presided over MTA fare hikes and simultaneous degradation of services. In the meantime, he has pursued a villainous policy of employing the notorious NYPD to aggressively crack down on MTA fare evaders and electric bike food-delivery workers towards whom he holds a peculiar animus.

At the national level, rail service remains at a laughably primitive level incapable of competing with other more carbon-intensive means of travel.

It is in the context of a complete failure to act in any meaningful way to bring GHG production down that we are presented with technological cures that require no change in the current way of life.

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I want to also note the cultural context in which geoengineering is offered as a solution. For decades climate change denialism, conceived as a form of anti-science and illogic, has been taxing the slender resources and energies of environmentalists. Instead of a rich discussion capable of weighing strategies to address the undeniable climate catastrophe that we face, countering denialism has become one of the central preoccupations of the environmental movement and has kept the discourse at a very low level.

Even the drabest proposals to mitigate the climate catastrophe appear attractive if they simply acknowledge the reality of the crisis and employ the legitimizing idiom of science.

Geoengineering is one such set of proposals. At the moment it is neither a science nor a practical scheme. It is an ideological intervention predicated on the world continuing on its current path of growth and increasing consumption, and could rightfully be described as eco-neoliberalism. Indeed, it views the climate disaster as a business opportunity.

As discussed below, it is based on a peculiarly narrow conception of the ecological disaster as a circumscribable problem, incidental to and addressable within the framework of market fundamentalism.

But geoengineering fails, even within its own self-defined framework. It offers a scientifically naïve and anti-democratic vision that is a distraction from the real work that needs to be done.

A False Framework

First, I want to elaborate on the framework that defines the problem in such a way that geoengineering seems like a solution.

Discussions of climate change are often formulated in the neat terms of a textbook physics problem. The problem, in this view, is balancing the earth’s energy budget. The earth absorbs heat radiated by the sun and, in turn, radiates a large portion of this absorbed energy back out. On average, the absorbed and emitted energy have to be roughly equal if the earth is not to heat or cool.

At the current moment the balance is tilted towards net absorption of heat, resulting in increasing average temperatures. The

mechanism for this net absorption of heat is the greenhouse effect, which traps heat in the earth’s atmosphere due to the presence of certain gases which are opaque to the low frequencies of the earth’s radiation preventing heat from escaping.

This widely accepted mechanism is remarkably successful in explaining the rough pattern of warming observed by scientists. If anything, the models are too conservative in their predictions, and reality is more dire than previously thought, as documented for instance by the latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report.

Despite the successes of viewing climate change in this framework, there are some serious limitations. This conception leaves out two essential points. First, it assigns causal priority to the universal laws of physics, rather than the circumstances in which these laws are operating — the social arrangement that is late capitalism, with its rapacious logic of unceasing profitmaking through ever-increasing production and consumption, that lies at the heart of producing the conditions of ecological disaster.

Second, the ecological crisis should be conceived as much more than global warming alone, which leaves out equally important problems that are neither separable from greenhouse gas production nor reducible to it.

Briefly, elements left out of this narrative include wide-ranging practices including certain methods of industrialized agriculture, mining and waste disposal leading to the horrific poisoning and destruction of our ecosystems, wholesale extinction of species, increasing rates of cancer, developmental problems among children, and many other issues.

Returning to global warming, the geoengineering perspective follows the disembodied physics-based narrative to identify the causes of climate change in the narrowest possible terms, as a consequence of a lethal mix of something called the sun and another thing called greenhouse gases that conspire to create the problem of global warming.

Thus, geoengineering solutions come in two varieties aimed at each of the two monsters — the Scylla of the Sun and the Charybdis of greenhouse gases.



Dimming the Sun

Solar radiation management, or SRM, is based on the idea that if we could dial the amount of solar energy delivered to the earth we could adjust the average temperature of our planet at will. This dialing would be achieved by blocking solar radiation so that is not absorbed by the earth.

Thus, if sun rays were somehow partially prevented from penetrating the atmosphere and being absorbed by the earth, the planet would not warm as much. Central SRM proposals include the injection of aerosols in the form of sulfates or other particulate matter into the stratosphere, as well as cloud and ocean brightening schemes to reflect sunlight back out of the atmosphere.

These strategies are not a way to reverse or even to slow down the greenhouse effect; rather they begin with accepting defeat against it. Even on the limited terrain set by SRM, the problems with the proposed strategies are many, but a few stand out.

Let me begin by noting the obscurantist terminology employed to describe what is being proposed. "Aerosols," a term from physics, describes particulate matter suspended in a gas. In more easily understandable terms, SRM amounts to polluting the atmosphere with a fine dust. Similarly, cloud and ocean "brightening" seem benign enough until we ask what brightening entails.

The increase of aerosols in the upper atmosphere would very likely result in both unpredictable weather patterns as well as climatic consequences. Nevertheless, some consequences can be gleaned from historical climate data and from modeling.

In the past, potent volcanic activity has resulted in the natural production of aerosols that get lodged in the stratosphere. In the aftermath of these events, net cooling of the earth was observed.

The volcanic dust is of the kind proposed by many SRM enthusiasts. Indeed, it's exactly this historical record that provides evidence of the efficacy of the methods of aerosol injection that SRM experts use in arguing their case. But these incidents are also correlated with severe droughts and

the disruption of key climatic patterns such as the monsoons, consequences also confirmed by climate modeling experts.

Historic data from volcanoes and independent modeling show that many of the most drastic weather-pattern disrupting consequences of aerosols will be for the global South. It is also important to keep in mind that many of the consequences of aerosol injection are inherently and irreducibly unpredictable.

Devastating Consequences

If all one wanted to achieve was to cool the earth, SRM could seem like a strategy worth pursuing. But the reason we are concerned with global warming is not out of a capricious desire to maintain a certain average temperature on our planet, but rather because warming threatens our ecosystem with collapse and poses the real possibility of human extinction.

That's why it would be appropriate to abandon the language of physics in favor of that of ecology, to better focus on the consequences of SRM. In addition to those already-mentioned likely disruptions of weather and climate, there will be other ecological consequences. As a means of dimming the sun, SRM will affect plant life not only through the disruption of patterns of rainfall but also because bright sunlight is essential to the lifecycle of many plants.

Similarly, ocean brightening will have consequences for marine ecology. Moreover, ocean and cloud brightening are expected to have unpredictable consequences for weather as these interventions will result in cooler air over oceans, which will be conducive to the development of severe weather patterns of the La Niña variety.

What's most troubling and irrational about SRM is that by bypassing greenhouse gas reduction, it can only achieve its goal of temperature reduction by constantly ramping up SRM interventions to counter the increasing effects of global warming.

The SRM perspective is based on the conception of the sun solely as a deliverer of unwanted heat. The effects on ecosystems and the experience of living in a world with

SRM appear to be of little or no concern. Yet the injection of aerosols and cloud brightening will fundamentally affect our daily lives as we will no longer be able to experience the sun as we do now.

Instead of the bright sun, we will be left with a less defined object through the haze of aerosols. We have to ask: Is our view of the sun so instrumental that we can dispense with our experience of it to maintain the dystopia of late capitalism?

Finally, the deployment of SRM will be a fundamentally undemocratic measure. We lack a world government that could be held accountable by the population and have the legitimacy and right to make decisions with major consequences for the entire globe.

Any implementation of SRM will be decided, no doubt, by the ruling classes of powerful nations but will affect the entire world and, if history is a guide, disproportionately the global South.

Atmospheric Carbon Capture

The second variety of geoengineering is based on capturing carbon and storing it. No one has yet come up with a viable strategy of capturing atmospheric carbon at a scale relevant to the climate, yet these strategies continue to excite the imaginations of venture-capital hungry entrepreneurs.

Just as with SRM, these technological strategies are not premised on changing the way that the world currently functions. On the contrary, they're modeled for a world where economic growth and increased consumption are assumed.

Several strategies in this category are worth pointing out to give a flavor of what is being suggested. One proposed strategy is to cultivate phytoplankton and other photosynthesizing species on ocean surfaces. These species would capture carbon for photosynthesis.

There are many issues associated with this strategy, but the biggest one is the uncontrolled disruption of ocean ecology. A second crucial issue is whether the absorbed carbon will actually be sequestered or rereleased into the environment.

Afforestation is another strategy which

requires planting forests for the explicit purpose of carbon capture. This strategy seems benign at first, but requires the repurposing of vast tracts of land to make a real difference as a climate mitigation strategy.

The displacement of people or the disruption of natural ecologies is a virtual certainty. Any land taken over for afforestation will no doubt belong to those who are already marginalized. Thanks to the resistance at Standing Rock in North Dakota by the Water Protectors, the whole world was made aware of the routine violations of treaty rights of Native people by the state whenever their land is needed for some purpose.

In addition, we are seeing the decimation of wild ecologies. With land shortage already a problem, the remaining unmarred wild ecologies will face the threat of instrumentalized conversion of rich ecosystems to forests, for the purpose of maintaining an untenable system of exploitation of the natural world.

A third strategy that has received a lot of attention is BECCS (bio-energy with carbon capture and sequestration). BECCS proceeds on a very simple if abstract and unworkable idea: Cultivate plants that can be combusted for the purpose of energy production in such a way that all the carbon byproducts from combustion are captured and sequestered.

Such a scheme would theoretically result in negative emissions because, during their growth phase, the plants would absorb carbon from the atmosphere for photosynthesis while no carbon will be released when they are combusted as fuel. Not surprisingly, no viable practical implementation of this idea exists.

Even if one grants the fantasy, scientists have shown that its implementation will result in net atmospheric carbon production. Moreover, BECCS suffers from the same problems as afforestation in that it requires the repurposing of land and its concomitant destruction of ecologies and displacement of people. Sequestration of captured carbon from combustion at the required scale is another problem that has not been solved.

Agents and Solutions

I want to now examine the logic that lies behind geoengineering as a whole. First, let us agree that capitalism is an ecological disaster. The insatiable drive for profit is its life force and requires the constant and ruthless exploitation of resources, whether of nature or humanity.

The destruction of habitat and decimation of the diversity of flora and fauna are noticeable to anyone who can recall life from even a decade ago. Greenhouse gases and climate change are just one facet of this disaster. What distinguishes the greenhouse effect is the simplicity of the mechanism

behind it and the clear identification of the agents — so called greenhouse gases that prevent heat from escaping the earth.

In ecology, as in the study of anything with a degree of complexity (evolutionary biology, history and sociology, say), billiard-ball-like causality where causal agents and their effects are unique and identifiable is rare. We inevitably have multiple forces at play, none of which is singly determining.

Even when we do have an effect with a single agent, one might ask how to counter the effects of this agent. One answer, and this is the answer of geoengineering, is to remove the agent. However, this is not necessarily viable nor even a real solution.

Allow me to develop an analogy that I first began to explore in a piece I co-authored with Erik Wallenberg for the geoengineering collection published by Science for the People.

In epidemiology, diseases with a clear bacterial, viral or parasitic agent are often best addressed from a public health perspective that is focused not on the microbial agent but rather on the conditions under which the disease spreads and develops. An example that illustrates my point very well is one that the biologist Richard Lewontin has used multiple times to illustrate a key difference between a “cause” and an “agent.”

Lewontin points to studies that show the precipitous decline in the occurrence of tuberculosis from the late 19th to the mid-20th century cannot be traced to medical or antibacterial interventions. Rather, no simple explanation is known but what did occur in this period is the rapid increase in access to better quality nutrition, housing, sanitation and education.

The subsequent recurrence of TB in times of austerity — such as in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites — illustrates vividly a different mode of causality in operation than the one that is focused on microbial agents.

Similar illustrations abound: epidemics of cholera, typhoid and dysentery occur almost exclusively under conditions of war or natural disaster in large parts of the world. Looking further back, plagues were often contemporaneous with crop failure and other causes of hunger and malnutrition.

How helpful is it then to view the causal agent as bacteria or other microorganisms when it comes to eradicating these illnesses? Not very, in my opinion. Clearly, in every sensible definition, the causes of these epidemics are war, austerity and primitive accumulation. Thus the focus on the agents of illness, while often needed and helpful when treating individual patients, is not so helpful when dealing with the eradication of certain diseases.

Quite often the focus has to lie else-

where entirely. For instance, in the case of malaria, the draining of standing water where mosquitos, the vectors of the disease, breed is often more effective than interventions that target the microbial parasitic agent of the disease. Thus, some illnesses require an entirely different focus.

In the case of epidemiology, the over focus on agents can have the opposite effect of addressing the problem, as is illustrated by the over-prescription of antibiotics resulting in antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria.

I believe that a similar perspective is needed in the case of climate change. The production of greenhouse gases has to be drastically reduced, but the focus on removing them from the atmosphere or turning off the sun is to miss the real cause of the disaster, which is clearly capitalism and its helpless drive for profit at any expense including the destruction of our ecosystem.

One might think that the promise of geoengineering belongs to the mythos of optimism in technology. I find it hard to believe that technology can excite anything like optimism in us anymore.

We live in a world where technology produces neither joy nor excitement. Our latest cellphone acquisition is not a moment of joy but the melancholic start of the countdown to its impending obsolescence.

When we encounter the Soviet Constructivist poster in museums, the optimism of their time is no longer legible to us. The placement of these posters in museums as relics seems apt. I believe that the mythos that geoengineering belongs to is an unmistakably contemporary one, and steeped in pessimism. It is rooted in the belief in the immutability of the present neoliberal moment.

Frederic Jameson has famously said that in these times, it is easier to conceive the end of the world than to conceive an end to capitalism. In this radically truncated contemporary view that grew out of the defeats from the 1970s to the present, we cannot imagine a possible world that is not driven by the nihilistic pursuit of profit.

As I have argued, geoengineering technology will not get us out of this mess but will further entrench us in a deeply eco-destructive mode of life, and guarantee a future that may not be a future at all. We have to develop an ecosocialist critique and practice that begins with conceiving the possibility of the end of capitalism. ■

Further reading: For readers interested in exploring geoengineering further from a left perspective, *Science for the People* has a special issue on geoengineering available at the URL <https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/geoengineering-special-issue/>. Naomi Klein's chapters on geoengineering in *This Changes Everything* are also excellent.

Markets & the Private Sector as Religion: A View from the Farm By John Vandermeer

FROM INTERACTING WITH small-scale farmers in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Michigan, I have come to understand some of their problems and some of the ways in which they analyze the world. From this perspective, recent proclamations from national politicians and local academics alike have caused me to reflect on certain basic features of contemporary capitalism.

Recent comments about markets and the private sector suggest an incautious use of language. The actual operation of small-scale and peasant farmers* as background shows that the very nature of such operations are clearly within both the private sector and market participation, but hardly correspond to the common meaning of either under current capitalist logic.

When Elizabeth Warren made the enthusiastic claim that “I am a capitalist,” she explained herself by defending the idea of markets, noting that historically markets had promoted entrepreneurship and led to great advances in technology and the provisioning of goods and services. This is confusing to be sure, since regions claiming to be one sort of socialism or another have always had markets, and by definition have explicitly claimed not to be capitalist.

I invite her to visit Cuba where a claim to be socialist (and anti-capitalist) intersects freely with farmers’ markets that include offerings of both state-supported products and products that arrive directly from the farm and sold to consumers by the farmers. A suggestion that somehow they didn’t have markets would be bewildering to the folks participating in them.

A seemingly independent proclamation from some of my academic colleagues at the University of Michigan was equally perplexing. In response to student objections to the School for Sustainability’s cooperative relationship with the giant brokerage firm Morgan Stanley, several professors noted that it is important for those of us concerned with sustainability that we engage with the “private sector,” and not be

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“anti-corporate” lest we restrict the options for the students we are training.

Small farmers . . . are forced to compete with what they call the corporate farming sector. Using public research to modify traditional crop varieties which are then patented and sold profitably and exclusively; lobbying to have legal restrictions over what rural communities can collectively decide; tariff restrictions that limit access to markets — all these are viewed by the small farming sector as anti-competitive.

After all, they argue, all corporations have dirty laundry and funding the Dakota Access or the Keystone XL pipeline, as does Morgan Stanley, may be bad, but other corporations do similar things.

If the farmers I engage with were presented with this notion of the private sector and corporate cooperativeness, I fear there would likewise be a sense of bewilderment, stemming from the very sense of the framing itself — feeling they are indeed in the private sector, but certainly not guilty of the sorts of malfeasance characteristic of many corporate actors.

Back to Basics

It is unfortunate that in the current global ecological crisis, those who claim to be

advocates for the planet fail to fully understand the nature of the interactions that exist among the most important inhabitants of that planet, which is to say the cultural, economic and political nature of saving the planet. At the center of this failure is a rather narrow, cold-war mentality of what capitalism actually is (socialism too).

A return to basics is perhaps in order, as I think many of my farmer friends might suggest. Karl Marx taught us of the “evils” of capitalism, to be sure. But his point was not that markets are bad, but rather that the fundamental structure of capitalist production (i.e. a “market-based economy” where an idealized notion of “the market” dictates all economic activity) carried with it the seeds of its own destruction, indeed the inevitability of destroying the very markets on which it was initially based.

Marx was attempting to analyze capitalism in a way that was clearly influenced by the materialism of Enlightenment thinkers (to say nothing of earlier sages, such as Epicurus), and his project was designed to make the analysis of macroeconomic structures somehow akin to the analysis of gravity or the electromagnetic spectrum. While his success at doing so is contested by many, it certainly cannot be said that he was somehow arguing that markets were inherently bad.

Indeed, it is evident to me that his view of capitalism was actually that he thought of it as a temporary stage of macroeconomic development which would, by its internal contradictions, cause its own destruction, much as had the internal contradictions of Feudalism before.

Although Marx said little of socialism, it was clear that he saw socialism emerging from that inevitable fall of capitalism. However wrong many of his historical predictions may have been (e.g. the reality of the Bolshevik Revolution), he saw markets as a real thing, indeed as a positive component of the historical replacement of feudalism through the bourgeois revolutions.

The post-World War II indirect East-West or “Roosevelt/Churchill versus Lenin” intellectual debate — i.e. the foundational

*The word “peasant” is being reappropriated by small-scale agriculturalists. So, for example, a serious journal, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, now occupies center stage in academic debates. But that discussion is beyond the scope of this short piece. — J.V.



Small-scale agriculture, the unrecognized backbone of what the world actually consumes.

contradiction of the underlying sociopolitical structures that led to the Cold War — contained few points of agreement. But one stood out, although there seems to have been little concern with advertising it since it was simply an underlying assumption of both sides: Small-scale, and/or peasant, agriculture would disappear.

The West saw it disappearing as agriculture became subsumed by the “efficiencies” that the capitalist system would bring, while the Soviet bloc saw it disappearing as agriculture became subsumed by the “efficiencies” that the socialist/communist system would bring. There was little disagreement about the “fact” of it disappearing.

Little appreciated at the time were the studies of Russian economist Alexander Chayanov, who, after extensive study of the pre-revolution rural sector in Russia challenged that shared notion that peasant agriculture was a “primitive” form that would be superseded by more advanced (capitalist or communist) structures.¹

After detailed study of the Russian peasantry, Chayanov wrote convincingly that their operations were not in accord with

what either side would eventually argue. Rather than religiously pursue the optimization of utility, peasant farmers planned their activities according to a schedule that included a host of conditionals, what Chayanov called “balances.”

Perhaps optimizing yield this year was one goal, but that would be tempered by a concern for how the long-term condition of the farm would be sustained. Similarly, adopting new techniques would be judged in the context of how much additional “drudgery” would be involved.

The vision of the peasant farmer as just a small-scale profit-maximizing entrepreneur was not in line with what actually happens in the world. They are formally in that socially constructed “private sector” to be sure, but hardly Morgan Stanley.

Now, three quarters of a century after this East-West non-debate, we see that both sides were surely wrong. Depending on sources, it is clear that most actual food people eat in the world is produced by peasant and small-scale farmers,² and that the industrial agricultural system which was presumed to end peasant farming either under capitalism or communism is mired in inefficiency and political controversy. The factories that supply its inputs and use its outputs as raw materials, have taken over its original purpose of food production.

On the relatively small fraction of the land devoted to agriculture in the world (perhaps about 25%), small-scale agriculturists produce the vast majority of the food that people actually eat.³

The political condition of this peasant farming sector is diverse when viewed across the world. However, a large section of it would most likely identify as “socialist.” Yet even those most militantly socialist are indeed in the “private sector” and engage

in “markets.” I’m not sure how they would react if it were suggested to them that their private sector reality and participation in markets made them “capitalists.” Probably with some bewilderment.

Small vs. Corporate Farming

The complaints that the small farmers of the world have about capitalism are partially due to its functioning correctly (as theory would suggest), but mainly about its hypocritical corruption.

When J. D. Rockefeller was “participating” in the development of the early oil industry he engaged in practices that could hardly be described as fair. Charging railroads “drawbacks” (imposing a tax for every barrel of oil they shipped from competitors), predatory pricing in local markets (selling oil below the cost of production to drive competitors out of the market), bribes (lobbying) to political officials, were all part of his strategy to “compete.”

Small farmers see the same thing happening in areas where they are forced to compete with what they call the corporate farming sector. Using public research to modify traditional crop varieties which are then patented and sold profitably and exclusively; lobbying to have legal restrictions over what rural communities can collectively decide; tariff restrictions that limit access to markets — all these are viewed by the small farming sector as anti-competitive.

Yet these anti-competitive actions are precisely what those who religiously promote capitalism are best at, even as they preach a gospel of competition for others.

Perhaps worshipping the private sector is not what it seems to my academic friends, nor are free markets what they seem to presidential candidates after all.

At least that would seem to be the view from the farm — the farm across the street from the soybean field that stretches to the horizon, the farm looking to borrow \$100 to repair the fence around the corral, the farm looking for help in paving the muddy road to the market — in short, the free-market farm that participates in those miraculous monopoly-free markets. ■

Notes

1. An extensive discussion of this point is provided by Van der Ploeg, J.D., 2013. *Peasants and the art of farming: A Chayanovian manifesto* (No. 2). Fernwood.

2. There are a variety of reports on this, variable in terms of data sources and particularities of definitions. Recent sources include Graeb, B.E., Chappell, M.J., Wittman, H., Ledermann, S., Kerr, R.B. and Gemmill-Herren, B., 2016. “The state of family farms in the world,” *World development*, 87, 1-15, and Rosset, P., 2008. “Food sovereignty and the contemporary food crisis,” *Development*, 51(4), 460-463, and Altieri, M.A. and Toledo, V.M., 2011. “The agroecological revolution in Latin America: rescuing nature, ensuring food sovereignty and empowering peasants,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(3), 587-612.

3. GRAIN, 2014. *Hungry for land: small farmers feed the world with less than a quarter of all farmland.* GRAIN Report.

Notes to Our Readers

YOU'RE THE BEST: We're thrilled to report that our annual fund appeal, concluding on Super Bowl Sunday, raised \$5875 in support of *Against the Current*. Many thanks to everyone who so generously contributed!

We encourage our readers to attend the Socialism 2020 conference, July 2-5 in Chicago (see <https://socialismconference.org/> for online registration). In addition to prominent speakers, this event features over 100 panels with ample audience participation, including some sponsored by Solidarity and ATC.

We hope to see many of you there.

The #MeToo Movement in Japan's Media Industry: The Fight Is Only Getting Started

By Chie Matsumoto

JAPAN'S #ME-TOO MOVEMENT was sparked by a television reporter who said she was sexually harassed by the country's highest-ranking finance ministry official.

"Can I touch your breast?" "Can I tie you up?" The voice of the man's relentless sexual advances was heard on a tape that ran in the weekly tabloid magazine *Shukan Shincho*. His target was the reporter herself.

When the full story appeared in 2018, there was sympathy among female journalists but little surprise. Most had experienced similar harassment. The recording of the encounter went viral on the Internet.

It was not an isolated case. More than 70% of women who work in the media say they have been sexually harassed on the job, according to a survey conducted by a confederation of media unions, the Japan Congress of Mass Media Information and Cultural Workers (MIC) in 2018.¹

In the most famous recent case, freelance journalist Shiori Ito accused a senior journalist with television network TBS (and a biographer of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe), Noriyuki Yamaguchi, of drugging and raping her in 2015 when she was a college intern seeking a job. Prosecutors dropped criminal charges against Yamaguchi in 2016.

Amidst mounting criticism and vicious online trolling, Ito published a bestselling book, *Black Box*, to tell her own story. She has since become a leading figure in women's battle against sexual violence. She took Yamaguchi to court and won a landmark civil case against him in December 2019.

As Ito's case highlighted, the majority of harassers are male bosses and coworkers, but the list also includes police officers, politicians and local and central government officials,² such as the finance ministry official, Junichi Fukuda.

The handful of women who muster up the courage to speak out often face vicious harassment and trolling, as Ito did (she says she was forced to flee the country after receiving threats on her and her family). The case involving the finance ministry official showed the price paid for confronting powerful men.

Chie Matsumoto is a journalist and member of Shimbunroren and WiMN.



Finance Minister Taro Aso, Fukuda's boss, hinted that Fukuda had been entrapped by the female reporter and expressed concerns about his human rights rather than the victim's. Some questioned the reporter's journalistic ethics because she handed a tape of the secretly recorded conversation to another media organization. Concern was mounting that her company would issue her a reprimand.

Many female journalists across the country decided enough was enough. They stood up to support their colleague with the hashtag: "#WithYou." More than 100 women gathered within a few weeks and formed Women in Media Network Japan (WiMN) in May 2019 — the first-ever all-female group of journalists (print, broadcast, publishing and freelance) in Japan.

Breaking the Silence

At a press conference to announce the group's establishment, and to protest against the finance ministry, 19 women reporters anonymously revealed they had been exposed to sexual abuse throughout their careers. In statements, some revealed a pattern of forced kissing, groping and fondling by male colleagues and interviewees so common that they grew numb to it.

They also spoke of their sense of responsibility and regret that by staying silent about this sexual abuse they may have

contributed to the industry's tolerance to it. Many had stayed silent because they had been told that predatory abuse is part of the job, and to just bear it. They were told that such abuse is the path to becoming professional journalists.

To maintain journalistic objectivity, they had kept themselves out of stories of harassment. The case against the television reporter made them realize they were among the voiceless victims they had been reporting all along.

The Japan Federation of Newspaper Workers' Unions (*Shimbunroren*) immediately responded to the case and demanded that the industry body, the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, adopt a strict no-tolerance policy against any sexual harassment and protect the victims under the understanding that harassment is a violation of human rights.

A similar set of demands was filed by the commercial broadcast unions.

Before the negotiation with the industry organization, a report by a university graduate was circulated to *Shimbunroren*. The graduate said she was asked during a job interview for a major newspaper if she had ever been sexually harassed. This question, by itself, is harassment: would a man be asked such a thing?

The suggestion is that media companies expect new recruits to put up with

unwanted sexual advances, so common as they are. Veteran journalists and members of *Shimbunroren* reported that they had been asked the same question more than 20 years ago. Nothing changed.

A Press Freedom Issue

Soon after the negotiation, the newspaper association passed a resolution stating that news sources abusing their status and harassing reporters not only infringes reporters' human rights, it violates citizens' right to know. It said henceforth it would refuse to turn a blind eye to words or deeds that keep women from doing journalistic work.

As both print and broadcast industry bodies clearly stated, demanding sexual favors or making unwanted sexual advances on journalists in exchange for information or access to interviews is a press freedom issue.

Japan's pacifist constitution famously denounces war. It also guarantees two essential rights of democracy: press freedom and the right to know. As harassment of journalists concerns some of the most important elements of democracy, interest surged from the media industry.

Meanwhile, the International Labor Organization (ILO) opened a forum on workplace violence and was scheduled to vote on a resolution to eliminate it in June 2019. The only two member countries that resisted were the United States and Japan. Japan was also categorized in a group of countries without any regulations on workplace violence and harassment.

Unions across Japan increased pressure on the government to demand a comprehensive law defining and banning sexual harassment, as well as stronger penalties against perpetrators.

The #MeToo and #WithYou movement helped uncover sexual and other forms of harassment not only in media but in many other jobs and industries, even at job interviews. The MIC was moved to conduct a second online survey, this time across all jobs and industries.³

The results were illuminating. According to the survey, about 20% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment said they never reported the case. Almost 70% complained that their cases were handled improperly, by being dismissed, transferred or dropped without investigation. Some were told it was best to keep quiet for their own sake.

Those findings suggest a pattern. When women address cases of sexual harassment or gender discrimination, the issues are often minimized. One reason is that the media industry, like others, is male-dominated. About 20% of the media workforce is female. Just 6.6% of the management of

newspapers and wire services are women (the figure is 14.7% in commercial broadcasters).⁴ There are almost no women on the boards of media companies.⁵

Gender Gap Persists

Japan ranks 121st out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, falling from 110th in the previous year.

More women in management would not only help create a more gender-neutral workplace, it might encourage victims of sexual harassment to report not just their own cases, but those of others. Female journalists often express frustration that such stories are hard to get past male-dominated newsrooms.

The recent outburst of solidarity among women journalists has boosted coverage of gender issues, analysts say. When it was revealed in mid-2018, for example, that Tokyo Medical University had for more than ten years manipulated scores on entrance examinations to favor male applicants by deducting points from female students, female (and male) journalists extensively reported the story and filed a protest statement.

The effort eventually exposed similar practices at other universities. Tokyo Medical University said that the medical industry needed more male doctors and practitioners because women take maternity leaves during pregnancy or tend to resign when they marry and have children.

The string of injustices against women continued. On March 12, 2019, a man was found not guilty of having sex with a woman who was drunk and incapacitated in the southern Japanese city of Fukuoka. (The case was overturned later in the high court. The man was sentenced to four years in prison.)

On March 19, the Shizuoka District Court in central Japan found another man innocent on charges of forcing a woman to have sex. The courts ruled that in both cases the women had "failed to resist enough" for the men to notice there was a lack of consent.

Another case in Nagoya District Court found a father not guilty of sexually abusing his teenage daughter repeatedly for two years. Although the court accepted that the man had sexually abused his daughter, it ruled that there was still doubt that she lost complete ability to resist. In other words, she showed no physical signs of abuse that would indicate her resistance.

#MeToo Fighting Back

Many women interpreted this string of unjust verdicts as a backlash against the #MeToo movement in Japan. On April 11, 2019 they took to the streets of Tokyo holding flowers and began what has devel-

oped into a nationwide campaign against the silencing of women.

The Flower Demo, which is now organized on the 11th of every month in 36 out of Japan's 47 prefectures, has offered a place for women (and men) to reveal abuse and sexual violence, or simply to receive or express support.

The campaign was fueled by solidarity among WiMN members who relentlessly pushed their editors to cover the Flower Demos, stories on gender-based violence and the #MeToo accounts.

These actions empowered one survivor of a 2007 rape case to file a lawsuit against Nagasaki City. The alleged rapist, the head of the city's Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Department, hanged himself a few months after the reporter filed a claim and the city was set to launch an investigation. The city has not officially apologized or even confirmed that she was raped.

That reporter's case was the first taken up by *Shimbunroren* since it appealed to women working in newspapers and wire services to report sexual violence. The newspaper union's federation in July last year recruited eight women to the all-male executive committee. Labor must first spearhead changes to corporate society, said the federation.

Shimbunroren organized the first Flower Demo in Nagasaki City in November, along with local advocacy groups for women that were the first to respond to the reporter's claims 12 years ago. They demanded an apology and said the shame brought on a city so emblematic of the global peace movement demanded justice for the rape survivor. The lawsuit has triggered several more claims of sexual violence against journalists in Nagasaki, surely the tip of the iceberg.

As a commitment to eradicating sexual violence especially in media industry, WiMN put together a compilation of confessions, essays and opinions from its members. The book, *The State of Sexual Harassment in Media*⁶, edited by WiMN, is guaranteed to ignite more reports of gender-based abuse and discrimination. The fight to end violence against women and build stronger solidarity is only getting started. The key is to keep sharing our stories. ■

Notes

1. MIC is a network of unions in Mass Media, Information and Culture industries. The online survey was conducted between July 18 and August 17, 2018. Some 428 (233 women, 194 men and one other) responded.

2. MIC survey.

3. MIC conducted another survey across more than 24 jobs and industries, including university job seekers, from mid-April to mid-May, 2019. Some 1,061 responded to the online survey.

4. 2019 Cabinet Office report: http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h29/zentai/pdf/h29_genjo.pdf.

5. Japan Federation of Commercial Broadcast Workers' Unions survey (2019. 10) <http://www.minpororen.jp/>

6. Masukomi • Sekuhara Hakusho (*The State of Sexual Harassment in Media*) scheduled for publication on February 13, 2020.

Looking at Social Reproduction By Cynthia Wright

Social Reproduction Theory:
Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression
Edited by Tithi Bhattacharya
London: Pluto Press, 2017, \$17 paperback.

MATERIALIST AND MARXIST feminist theory is currently undergoing something of a renaissance. Wide-ranging conceptual and empirical work on social reproduction is a major part of that theoretical innovation.¹ So, too, are the recent international women's strikes highlighting key issues such as gender violence and attacks on reproductive autonomy, as well as the range of unpaid social reproductive labor often performed by those gendered as women.

As Cinzia Arruzza observes in the concluding essay of *Social Reproduction Theory*, "the women's strike can legitimately be seen as a political translation of social reproduction theory."²

These developments reflect a search for alternatives to mainstream liberal feminism and to the profound crises and contradictions of everyday life as well as the need for an anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal theoretical framework and politics. This may be one of the most important contributions of a renewed social reproduction theory: it can help us understand, as Laura Briggs has recently argued, "how all politics became reproductive politics."³

Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, edited by scholar and activist Tithi Bhattacharya, forms part of this renewed work on the theory of social reproduction and everyday life in global capitalist context.

As the subtitle suggests, the collection argues for a more expansive understanding of class relations. It also aims to build on the insights of anti-racist feminist intersectionality analysis, with a view to creating theory and anti-capitalist politics that can account both for class power and the material organization of gender and race in the context

Cynthia Wright is a long-time activist who lives and works in Toronto where she teaches at York University. Among her recent projects is a history (with Franca Iacovetta) of Emma Goldman's exile and death in Toronto, including how the inter-generational memory of Goldman has circulated in the city.

of a unitary system.

But for those unfamiliar with the basic concept of social reproduction within Marxist feminist theory or needing some re-cap, here's a brief overview.

Expanding Marxist Feminism

Social reproduction is defined and conceptualized in different (although overlapping) ways and at different site and scales.⁴ While the capitalization of SRT (*Social Reproduction Theory*) in the book's introduction might suggest a singular theoretical tradition or current of feminism, there are in fact various genealogies of theorizing in the field — as well as some productive debates.⁵

Adding to the mix, as the introduction also acknowledges, is that several bodies of literature theorize what many Marxist feminists call social reproduction using different conceptual terms. Marxist feminist theorists of social reproduction do differ, but they converge on themes including an expanded understanding of work and the working day and a concern for the production and reproduction of labor power.

However, this focus turned out to be no mere addition to Marxist theory. As Kathi Weeks describes it, social reproduction theory "has in fact required a vast re-thinking of [Marxism's] concepts and models, its critical analyses and utopian visions" as feminists mapped the possibilities of an expansive politics at the site of "the contradiction between capital accumulation and social reproduction."⁶

So while there remain productive theoretical and political debates within SRT, and some unanswered questions, there is no doubting its capacity for powerful and exciting theoretical insights.

Social reproduction, as a conceptual framework within Marxist feminism and feminist political economy, is not new. A number of Marxist feminists, including Meg Luxton and Silvia Federici, have been publishing theoretical and empirical research in this area consistently for decades.⁷

Such theoretical work dates back to the late 1960s at least and is part of a broader inquiry and set of debates regarding the question of women's oppression in capitalist context and the critique of political econo-

my and its categories.⁸ As part of that theoretical trajectory, *Against the Current* readers may recall the classic and oft-cited definition of social reproduction from Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner. Writing in the 1980s, they referred to social reproduction as:

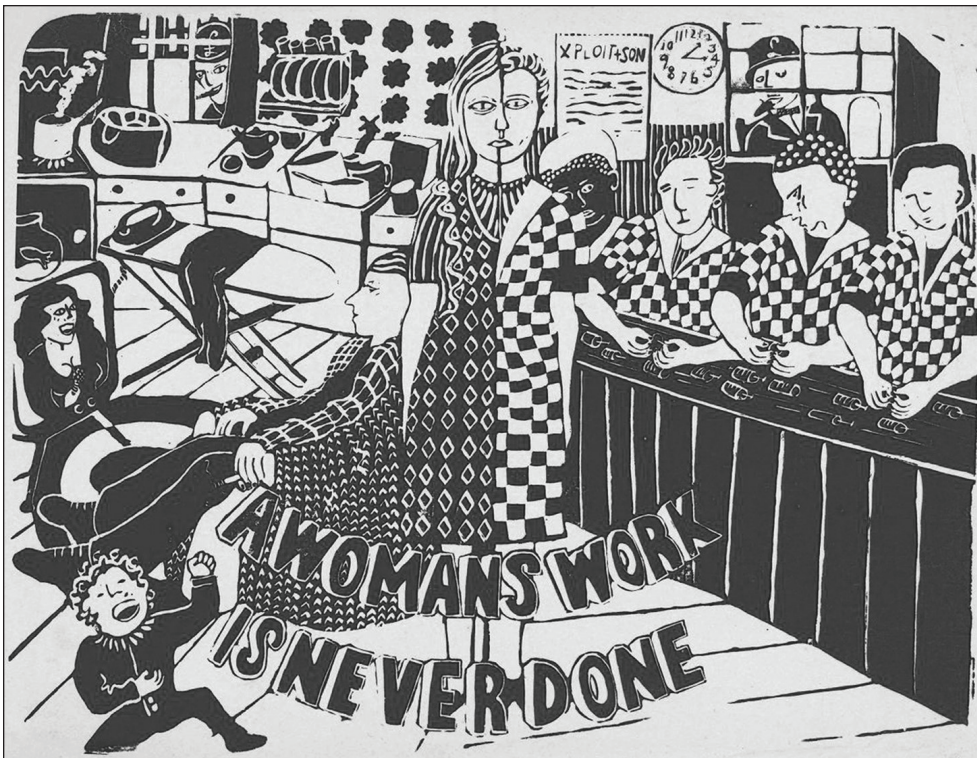
*"the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally. Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization of children are provided, the care of the infirm and the elderly, and the social organization of sexuality."*⁹

Sue Ferguson, who has contributed a great deal to the renewed project of SRT (and who contributes to the collection with an important chapter on social reproduction, capitalism and the making of children's subjectivities), elaborates on social reproduction in a recent essay:

*"(I)t's most powerful insight is that the process of capital accumulation requires human labour power but does not produce it. As there is no mechanism in the direct labour/capital relation to ensure labour's daily and generational renewal, it finds ways to organize historically specific embodied subjects — differently gendered and racialized subjects — in and through hierarchically and oppressively structured institutions and practices, such as private households, welfare states, slavery, and global labour markets."*¹⁰

Ferguson's conceptualization is helpful because social reproduction is often popularly conflated with the family, domestic labor and the private household, all of which may be very important in a given context but do not define social reproduction across all historical conjunctures.

Some social reproduction theory (especially some of the earlier formulations) too easily assumes a national frame where questions of migration, (lack of) citizenship, and the increasingly global character of working-class lives and social reproductive labour disappear. Additionally, recent work on labor, social reproduction and the global South has asked whether widespread informal labor might necessitate a re-working of the concept of social reproduction.¹¹



“Woman’s Work Is Never Done” — attempting to theorize a woman’s exploitation and oppression.

While the focus of *Social Reproduction Theory* is largely on the U.S./Canada context with some scattered references to struggles over social reproduction in the global South, some of these points are addressed by Carmen Teeple Hopkins, editor of a recent special issue on feminist geographies of social reproduction and race,¹² in her interesting chapter, “Mostly Work, Little Play: Social Reproduction, Migration and Paid Domestic Work in Montreal.”

In this contribution, Teeple Hopkins asks how migrant domestic workers meet their own social reproductive needs in a context of long paid working hours and the lack of a place to call home that is not a workplace.

Drawing on theoretical tools from feminist economic geography as well as diverse currents within SRT (including Black feminist approaches to transatlantic slavery), Teeple Hopkins examines how Filipinx women rely on religious spaces, and the friendships connected to them, as sources of reproductive support.

Theory and Strategy

In her introduction to *Social Reproduction Theory*, Bhattacharya outlines the three major tasks of the anthology: a) clarifying the theoretical focus and site of inquiry of Marxist-feminist social reproduction theory; b) expanding on Marxist theory from the standpoint of social reproduction, including the understanding of race and gender, as well as class; and c) teasing out the strategic possibilities of a social reproduction politics within contemporary context. (6)

Bhattacharya’s own theoretical chap-

ter, “How Not to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class,” offers an approach to all three, but not all of the contributors necessarily address all three equally.

While many of the contributors offer some interesting examples of the strategic possibilities, the book does not discuss at length concrete contemporary organizing initiatives at the site of social reproduction. Cinzia Arruzza’s essay on the women’s strike concludes the book, but it’s the only contribution that is a handful of pages and not a full-on chapter.

At the same time, several chapters offer theoretical insights and historical examples that can clarify the broader structural context of specific struggles. Serap Saritas Oran’s “Pensions and Social Reproduction,” for example, illuminates why and how the question of intergenerational social reproduction has become such a major site of struggle across various social contexts. Similarly, Nancy Fraser’s “Crisis of Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism” anatomizes crises in social reproduction and their outcomes across three historical regimes.

In one of the most interesting and ambitious chapters, “Without Reserves,” Salar Mohandesi and Emma Teitelman work with the standpoint of social reproduction to revision the historical sweep of U.S. capitalism, state formation, and class composition. The result is a rich contribution that draws on the important contributions of U.S. women’s, gender and labor history to under-

standing social reproduction.¹³

In “Body Politics: The Social Reproduction of Sexualities,” Alan Sears locates sexuality within the context of broader social relations of production and reproduction, with a view to theorizing why and how heteronormativity and gender power persist. As part of this analytic work, Sears envisions the possibilities for a more expansive understanding of sexual liberation, bodily autonomy, and freedom from sexual violence.

Recent work in the field elaborates on these vital theoretical and political commitments. For example, the question of the production and reproduction of binary gender itself within social reproduction is currently undergoing renewed inquiry and critique as scholars bring a transgender theoretical lens to the concerns of SRT.¹⁴

The profound problem of widespread violence against women and gender non-conforming people calls out for further attention within social reproduction theory.

In a recent interview, Silvia Federici speaks to the relationship between that violence and — to name just some links — the devaluation and coercion of women’s labor; women’s refusal to carry out social reproductive labor; and the dispossession of (often indigenous, often older) women from common lands.¹⁵

Finally, Sears’ notion of an erotic liberation re-envisioned via a social reproduction lens is echoed in disability scholar Loree Erickson’s argument that people with disabilities are figured as sexually undesirable because they are read as dependent bodies. For her, full sexual expression for people with disabilities cannot happen without a re-making of ideas and practices of care and dependency.¹⁶

Class, Gender and Racial Dynamics

In general, theories of social reproduction have attempted to avoid the problems of so-called “dual systems” theory, that is, the argument that patriarchy and capitalism, gender and class, are two autonomous structures, and have instead sought to theorize women’s oppression in a non-reductive way within the dynamics of capitalism.¹⁷

Much SRT emerged in the British, U.S. and Canadian context but as it grappled with the dynamics of class and gender, it often had far less to say about race and capitalism and the racial division of labor.

As Sue Ferguson has observed: “The theoretical work of explaining how and why capitalism’s very existence involves racism, and how and why racism takes the specific form it does under capitalism — that is, the

theorization of a systematically racialized patriarchal capitalism — lags behind.”¹⁸

While the back cover of *Social Reproduction Theory* claims the book is “presenting an alternative to intersectionality,” it would be more accurate to suggest that those contributors who do address intersectionality theory engage it in various ways. Put another way, the theorization of social reproduction in the context of racialized patriarchal capitalism remains a major problem that will require systematic work drawing on critical dialogues across different literatures and theoretical orientations.

Bhattacharya’s introduction suggests (with particular reference to David McNally’s chapter, “Intersections and Dialectics: Critical Reconstructions in Social Reproduction Theory”) that social reproduction theory opens up a way to build on the “insights of intersectionality” while critiquing its methodological approach to race and gender understood as discrete systems that intersect. (17)

Within intersectionality theory itself, there is already a wide-ranging extended internal conversation going on about the field’s epistemologies and methodologies (which are in fact diverse).¹⁹ This suggests one space of critical dialogue for SRT.

Second, in a context in which theories of racial capitalism are also undergoing renewal, there is rich potential for elaborating on cross-conversations between theories of social reproduction and those of racial capitalism.²⁰ There are important theoretical traditions among Marxist and socialist feminists of color and anti-racist feminists who have contributed in significant ways to theories of race, gender, capitalism and social reproduction.

In other words, it’s important not to conflate all feminist of colour theorizing with intersectionality theory. In this connection, McNally’s chapter rightly references the importance of Angela Davis’s classic *Women, Race and Class* (1981). At the same time, contextualizing the book within the long tradition of Black Communist women’s theorizing of which it is a part would yield further insights important for social reproduction theory while also identifying some of the unresolved theoretical problems of that tradition.²¹

Finally, there are important cross-conversations between the theoretical production by U.S. feminists of colour and transnational feminism. Much of this literature also suggests important insights into processes of race and social reproduction.

As Lisa Duggan observes in an essay on social reproduction, “new scholarship on globalizing care chains, transnational adoption, and indigenous resistance to structural adjustment policies also centrally analyze processes of social reproduction in the

context of global political economy, though these scholars do not generally employ the term itself.”²²

Re-reading Political Economy

Theories of social reproduction aim not to add another category to analyses of everyday life, but to re-read political economy, politics and anti-capitalist organizing and strategy anew from the standpoint of social reproduction. This has become an increasingly urgent theme in the debates given that, as Nancy Fraser warns in her contribution, “today’s crisis of care...will not be resolved by tinkering with social policy.” (36, ellipsis is mine).

Then there is the problem that, as Rada Katsarova has observed, “infrastructures of access to social services and social-reproductive needs have been turned into coercive instruments of dispossession and racialization” not to speak of their problems for transgender people.²³

One thing that’s clear, as she notes, is the increasing criminalization of all those who try to experiment with forms of life beyond capital, beyond the state.

A theoretical lens anchored in social reproductive theory is enormously productive, but the practical-political question ahead of us remains: What might what Silvia Federici calls “the reclamation and commoning of the means of reproduction”²⁴ look like? And how might this re-order feminist politics today? ■

Notes

1. Some of this work has been reviewed in recent issues of *ATC*. Verónica Schild’s materialist feminist intervention on capitalism, environmental destruction, and contemporary Latin American feminisms is a sobering reminder that any serious anti-capitalist feminist politics must take seriously the question of ecology and social reproduction. “Feminisms, the Environment and Capitalism: On the Necessary Ecological Dimension of a Critical Latin American Feminism.” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 20, 6 (2019): 23-43.

2. Cinzia Arruzza, “From Social Reproduction Feminism to the Women’s Strike.” In Bhattacharya, ed., *Social Reproduction Theory*. See also the dossier on the theory and practice of the feminist strike in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117, 3 (July 2018) as well as journalistic articles including: Linda Martin Alcoff, Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Battacharya, Nancy Fraser, Barbara Ransby, Keenanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Rasma Yousef Odeh, and Angela Davis, “Women of America: We’re Going on Strike. Just So Trump Will See our Power.” February 6, 2017 *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2017/feb/06/women-strike-trump-resistance-power> and Linda Martin Alcoff et al., “We Need a Feminism for the 99%: That’s Why Women Will Strike This Year.” 27 January 2018 *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/27/we-need-a-feminism-for-the-99-thats-why-women-will-strike-this-year>.

3. See Laura Briggs’ excellent and very readable book, *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics: From Welfare Reform to Foreclosure to Trump*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

4. Adding to the complexity is the fact that social reproduction is an important category in various currents of Marxist theory, for example, Italian autonomous Marxism. For more, see Rada Katsarova, “Repression and Resistance on the Terrain of Social Reproduction: Historical Trajectories, Contemporary Openings.” *Viewpoint Magazine*, 5 (2015). <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/repression-and-resistance-on-the-terrain-of-social-reproduction-historical-trajectories-contemporary-openings/>.

5. Silvia Federici, “Social Reproduction Theory: History, issues and present challenges.” *Radical Philosophy* 2.04 (Spring 2019): 55-57. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/social-reproduction-theory-2>.

6. Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 25, 27.

7. See Kate Bezanson and Meg Luxton, eds., *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-Liberalism*. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006). For Federici, see *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle*. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012) and Federici and Peter Linebaugh, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2018).

8. For some insight into the historical trajectory, see the recent issue of *Monthly Review* 71, 4 (September 2019) looking back at Margaret Benston’s classic 1969 essay, “The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation.” See also the essay by Dorothy Smith, “Feminist Reflections on Political Economy” in *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

9. Cited in Lisa Duggan, “(Re)Producing Social Justice After Neo-Liberalism.” *Scholar and the Feminist Online* 7, 3 Summer (2009). https://sfolonline.barnard.edu/sexecol/duggan_01.htm. Emphasis hers.

10. Sue Ferguson, “A Response to Meg Luxton’s ‘Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism.’” *Studies in Political Economy* (2014): 165.

11. Alessandra Mezzadri, “Informal labour, the majority world and the need for inclusive theories and politics.” *Radical Philosophy* 2.04 (Spring 2019): 33-41. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/on-the-value-of-social-reproduction>.

12. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 48 (January 2015).

13. To make a broad generalization, one might argue that social reproduction theory has been a strong theoretical current within feminist theory and sociology in Canada, whereas the U.S. context that has produced a particularly rich historical literature on social reproduction.

14. This is one of the themes of a 2017 special issue of *Society and Space*, “Beyond Binaries and Boundaries in ‘Social Reproduction’” <http://societyandspace.org/2017/10/31/intro-beyond-binaries-and-boundaries-in-social-reproduction/>. Briggs also wrestles with the question of trans/gender in the Introduction to *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics*.

15. The interview with Federici is included in Fiona Jeffries, *Nothing To Lose But Our Fear* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015).

16. Loree Erickson, “Out of Line: The Sexy Femmegimp Politics of Flaunting It!” In Tristan Taormino et al, eds., *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).

17. In this regard, Lise Vogel’s work forms a key theoretical orientation for some of the contributors to *Social Reproduction Theory*. See her *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013). Vogel also wrote the foreword to *Social Reproduction Theory*.

18. Sue Ferguson, “A Response to Meg Luxton’s ‘Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism.’” *Studies in Political Economy* (2014): 161-168.

19. See also Collins’s most recent book, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

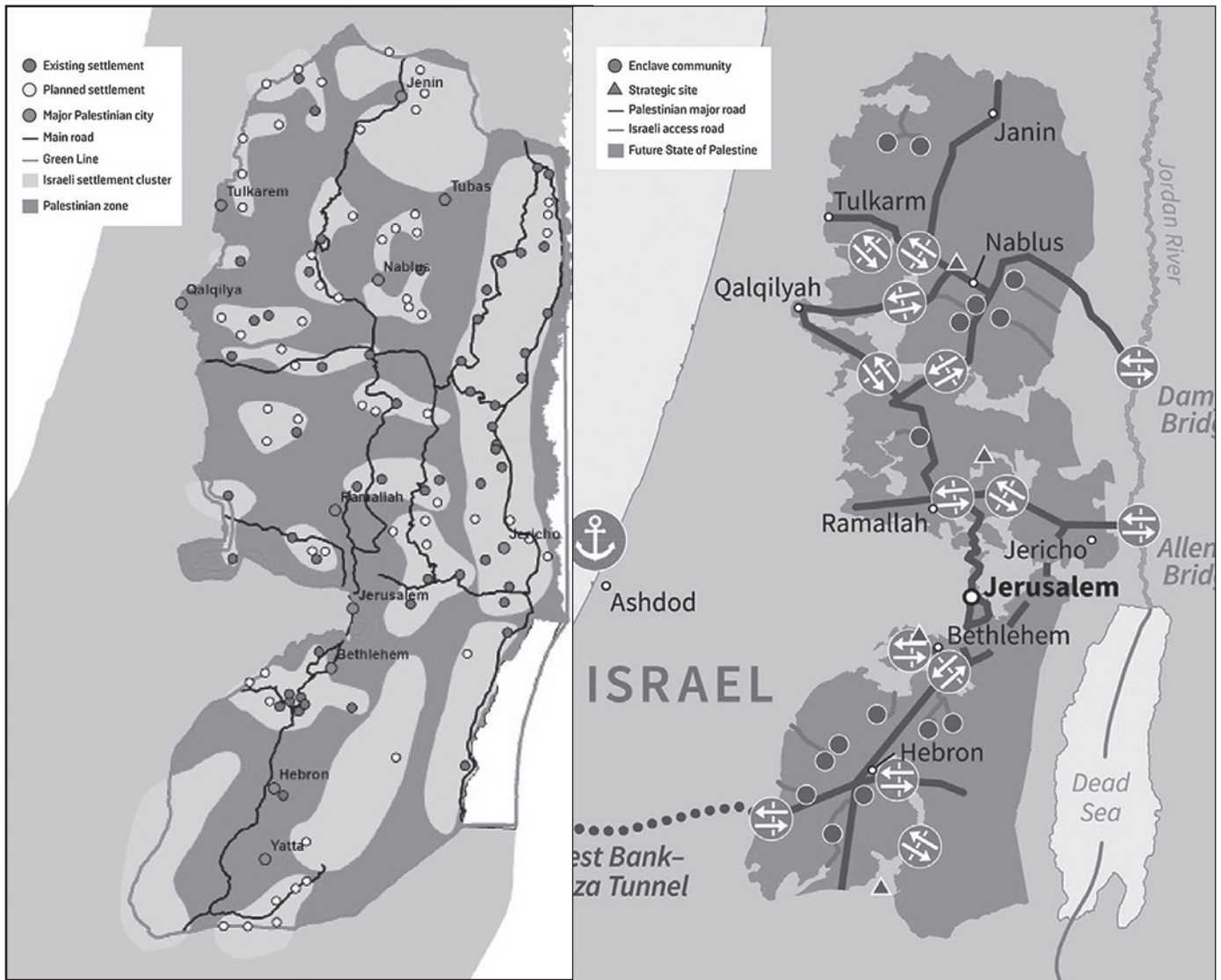
20. See, for example, the special issue of *Boston Review* on “Race Capitalism Justice” edited by Walter Johnson with Robin D. G. Kelley (Winter 2017).

21. See Carole Boyce-Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones*. (Duke University Press, 2008) as well as some of the recent scholarship discussed by Alan Walk in “From ‘Triple Oppression’ to ‘Freedom Dreams’” in an essay in *ATC* <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/162/p37771>.

22. Lisa Duggan, “(Re)Producing Social Justice After Neo-Liberalism.”

23. Katsarova, “Repression and Resistance on the Terrain of Social Reproduction.”

24. Federici and Linebaugh, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Common*.



Left, Drobles Plan (1979); right, Trump-Netanyahu Plan (2020).

The Trump-Netanyahu Apartheid Plan By David Finkel

MANY APPALLING DETAILS of the apartheid-annexation Steal of the Century proclaimed as the Middle East “peace plan” by Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu and Jared Kushner — the troika of the impeached, the indicted and the idiotic — have been pretty well covered by the progressive media and Middle East commentators. (I’ll suggest a brief list of sources at the conclusion of this article.)

Predictably, the plan rollout was timed to boost Trump’s standing with his Christian-Zionist fundamentalist base and the right wing of the Jewish community. It also bolsters his crony Netanyahu’s standing in Israel’s pending third election within the last year (the main opposition candidate Benny Gantz also welcomed the plan to annex Israel’s West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley).

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

In the White House drafters’ calculation, a “peace” deal on any terms would facilitate the strategic project to incorporate Arab regimes and Gulf monarchies, led by Kushner’s Saudi buddy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, into the U.S.-Israeli alliance against Iran. That’s also what lay behind the U.S. drone assassination of Iranian general Qassim Soleimani.

Writing in *The New Yorker* online (February 10, 2020), however, Bernard Avishai observes that “the Trump Administration’s plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace has already been so widely discredited for its one-sidedness and its political deviousness that there is a risk of ignoring its most immediate threat — which is not to the Palestinians but to Jordan.

“In Israel, the plan, or ‘Vision,’ as the document unveiled at the White House calls it, has been received as an American warrant for the Israeli government to annex West Bank

territory. This could precipitate a crisis in the Hashemite kingdom of Abdullah II, whose stability is critical to Israel’s security, and to that of America’s regional allies, particularly in any effort to thwart Iranian forces in Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf.”

If those are unintended consequences, many others are entirely intentional consequences of previous acts of the Trump and earlier administrations. The handwriting was on the wall when Trump named his bankruptcy lawyer David Friedman, a supporter and financier of the rightwing Israeli settler movement, as U.S. ambassador to Israel, moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, and announced that the United States no longer considers Israeli settlements contrary to international law.

This is entirely in keeping with long-standing U.S. doctrine that international law is only what the United States says it is, and applies when and only when the United

States says it does. In any case, the effective result is that Trump has put the final bullet into the corpse of the “two-state solution,” which has been dead in practice for quite some time anyway.

“I don’t think Jared Kushner has an idea in his head about anything to do with Palestine or Israel,” Professor Rashid Khalidi told “Democracy Now” (January 29, 2020). “He knows what he’s told. And this is dictated to him by his Israeli mentors, and it is meant to be an Israeli diktat to the Palestinians.”

Old Garbage in New Pail

Contrary to Kushner’s claim to taking “an unconventional approach,” Yehuda Shaul points out:

“(T)he Trump plan is actually as traditional as it gets. In fact, it bears striking resemblance to another plan published more than 40 years ago. In 1979, the World Zionist Organization released a plan titled ‘Master Plan for the Development of Settlements in Judea and Samaria, 1979-1983,’ written by Matityahu Drobles, a former member of the Knesset for the Herut-Liberal Bloc — a precursor to today’s Likud party — and the head of the World Zionist Organization’s Settlement Division, the body responsible for planning and building settlements.

“His plan was basically a detailed attempt to execute the then-Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon’s plan for settlement expansion — a task that successive Israeli governments carried out with great zeal over the following four decades, placing 640,000 settlers in key areas throughout the West Bank. Trump’s vision is actually Drobles 2.0.” (<https://foreignpolicy.com/>, February 11, 2020)

The plan’s map for disconnected Palestinian areas does break some new ground in its degree of dishonesty, as Shaul states: “Drobles was honest enough to admit what he was doing; he was explicit that what his map described was not a Palestinian state but the means to prevent one. Trump and Kushner support the exact same line of thinking, yet they call this collection of bantustans a plan for ‘two states.’”

There’s a reason for this deceptive language, which may be the plan’s most sinister dimension although it’s greatly underreported in the mainstream media. It envisions the “transfer” of Arab villages in northern Israel, where many of Israel’s 20% non-Jewish population lives, to the fake Palestinian “state” — along with the citizenship of their inhabitants.

This scheme, which would follow the logic of Israel’s recently adopted “Jewish nation-state law,” is not only an outrage in its own right. It follows a rising trend of ethno-supremacist reaction in many parts of the world.

The largest example is India, where the Hindu-nationalist government’s projected new “registration” threatens the citizenship rights of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Muslims who’ve lived there for centuries.

Don’t imagine it’s just a faraway trend. Donald Trump, if reelected, might feel emboldened to overturn the 14th Amendment’s guarantee of citizenship for anyone born in the United States, setting off a Constitutional crisis that would make his Russia collusion and Ukraine extortion look like child’s play. That might be a high crime too tall for even Trump to attempt, but it’s never a good idea to “misunderestimate” (as George W. Bush might put it) the criminality of this administration.

The “population transfer” threat is another reason why this travesty of a “peace plan” should alarm everyone. At this writing I’ve seen no leading Democrats calling out this most sinister feature.

Democratic Party presidential candidates and Congressional leaders mostly say they oppose the plan’s “unilateral” character with no Palestinian participation. Elizabeth Warren stated, “I will oppose unilateral annexation in any form — and reverse any policy that supports it.”

Only Bernie Sanders’ Senate office issued a statement that a peace deal must “end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and enable Palestinian self-determination in an independent, democratic, economically viable state of their own alongside a secure and democratic state of Israel.”

Sanders is the one candidate who speaks

the words “Palestinian self-determination.” That’s laudable in the face of the long U.S. bipartisan support for Israeli supremacy, especially as the Bernie-bashing campaign of the Democratic party establishment and corporate media revs up to full throttle.

Regrettably, the potential for achieving meaningful Palestinian self-determination within the “two-state solution” has been strangled by Israeli action and imperialist complicity.

Nor does the U.S. ruling class care about Palestine at all, and its cynical endless exercises around a “peace process” with no peace have produced the present result.

The struggle ahead against the Israeli state’s imperialist-abetted apartheid-annexationist “solution” will be long and difficult. It’s up to the solidarity movement at the grassroots to intensify our activism, especially around the global Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions (BDS) campaign, educate our communities, and put Palestinian rights on the agenda from the bottom up. ■

Further Reading:

Professor Rashid Khalidi has written several important articles, including this one at <https://time.com/5774722/trumps-plan-outrageous-palestinians/>, and interviews including on “Democracy Now” (www.democracynow.org, January 29, 2020).

Jonathan Cook, a journalist based in Nazareth, Israel dissects Jared Kushner’s discussion of the Palestinian Authority’s “police state” at <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/2020-02-04/kushner-palestinian-police-state>. His article on the sinister “transfer” plan is at <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/2020-02-07/israels-palestinian-minority-has-good-reason-to-fear-trumps-plan/>.

On the growing strength of the fanatical Israeli religious-settler right wing, Moshe Machover’s essay “Messianic Zionism — The Ass and the Red Heifer” appears in the February 2020 issue of *Monthly Review*.



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Chicago Teachers Strike & Win Again By Robert Bartlett

THE 2012 CHICAGO Teachers Union (CTU) strike was a defining moment that changed the narrative and direction of teacher unionism. The community supported the strike because they saw the teachers' demands as fighting for what schools should be.

The union leadership, forged out of a caucus that supported parents when they struggled for better schools, described this process as "bargaining for the common good." After years of attacks on public teachers, the victory against a neoliberal mayor laid the groundwork not only for schools that Chicago children deserve, but opened a path for teachers' unions across the country.

In 2019, the stakes were just as high for the CTU and again they came away with a clear victory. The strike settlement contains improvements for educators and students with no givebacks.

However, there are significant differences from 2012. This contract fight was not defensive, but offensive. It clearly demanded changes to provide equity in education. The teachers also highlighted social demands beyond the classroom and outlined where the resources existed that could correct them.

The second difference was in the political leadership of the city. The election of Lori Lightfoot as mayor in April 2019 was a repudiation of the policies of former mayor Rahm Emanuel. The CTU forced the new mayor to bargain on a range of issues that the union has no legal right to strike over.

Robert Bartlett was a high school teacher for 25 years and is an associate member of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators. He was active in the 2012, 2016 and 2019 CTU solidarity campaigns.

This reflected the union's work at explaining what education means over the last nine years.

This fight also marked a real step forward in the two unions representing teachers and staff, who carried out a joint strike against austerity — no small step in Chicago. The fact that not all the goals were achieved takes nothing away from the strike. In fact given the powerful forces that confront unions like the CTU that should not be surprising.

What is surprising is to see how the landscape of education has changed since the 2012 strike. When the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) won election in 2010 it confronted the wreckage of "educational reform" that blamed teachers and their unions for all the shortcomings that resulted from inadequate funding and rampant inequality.

With teacher unions scapegoated as the culprits, the solution was the implementation of a multifaceted privatization campaign that promoted vouchers, school performance metrics based on high stakes testing, and the establishment of privately run, publicly funded and non-union charter industry. Many of these were for-profit enterprises.

Strike Preparation

Several factors had to be considered in preparing for the 2019 strike. First, in the year following the 2012 strike — and despite opposition by the CTU and parents — Mayor Emanuel forced the closure of 50 Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Ninety percent of them were in Black and brown neighborhoods. Hundreds of teachers, disproportionately African American teachers, unable to follow their students to the schools they were assigned to, lost their jobs in this process.

Second, student-based budgeting — an allotment of money to schools based a per student basis, *not the needs of the school* — led to a diminishment of educational resources in poorer areas. But schools in more affluent neighborhoods were able to raise supplemental funds to provide for smaller class sizes and a richer and more diverse curriculum.

Third, since 2000 the dual track policy of starving neighborhood schools of resources and encouraging gentrification had pushed almost 200,000 Black people out of the city. Public housing was torn down and rents skyrocketed. The increasing school starvation also drove students into charter schools.

Fourth, teachers have been under pressure from the threat of losing their jobs. Along with the decline in school enrollment, they have been saddled with a punitive evaluation process which ranks schools and teachers' "effectiveness" based on their students' standardized test scores. Of course these scores highly correlate with family income. Added to the oppressive evaluation procedures, the school system developed a policy of training what teachers call "bully principals." Fear of being targeted undercut teacher confidence gained during the strike.

As a result of these relentless attacks, some CTU teachers felt that "social movement unionism" left them unprotected. This led to a contested CTU election in May 2019 by a conservative group of teachers called "Members First." Their appeal to the membership was based on opposition to the inclusion of social justice issues affecting the majority of students of color as a union priority.

Their strongest support came in whiter areas of the city where police and firefighters live. (Chicago has a residency policy for all public workers, including teachers.) This conservative layer of educators were aggravated by the CTU leadership's support of groups like Black Lives Matter and restorative justice practices in schools.

After the roughly two-to-one leadership victory by CORE, the union could focus on building the legally required support necessary to approve a strike vote. (Illinois designed a law applicable only to Chicago teachers; 75% of *all* teachers, not just a majority of those voting, have to vote yes.)

Another element that influenced the course of the 2019 strike is the payoff resulting from the CTU's organizing the charter school sector. After winning office, CORE developed a two-pronged strategy: to stop charter school expansion and to organize the teachers by their charter school networks.

By 2018, CTU and AFT had managed to organize about 30% of the Chicago charter teachers into IFT Local 4343. They then discussed and carried out a merger between Local 4343 and CTU. It was approved in CTU by a 70% to 30% vote, with those voting against merger partly motivated by a displaced anger at public school closings and the loss of jobs due to charter expansion.

Charter contracts were lined up to expire in most charter networks at the same time so that maximum pressure could be applied to the different operators. With the contracts expiring and the merger behind them, CTU prepared for the first charter school strike in the United States.

One big goal was to raise the charter teacher wages up to the level of the those in the Chicago Public Schools. They were also intent on winning a reduction of class size. Because they were not hampered by a state law over what they could

bargain and strike over, issues like class size and student supports set the table for CTU's strike. Teachers struck three separate charter networks — Acero, Chicago International Charter Schools, and the Instituto Health Sciences and Justice Leadership Academies — affecting 21 charter schools in total. Strikes ranged between five and nine days. Caps on class size, raises of up to 35% over four years bringing charter teachers close to parity with CPS, sanctuary school status for immigrant students, and language mandating staffing in special ed and kindergarden classes were all won.

This win advanced the conditions of the charter school teachers while opening up a window for CTU. As a result, the victory was strategic not only in strengthening CTU's power in the charter sector but in establishing a common narrative about the needs of all schools.

Along with these internal preparations for the CTU strike were a series of external factors. Key was the election of a new mayor. On top of his unpopular decision to close neighborhood schools, Rahm Emanuel got caught in a cover up of the police execution of Laquan McDonald. As a result, he decided not to run for a third term.

Both Lori Lightfoot and her opponent ran on education platforms that were hard to distinguish from that advocated by the CTU, calling for "equity" in education. After winning, she appointed the most progressive school board in the era of mayoral control. Board members include Miguel del Valle, a political progressive; Elizabeth Todd-Breland who wrote a well-regarded book, *A Political Education*, about Black politics and education reform in Chicago; and Dwayne Truss, a west side activist in the fight against school closings.

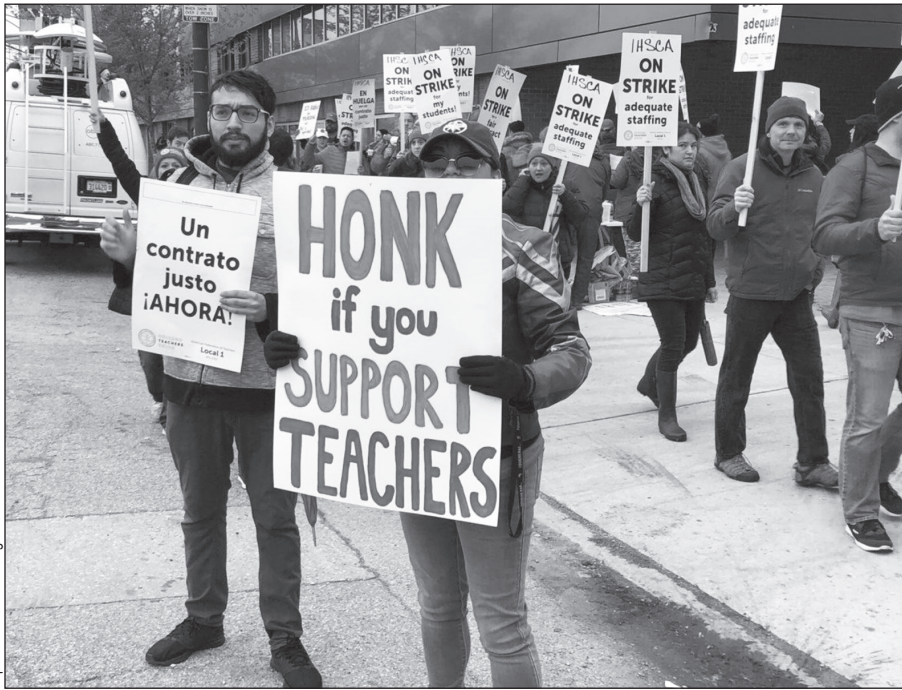
However, despite Lightfoot's campaign promise to support an elected school board (Chicago has the only appointed school board in Illinois), she stopped a bill establishing it in the legislature. She also kept the same CPS bargaining team that Rahm had used in 2012 and 2016, effectively maintaining the same policy as previous school boards.

Additionally, as a result of the defeat in 2018 of the rabidly anti-union governor Bruce Rauner by billionaire Democrat J. B. Pritzker, the finances of Chicago Public Schools improved. Under public pressure, the Illinois Legislature changed the state school funding formula. This resulted in CPS receiving almost a billion more dollars a year. It became harder to claim that there was no money to reduce class size or the wrap-around services CTU was demanding.

The last piece of the puzzle was the alliance forged between the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73 — who represent special education, classroom assistants and other non-teaching staff — and CTU. A new leadership in Local 73 sought a united struggle with teachers to raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers and to support the social justice demands both unions shared.

The Mayor's Strategy

While the former mayor had prepared for the 2012 strike by cancelling the last raise teachers won in their previous contract, and coerced school staff into signing contract waivers in exchange for \$125,000 extra money for their school, Lightfoot was willing to concede to the unions' demands on wages. But given the state law that limited contract negotiations to wages and benefits, she did not want any language in the contract to be binding on "permissive" subjects that define the everyday



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IHSCA charter school teachers supported the public school teachers and staff, as they had been supported in their earlier, and successful, strike.

conditions of schools. The law states that these can be bargained, but only with the consent of both parties.

Lightfoot didn't come with the baggage that Rahm had acquired, particularly given the deals he made with other unions in order to isolate CTU. She was willing to talk about equity in education but planned to keep a range of issues, from class size to the wraparound services the unions were demanding, limited to promises she might make.

The Strike

The issues that SEIU 73 and CTU were fighting for have striking similarities. With many of the lowest-paid union members qualified to receive food stamps, both wanted to lift poorest members out of poverty wages. For the lowest-paid public school employees the strike was definitely about money, but it didn't end there.

Both unions highlighted issues where staffing inadequacies deprive students of the services they need. This was particularly true for Teaching Assistants and Special Education Classroom Assistants, who were often pulled out of their classroom assignments to cover for absent staff.

Students in Chicago are faced with challenges such as the level of trauma in their neighborhoods due to lack of health insurance, levels of violence, challenges of being criminalized in cases of school discipline rather than using restorative justice practices and poor environmental conditions. The need for a nurse in every school, every day seems obvious, but social workers and counselors are equally necessary for the mental and physical health of students.

Those demands resonate beyond the most needy neighborhood schools. Staffing ratios of counselors and special ed case managers have been far beyond levels recommended by professional associations. Teaching in all its facets is dependent on the amount of attention adults can pay to students, which is why shortchanging students by cramming them into classrooms or pulling counselors and other staff from their

regularly assigned duties to fill vacant positions is an educational justice issue.

Given the number of undocumented and mixed status families, teachers and staff felt strongly that their students needed to feel secure at school; they raised the demand for sanctuary schools. And given that there are 16,000 students who are attending school while homeless, addressing homelessness became an important issue.

Another key demand was the suspension of additional charter schools during the life of the contract. Evidence has shown that the proliferation of charter schools has destabilized neighborhood schools in the Black and brown communities while not providing an education that is significantly different from the Chicago public schools they displace.

Non-unionized charter schools also suffer much higher rates of staff turnover than public schools in the same communities. This suspension of charter expansion can lead to more public advocacy for the necessary resources and support in neighborhood schools.

Another win was lifting the cap on sick days that teachers could accumulate from year to year. Accumulating sick days is standard in most teacher contracts. These can then be used as a credit toward their pension or cashed out.

In the 2012 contract CPS had demanded a limit of 40 bankable sick days, which had the entirely predictable result of teachers deciding to use their days rather than lose them. This exacerbated the shortage of substitute teachers and reduced the effectiveness of instruction when teachers used their excess days. Under the new contract teachers can bank up 244 days, thus overturning a stupid and petty rule.

In an example of the coordination between SEIU 73 and CTU, a month before the strike they jointly hosted an Art Build where banners, placards and parachutes (meant to be visible to hovering news helicopters) were made to dramatize the demands.

The Art Build was successful, demonstrating the unity between Local 73 and CTU and setting the tone for the issues both unions were pushing. These cloth banners were so popular that after a day of demonstrating it was hard to retrieve the items from members so they could be used at the next rally.

The tempo of the strike was similar to 2012, where picketing began at every school in the morning. Most afternoons featured mass rallies designed to pressure the mayor or highlight sources of revenue that had been diverted from schools to fund private development schemes. These had the effect of shutting the downtown but also demonstrating the strength of teachers and allies with rallies of up to 30,000 people.

On one multiple march day, three separate marches on the north side converged on the Lincoln Yards development, which had garnered \$1.3 billion in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) money. The next day the target was in the South Loop 78 project, slated to receive up to 1.1 billion TIF dollars to

develop land adjacent to a rapidly gentrifying area.

As the strike continued, CTU ratcheted up the pressure and demonstrated the commitment of its members by holding a civil disobedience training that attracted 500 teachers who practiced sit-ins blocking traffic in front of union headquarters.

The mobilizations had the effect of forcing the mayor to back down from each line in the sand she tried to draw. She had to back down on bargaining over permissive issues including class size, staffing, and support for homeless students, and the amount of money that she would put into the agreement.

Even when the tentative agreement was reached on the tenth day of the strike, Lightfoot stated that no lost school days would be made up. The next day a rally of over 10,000 encircled city hall and forced her to agree to make up five of the 11 days. *The strike blew the lid off the legal restrictions on CTU's ability to negotiate on subjects other than wages and benefits and has implications for the future.*

What Was Won?

Highlights in the five-year agreement included a 40% raise for the lowest-paid paraprofessionals and classroom assistants, paraprofessional salary lanes that reflect experience and training, and a 16% raise for teachers and clinicians. The major victory came on issues over which the union is legally barred from striking but are “permissive,” meaning they could be bargained by consent of both CPS and the union.

Gains won on permissive subjects include enforceable class size caps, money to reduce class size prioritized to the neediest schools, a nurse and social worker in every school every day by 2023, 180 more special education case managers, 120 more staff in highest-need schools, additional bilingual staff and resources, dedicated staff to support homeless students, sanctuary school protections, a moratorium on charter school expansion, and effective in 2020 a ban on the use of subcontracted clinicians. These are groundbreaking gains.

While the only loss was a 0.75% increase in insurance cost in the final years of the contract, some important demands were not addressed. The main one was no reduction in maximum class size guidelines. Currently these are 28 students in kindergarten through third grade and high school, and 31 in grades 4-8. Instead there is a stronger commitment to enforceable class size. In reality the only way the resources needed to adequately address the needs of the students of Chicago can be funded is through cutting off tax breaks for developers and instituting stiff taxes on corporations and the wealthy.

Strike Lessons

The strike is a clear victory in that the union forced the city to negotiate and concede on issues that the union was unable to legally strike over. The unions won significant concessions on many demands that addressed “common good” bargaining — on staffing and resources for the betterment of

education.

Despite the attempt by the mayor, the major newspapers and business community endeavored to make the negotiations solely about money, the memberships of CTU and SEIU 73 were having none of that.

The strike had a political focus. It revealed how taxpayer money has been diverted from schools and other social services through TIFs, funding development projects of the rich. CTU targets and talking points highlighted revenue sources, such as demanding a financial transactions tax to force the wealthy to pay their fair share. This educated the community on why schools are so underfunded.

As the strike continued the political education of strikers and city residents deepened as CTU emphasized social and economic goals. “Bargaining for the common good” was reinforced within the union and energized a new layer of CTU members hired since the 2012 strike.

I was personally heartened by meeting a former student on the picket line with her partner, and a former colleague who picketed one morning with her son. Both teachers are in their first year of teaching and reflected the engagement of new teachers. In fact younger members were prominent in the large mobilizations across the city, with young Latinx caucus members making up the majority of those arrested during the one civil disobedience action of the strike. Although gains in union consciousness achieved in one strike can be eroded over time, the CTU has worked to incorporate new leaders, especially people of color.

The teacher strikes in both Los Angeles and Chicago show some of the limits that the most visionary unions face today. It will take a movement on a national scale to begin to achieve the far-ranging political and economic demands raised in these strikes, but the terms of what we should be struggling for were advanced. That is no small achievement.

The unity between SEIU 73 and CTU was a watershed moment. Too often unions are willing to take a deal “to benefit



Educating the public about the misuse of TIF funding was an important component of the strike.

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charters will still be a difficult task, but one that is crucial.

At a February 12th celebration of the strike victory the CTU officers acknowledged the groups that made the victory possible. First were the strike captains and coordinators across the city, along with over 40 members of the negotiating team. Second were the teachers from the CTU charter school division, whose strikes in 2018-19 placed the issues of staffing, class size, pay equity and sanctuary schools squarely in the public.

Third were the members and officers of SEIU Local 73 who were so visible at every picket line and demonstration and showed the unity of strikers from both unions. Fourth were members of community groups and supporters who were on picket lines, organized the pre-strike Art Build (the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association sent a dozen or more members to lead this with CPS art teachers). Fifth was the CTU staff, and finally a special recognition of the nine members of the LatinX caucus who were arrested in a civil disobedience action.

their members,” but to the detriment of another union. Local 73 stuck to their alliance with CTU and continued to honor picket lines even after they reached a deal for their members — a principled stance that should be the norm in the labor movement.

Public support of the strike was favorable but harder to judge. At the west side school in the Black community where I picketed, support by passing motorists who honked, was good. CTU members on the picket lines across the city reported consistently strong public support, even when approaching days nine and ten of cancelled classes.

Eleven days of no school is hard on parents, but there were few signs of exasperation with the teachers and staff on picket lines or demonstrations. One measure of public support over the social goals of the strike was the gradual change in news coverage to shift away from pay issues to staffing and student support demands.

Both papers initially demanded that teachers “take the deal.” After the strike was settled, one of the papers that had lambasted CTU for bringing up “extraneous” issues like homelessness ran an article lauding the new services that the homeless students will receive under the new contract.

External support efforts like the Chicago Teachers and Staff Solidarity Campaign were a shadow of their 2012 strength in the numbers of people attending meetings and being able to reach out. Reasons for this include the dissipation of the remnants of the 2011 Occupy movement who were the core of the 2012 committee, and the diminishment of the far left whose cadres had more organizational experience than the new activists of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Community groups were in support of the strike, but less visible in coalitions than in 2012. Broader union support still reflected the deep divide between the left-wing CTU and traditional trade unions that organized a support rally but didn’t mobilize their members to attend.

The victories of the charter strikes need to be followed up with a continuation of the organizing effort of the last 10 years. So far the largest non-union charter chain, Noble Street, has responded to the strike by raising their pay scales in an attempt to head off internal pressure. Organizing at the

Next Steps

In addition to making sure the provisions on the contract are carried out, CTU needs to take advantage of the union’s power to achieve several legislative changes. The first is to take away mayoral control of the school board, and institute an elected representative school board.

The second is to overturn anti-democratic measures meant to limit the power of unions and working people, as well as denying rights to the majority Chicagoans of color who need to direct the education of their students. This will require a broadening coalition of labor and community organizations.

Despite its limits, the victory in Chicago continues to provide an impetus for other labor activists to broaden the use of common good bargaining and strategic goals. It also shows how crucial a leadership is if unions are to succeed in challenging the power of our opponents. It was impressive to see how that leadership deepened as teachers and staff stepped up to the responsibilities of the strike. It will be a test to see how those new member leaders continue to build CTU’s vision and practices.

Along with the new members who stepped forward in 2020 it should be noted that since the CORE swept office in 2010 with Karen Lewis as its head, nearly a decade later only one of the original candidates, Jesse Sharkey, is still in office. Lewis retired in 2018 after fighting an aggressive form of brain cancer. The loss of the charismatic Lewis was a blow, but the continuity of CORE’s vision as a socially active union survives the changes in leadership.

A common chant in the strike was “when we fight, we win.” There is no guarantee that a strike can always win, but the converse is certainly true — when we *don’t* fight, we lose. We’ve had plenty of examples of that over the past 40 years, and it is time to continue using aggressive strategies and tactics that can increase chances of winning. That is the real bottom line of teacher and other union struggles. ■

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: From Freedom Now to Black Power

By Martin Oppenheimer

SIXTY YEARS AGO the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was founded by delegates from Black student groups that had been staging sit-ins to integrate lunch counters in the South.

The sit-ins had spread rapidly from the first one in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, 1960. In a period of 60 days the sit-ins had spread to nearly eighty communities as far apart as Xenia, Ohio and Sarasota, Florida. It had become clear that training for and coordination of these scattered efforts were needed. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ella Baker of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) secured the cooperation of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, all committed to nonviolent desegregation efforts, to sponsor a “Leadership Conference on Nonviolent Resistance.” The Conference began on April 15 at Shaw University, a predominantly Black institution in Raleigh, the North Carolina state capital. Ella Baker had been a student there.

Rev. James Lawson, an activist from Nashville, Tennessee, was named coordinator of the Conference and gave the keynote address. In it he exposed a rift between the more traditional National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the more militant direct action-oriented students who had come to the Conference.

He called *Crisis*, official organ of the NAACP, the magazine of the “black bourgeois club.” Ella Baker downplayed this disagreement in order to maintain an appearance of unity. She would play a crucial role in mediating disputes within SNCC over the next few years.

On its final day, April 17, 1960, the Conference established a coordinating committee and adopted a statement of purpose, written by Lawson. It affirmed “the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose...and the manner of our action.” This committee soon ended its “temporary” status to become what we know as SNCC.¹

Over the next two years numerous facilities including libraries, swimming pools, and even churches were desegregated in the Upper South. SNCC went on to play a major role in “Freedom Summer,” the 1964 campaign to register Black voters in Mississippi. The year following Freedom Summer marked the high point of SNCC’s strength. In 1965 there were 200 full-time SNCC workers.

But very soon SNCC would come to a critical strategic crossroads. It took the path from nonviolent direct action and its slogan “Freedom Now” to Black Power. This essay will explore how that happened, and its consequences.

Martin Oppenheimer was a delegate to SNCC’s founding convention and to CORE’s national conventions in 1964 and 1965.

Any substantial changes in the segregationist system of the five states of the Deep South (as distinct from the Upper South where most of SNCC’s actions had taken place) seemed impossible in the 1960s due to the sheer terror (bombings, assassinations, jailings) facing civil rights workers on a daily basis.

In late 1963 civil rights organizations determined to attack this system by means of a concentrated campaign to register the unrepresented Black population of Mississippi to vote. This became “Freedom Summer.” SNCC believed that local authorities, supplemented by mobs, would undoubtedly block any attempt to register Black voters. Their violence would force the federal government to intervene.

Whether President Johnson liked it or not, America’s image in world politics, in the midst of the Cold War, was at stake. To push this strategy further, a Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) — separate from the segregationist official Democratic Party — was created. The plan was to challenge the regular Democratic Party and attempt to displace it at the Party’s August, 1964 Presidential Convention in Atlantic City, N.J.

In mid-June 1964 some 300 college students, mostly white Northerners, were brought to a college in Oxford, Ohio, to prepare for the campaign, which was sponsored by an umbrella organization, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). Overall about 900 volunteers eventually participated, of whom about 135 were Black.

Given the miserable performance level of Black public schools, a parallel campaign was also created to set up Freedom Schools to teach Black students in a variety of subjects. A representative of the U.S. Justice Department told the volunteers that it could not protect voter registration workers, despite the fact that both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy had used federal troops to protect students attempting to integrate schools several years earlier.

Soon after the campaign began three volunteers, James Chaney (Black), Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman (both white), disappeared after having been briefly arrested in Philadelphia, Mississippi. A Black church, the Mt. Zion United Methodist nearby, had been burned to the ground. The three men went to investigate on June 21. Their bodies were found on August 4.

The FBI took no action in the critical two days between the disappearance and the murders, it would later be shown, but soon 21 men were arrested for violating the civil rights of the victims. The charges were dropped by a U.S. Commissioner, but in later years there were arrests in that and other cases thanks to persistent efforts by relatives and



allies of the victims.²

The project went forward despite continuing attacks, including bombings, and about 1,000 arrests. COFO collected data about these events that went to 26 pages. Black farmers in the areas where organizing was going on were armed, which limited the violence somewhat. There was also widespread press coverage.

The MFDP delegation to the Democratic Party's Atlantic City Presidential Convention that August, 1964 included a number of SNCC members. The MFDP faced the formidable obstacle that a number of their liberal and labor union allies favored a compromise that would have allowed only two seats, and not as delegates from Mississippi but as at-large delegates. President Johnson and his vice-presidential nominee-to-be Hubert Humphrey were afraid that support for the MFDP would alienate Southern whites, who up to that time still generally supported the DP.

Every effort was made to keep the MFDP out. The compromise was rejected by the MFDP delegates. They attempted to take seats but were hustled out. They went home, many feeling that working within the conventional political system was useless. "In the eyes of the SNCC leadership, the Northern liberal elite had finally shown its true colors; moral force had proven no match for raw political power."³

Ironically, the official Mississippi delegation did not support Johnson anyway. Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate, carried Mississippi that November, plus all the other states of the Deep South. Four years later third party segregationist George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, carried most of these same states.

It had become clear to many in SNCC after the murders of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner that the federal government would not intervene even to protect white volunteers, much less Blacks. The issue of armed defense was now on the agenda. The question had come up at its Atlanta staff meeting the previous June, where those who were skeptical about white volunteers coming to the project also advocated that SNCC workers be allowed to arm themselves.⁴

The decision at that time was that no guns were to be kept in any SNCC facility, and that SNCC staff were not to carry guns. But SNCC refrained from taking a public stand on armed self-defense for others. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded on nonviolent direct action principles, also debated the question, with James Farmer, CORE's national director at the time, expressing fear that white liberal support would be undermined if their Southern activists became openly violent even in self-defense.

That fall, after most of the Northern white volunteers had gone home, the Ku Klux Klan and local police increased their level of harassment and violence against the continuing COFO campaign. In McComb, Mississippi, Black residents reacted to a bombing on September 20 by coming into the streets armed with guns, Molotov cocktails, and other weapons, and attacking whites and white establishments. Finally the federal government reacted. Nine Klansmen were tried for arson and bombing in October. After pleading guilty, they were put on

probation.

SNCC's relations with other civil rights groups and with liberal and labor supporters were gradually deteriorating. The MFDP's refusal to compromise in Atlantic City was one factor. But strains had also developed during the run-up to Mississippi Summer, when SNCC refused to sever ties to the National Lawyers Guild, which was providing legal counsel in a number of SNCC cases. The NLG was considered by mainstream civil rights and liberal groups to be Communist-dominated.

After Freedom Summer SNCC had become the face of civil rights, to the chagrin of some of the older, established organizations. The consequence was a drying up of financial support.

It was not clear that there had been much progress on voting rights. Despite the fact that there were now close to 200 full-time SNCC workers, morale was down. A reassessment was called for. It would be influenced by the experience of several SNCC leaders who had gone to Africa in September as part of a larger delegation sponsored by Harry Belafonte. There they were exposed to the socialist ideas of Sekou Tourè, the President of Guinea. They also met with Malcolm X. This was the beginning of a relationship that would last until Malcolm X's assassination on Feb. 21, 1965. The contact with Malcolm X also worried mainstream civil rights leaders.

In mid-November 1964, SNCC staff met at Waveland, Mississippi to reevaluate strategy. A Molotov cocktail was thrown. Some of the SNCC staff were armed and rushed after the perpetrators, who were caught, warned and released. Howard Zinn, the radical history professor who was the first to publish a study of SNCC,⁵ was told by a participant, "You have just witnessed the end of the nonviolent movement."⁶

It had also become clearer by this time that the group was no longer a coordinating body for campus-based organizations but instead a group of full-time organizers. Meanwhile, strains between white and Black SNCC staff were increasing. The latter thought white organizers would inhibit the devel-

opment of local Black leaders. This “foreshadowed a new racial consciousness that would pervade the black struggle in the last half of the decade.”⁷

More immediately, a factional dispute between a group referred to as “freedom high,” meaning a tendency to act on the basis of individual conscience, versus a “hardline” group favoring a more centralized, disciplined approach, was tearing at the fabric of SNCC’s solidarity.

Controversy also swirled around a demand from a women’s workshop that SNCC deal with discrimination against the women in its ranks. A group of women presented a position paper, “Women in the Movement,” which charged that women mostly performed office tasks. Some SNCC veterans, both men and women, pointed to the important positions held by women, and the critical role of Ella Baker, a SNCC founder and constant adviser.

SNCC women have testified on both sides of the issue. Jean Smith Young, also a Howard University student participating in Freedom Summer, for example, states that she “never felt discriminated against as a woman... I felt and experienced quite the opposite. SNCC was a liberating experience for me as a woman.”⁸ Veteran SNCC staffer Stokely Carmichael’s notorious remark, made apparently in jest, that the position of women in SNCC was “prone” didn’t help dispel the idea that there was at least some truth to the discrimination story.

There was also the highly charged and divisive role of sexual relations among the Freedom Summer volunteers, and in SNCC more generally. A number of Black leaders in SNCC had white girlfriends. During Freedom Summer white female volunteers faced an “explosive” dilemma: “They could either reject black males’ advances and risk being labeled a racist, or they could go along at considerable physical and psychological cost to themselves.”⁹

Demonstrating another dimension of this double standard, Black women volunteers who dated white male volunteers faced SNCC staff tongue lashings; Black men who dated white women did not. Adding to SNCC’s difficulties were resentments between the more “middle-class” staff, both Black and white, and Black staff who came out of local struggles and were less formally educated.

James Forman, the veteran Executive Secretary, also felt that Northern “middle class” elements were spreading the use of marijuana, which he considered politically dangerous. Neither the Waveland meeting nor a subsequent one in Atlanta resolved these issues.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party supported Lyndon Johnson in November 1964, to the dismay of most SNCC staff. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was on the horizon, and the MFDP had been promised seats at the 1968 Democratic Convention. Participation in the two-party system was becoming more feasible at least in some parts of the Deep South, especially in urban areas.

SNCC, however, was turning in a different direction, towards more radical views. In January, 1965 SNCC challenged the seating of Jamie L. Whitten and four other whites, who had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Mississippi the previous November, on the basis that Blacks were excluded from voting. The House voted 228-143 to seat them nevertheless. Actually, although this was a pretty good outcome, Cleveland Sellers wrote that the objective of the

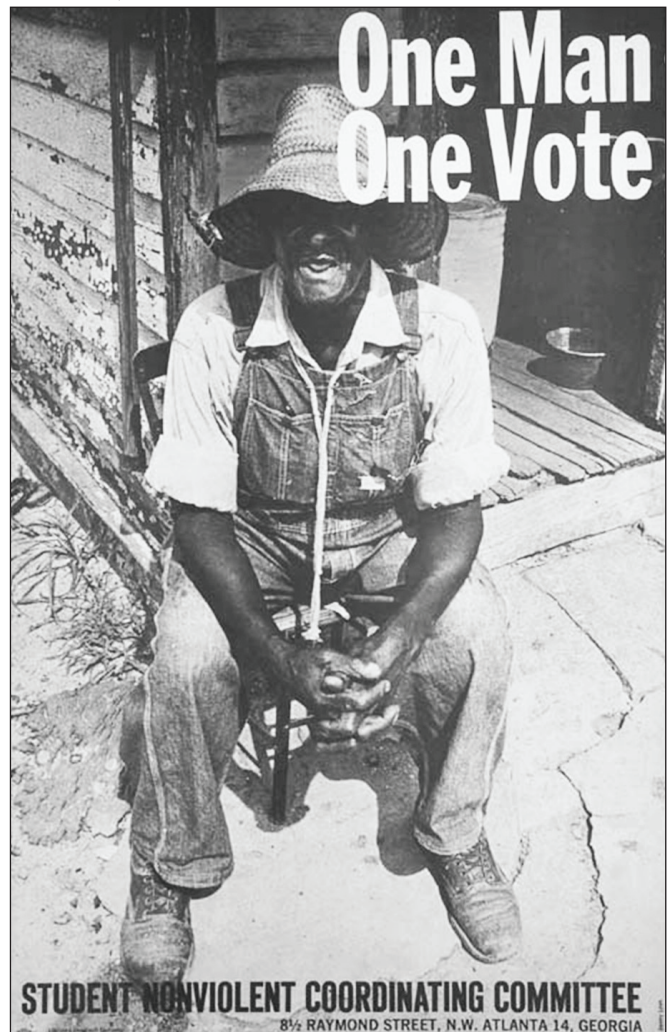
challenge was “to prove that the system would not work for poor black people.”¹⁰ Sellers’ view would prove to be overly pessimistic.

Early in 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference initiated a voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama. In Dallas County, where Selma is located, which was then more than half Black, there were only 130 registered to vote out of some 15,000 Black adults. Nearby, neither Lowndes nor Wilcox Counties had a single Black voter. King was arrested February 1 in Selma, setting off marches that led to a thousand arrests, including hundreds of school children.

In March, following the shooting of a Black protester, Jimmy Lee Jackson, by a state policeman, the SCLC decided on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to publicize the disastrous conditions facing Blacks in that state. About 2,000 began the march on March 7. SNCC did not participate officially, but many individuals including SNCC chairman John Lewis did.

At the Pettus Bridge just outside Selma, the marchers were ordered to disperse and when they did not, the police attacked, using clubs and tear gas. There were many injuries. Lewis was hospitalized with a fractured skull.

SNCC workers from several states immediately descended on Selma. The march resumed a few days later only to be halted by police. Martin Luther King Jr., at the head of the march, then turned it around in order to avoid further



violence. During the following days three white clergy who supported the movement were attacked. One, James Reeb, died of his injuries.

The march finally did continue to Montgomery, accompanied by U.S. Army and Alabama National Guard troops. On March 25, after a rally at the capital, Viola Liuzzo, a white volunteer who was driving to Montgomery, was killed by a sniper.

President Johnson used the Selma incidents to advocate new federal voter legislation. He realized, after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, that the Democratic Party was finished as far as the South was concerned and that it would not make a comeback until Blacks voted in much larger numbers.

The Democrats have not yet fully recovered from even Johnson's far from radical civil rights policies. President Obama carried only the Southern states of Florida, North Carolina and Virginia in 2008. In 2012 he lost North Carolina. Hillary Clinton carried only Virginia in 2016. No Democrat has carried a "Deep Southern" state since Bill Clinton won Georgia in 1992.

This persisted even in the light of vast demographic changes: the South had become much more urban, educated, and Northern in composition since the mid-1960s, and Blacks have voted in increasing numbers, overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party. In contrast, most whites in the South continue to vote against the party that is viewed by many of them as the "black party." In fact, the higher the percentage of Black voters in a Southern state, the lower the percentage of whites voting Democratic.

Following the Selma demonstrations, Stokely Carmichael moved to Lowndes County, Alabama to lead the campaign to register Black voters. Given the impossibility of taking over the segregationist Democratic Party organization, it was decided to organize a third party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. It used the ballot symbol of a black panther, in contrast to the white rooster of the official Democratic Party.

Soon the name would be changed to the Black Panther Party (not to be confused with the Black Panther Party in California). It was an all-Black party simply because no local white would join. Carmichael told prospective members that the role of the Party was just like that of other parties: "We want power, that's all we want."¹¹

Most local Black farmers were armed; so were many SNCC workers in Lowndes County. In addition, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, a Louisiana group consisting mostly of Black military veterans, occasionally provided guards at Black gatherings. A year later "power" would change to "Black Power."

The strategy in Georgia was different. Julian Bond, SNCC's communications director and one of its founders, won a seat in the Georgia State House of Representatives running as a Democrat. He was refused the seat by the white legislators due to his support for SNCC and its opposition to the Vietnam War. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered him seated.

The 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts and President Johnson's 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, the so-called war on poverty, presented SNCC with a classic dilemma of which direction to take. The reformist path seemed increasingly attractive to many. Voter registration

and electoral successes were now on the horizon. The war on poverty seemed to create real opportunities to change communities, and real salaries with which to support families.

Many SNCC staff, however, rejected these strategies as inadequate and cooptative. James Forman, SNCC's leading theorist, had predicted Washington's strategy and its consequences: The government "would pay people to work in its poverty programs — a reformist trap designed to militate against basic changes, for the government is not about to finance programs that are working to destroy the present economic and political system."¹²

Black nationalist tendencies within SNCC, influenced by Malcolm X and others, led to white SNCC staff feeling increasingly unwelcome. At the Kingston Springs, Tennessee, staff meeting in May 1966, Stokeley Carmichael, who was inclined towards Black nationalism and increasingly dubious about nonviolence, replaced John Lewis as chairperson.

Carmichael was 24 years old. Lewis was seen as insufficiently militant and too close to mainstream civil rights groups, especially the religiously-oriented SCLC. The issue of whites in SNCC now became urgent. If SNCC was 25% white, how could it develop a Black consciousness? Cleveland Sellers asked later.

The Kerhonkson, New York, staff meeting in December, 1966, was the last one with any white staff.¹³ By this time almost all whites had left, either to organize among Southern whites, or, since that was difficult to say the least, to move into other political arenas, mainly the antiwar movement. SNCC's going all-Black contributed further to its abandonment by the white liberal and mainstream civil rights community.

Even as SNCC and other groups were busy organizing in the South, Northern urban "ghettos" had exploded into a series of "race riots" beginning in Harlem, New York City, on July 18, 1964. These continued yearly, mostly in the summer months, mainly in Northern cities, with increasing violence until local, state and the federal authorities responded with overwhelming force.

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Black rebellion broke out on August 28. For three days white-owned businesses in the predominantly Black section of North Philadelphia were looted and police were attacked. Two people were killed and many injured, including 100 police.¹⁴ In the Watts section of Los Angeles, California in August, 1965, 4000 people were arrested, 34 killed, and about \$35 million damage resulted from nearly two days of rioting.

In the Newark, New Jersey rebellion of July 12-17, 1967, the National Guard was called out. In Newark 23 people were killed. In Detroit a week later, 5000 National Guardsmen were called in to control rioting. In the Spring of 1968, following the assassination of Martin Luther King, riots broke out in 138 cities. About 60,000 soldiers were called out to suppress them. More than 40 Blacks were killed and some 20,000 were arrested at least briefly.

These riots, termed "insurrections" by some, were not white versus Black. They were mainly attacks against property not Black-owned. The context, as President Johnson clearly understood, was the conditions prevalent in the decaying centers of cities that had become predominantly Black after World War II, with high rates of poverty and unemployment, job discrimination, poor educational facilities, and police hos-

tility particularly against Black youth.

Trigger incidents often involved an altercation with police. In urban areas progress towards equal opportunity was miniscule, and tactics of nonviolence were difficult to employ against landlords and politicians who were some distance removed.

The riots continued despite the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which provided significant sums to create programs to assist unemployed youth (including whites), and promoted “maximum feasible participation of residents” in local employment and other improvement programs.¹⁵

Militant civil rights organizations including SNCC quickly began “a veritable northward stampede...to establish organizational footholds in the ghetto...”¹⁶ Understandably, given the usual internal disputes and difficulties in relating to a population in the urban North that was very different from the rural South, this was a tough job.

Nonetheless, Jacobs and Landau’s view, that “the masses of poor Negroes remain an unorganized minority in swelling urban ghettos and neither SNCC nor any other group has found a form of political organization that can convert the energy of the slums into political power,” is an exaggeration.¹⁷

In every metropolis numerous organizations existed, from the NAACP and the Urban League to political party organizations, churches, and independent charities, and even chapters of the more radical National Welfare Rights Organization. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was also doing community organizing work among poor whites. Yet despite these efforts, the poverty of many “ghettos” remained fundamentally unalleviated.

A political backlash soon developed to the urban uprisings (and the increasing militancy of students, symbolized by the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of September, 1964-January, 1965). Black support for Democratic candidates for public office led to a Republican strategy to use “law and order” and patriotic, pro-war rhetoric to sway white Democrats to the Republican side. Moreover, the riots led to massive expenditures by local governments to provide their police forces with the latest weaponry, even including tanks in some cities.

The FBI engaged in successful efforts to infiltrate and eliminate radical Black activists. Bob Zellner believed that both Black and white informers, including *agents provocateurs*, had been in SNCC from the beginning. Mississippi’s NAACP was infiltrated by the state’s “Sovereignty Commission,” a kind of state FBI, to spy on civil rights activists.

By early 1966 SNCC found itself in yet another dilemma: if it failed to break with the President on the issue of the war, it would lose credibility with more militant Blacks. If it did break, it would lose even more financial support from the liberal and labor wing of the Democratic Party.

However, after the shooting of SNCC volunteer Sammy Younge, a U.S. Navy veteran, on Jan. 3, 1966, as he tried to integrate a “white” bathroom in Tuskegee, Alabama, the SNCC Executive Committee not only voted to oppose the U.S. government’s foreign policy, but went so far as to advocate support for draft resisters. This resulted in SNCC’s further isolation from mainstream civil rights organizations that were loyal to the Johnson administration.

SNCC’s move in the direction of Black nationalism and the slogan of “Black Power” gained ground with a resurgence of protests following the shooting of James Meredith on June 5, 1966. In 1962 Meredith had been the first Black to attend the University of Mississippi. His successful effort to enroll required the use of 31,000 troops including 11,000 Mississippi National Guardsmen called into federal service, plus a contingent of U.S. Marshalls, to put down what amounted to an armed insurrection by white citizens from across the state protesting integration of “Ol’ Miss.”¹⁸

On June 5, 1966 Meredith determined to walk from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, the state capital, to promote voter registration. A day later he was shot and wounded by a sniper. SNCC, CORE and King decided to continue his march and utilize it to register Black voters along the route.

Willie Ricks, a SNCC field organizer, at this point proposed using the slogan of Black Power to arouse local Blacks to join the campaign. It was quickly supported by James Forman back in Atlanta, and Carmichael who was with the march. Carmichael wanted to de-emphasize white participation, and supported the inclusion of the armed Deacons group.

King was dismayed, feeling that the Black Power slogan would backfire, alienate white supporters, and provide ammunition to racists. Even Meredith opposed the slogan. The NAACP and the Urban League, another old-line mainstream civil rights group, both withdrew from the march.

John Lewis was similarly critical, and in a later interview termed the slogan “meaningless rhetoric.” Vice-President Hubert Humphrey spoke out against it. Yet it was supported in the form of a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen.

Carmichael was arrested on June 17, then released and at a rally in Greenwood, Mississippi, deliberately made a point of raising the slogan of Black Power. The march ended in Jackson, Mississippi, after it had been attacked by white mobs and police at two earlier points. In Jackson, Carmichael again called for “Black Power.”

The slogan could be, and was, interpreted in many ways. The mainstream media took it as promoting violence and hatred of whites, even as “reverse racism.” The NAACP swiftly condemned it because it seemed separatist, that is, opposed to integration. Soon mainstream civil rights groups and leaders, including Congressman Adam Clayton Powell from Harlem, maneuvered to coopt the slogan, even holding several “Black Power” conferences. It was used by some Black leaders as rhetoric to promote Black business entrepreneurship.

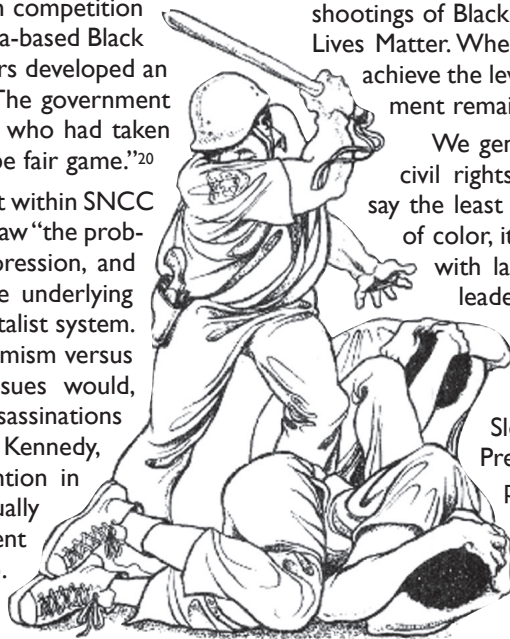
Yet Carmichael initially advocated only building a Black political base in order to elect Blacks to public office. Later in 1967 he wrote, with political scientist Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power, the Politics of Liberation in America*. Here the authors adopt a clearly radical, quasi-Marxist Black nationalist theory, that “black people in this country form a colony...they stand as colonial subjects in relation to white society.”¹⁹

Regardless of interpretation, Black Power galvanized young Blacks and its militant tone seemed to revive a sense of organizing possibilities. But it also irreparably sundered the tenuous coalition of civil rights forces in which up to now SNCC had played a major, perhaps the leading, role.

SNCC'S future still looked fairly bright. It would be seven more years until the FBI closed its file on the organization. But once the Voting Rights Act and President Johnson's "anti-poverty program" were passed, SNCC needed to find a new path forward. And Johnson's carrot was accompanied by the stick of repression. SNCC's advocacy of Black Power and armed self-defense attracted the attention of too many law enforcement officials.

SNCC's name was now a misnomer. It was no longer "students" nor nonviolent. It had turned into a cadre mini-party. In the Spring of 1967 it found itself in competition with a new organization, the California-based Black Panther Party. SNCC and the Panthers developed an on-again, off-again partnership but "The government was on the offensive and everybody who had taken a revolutionary position seemed to be fair game."²⁰

There was a fundamental argument within SNCC between those like Carmichael who saw "the problem" as primarily one of racial oppression, and those like Forman who believed the underlying issue was social class, that is, the capitalist system. This was on top of the issue of reformism versus revolutionary action. These two issues would, in the maelstrom of 1968 (the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, the riot at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, continuing arrests) eventually result in a change of name (to Student National Coordinating Committee). Additionally, there were splits, defections, exile for some, clandestine existence for others and even an unsolved car bombing leaving two SNCC cadre dead in 1970. By the Spring of 1971 SNCC was effectively done, in the estimation of the FBI.²¹



Frank Cieciora

Was the advocacy of armed defense and the turn to Black Power the crucial element in SNCC's demise? In my view the turn was inevitable at the time if SNCC was to remain relevant to many younger Blacks. Still, this development certainly hurt access to financial resources and did lead to the disaffection of some members and allies.

None of the militant Black organizations of the 1960s that supported armed resistance survived at the national level. Between repression and cooptation, the revolutionary elements of the Black freedom struggle were (for the power structure) successfully stalled. SNCC, however, was responsible for much of the groundwork for the next phase of the freedom struggle: the election of Black public officials in the South.

Soon there were increasing numbers of Black mayors, members of Congress and statewide office holders. Some, such as John Lewis, still in Congress at the close of 2019, had been among SNCC's founders. Marion Berry, SNCC's first chairperson, served two terms as Mayor of Washington, D.C. (including a political comeback from scandal and drug conviction — ed.).

Nationally, the number of all-Black elected officials at all levels, from Congress down to local sheriff, increased from 1,469 to 4,890 in the decade between 1970 and 1980 — still

a pittance, but the trajectory was clear.

Non-party civil rights activity would center on organizations led by a few charismatic individuals such as the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan and his Million Man March of Oct. 16, 1995, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH organization in Chicago and Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network. But there was little to show in terms of nationwide grassroots movement building.

When a grassroots movement finally began to take root in 2012-2014, it took the form of street protests against police shootings of Black and Latinx civilians and coalesced as Black Lives Matter. Whether that movement can be sustained and achieve the level of success of the 1960s civil rights movement remains an open question.

We generally don't think of unions as part of the civil rights movement. Although organized labor to say the least has a mixed record with regard to people of color, it should be remembered that many unions with large numbers of Black workers have been leaders in civil rights campaigns.

The 1941 March on Washington was organized by A. Philip Randolph, the socialist leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. It was called off after President Roosevelt signed an executive order prohibiting discrimination in the defense industry. The 1963 March, led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was peppered with union leaders and members.

Many of today's labor struggles, as in recent teachers' strikes and the "Fight for Fifteen," are led by Black and Latinx workers. Perhaps the workplace has now become the terrain of struggle for civil rights. ■

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REVIEW

Burning Questions of Our Planet By Steve Leigh

ON FIRE!

The Burning Case for a Green New Deal

By Naomi Klein

Simon and Schuster, 2019, 320 pages, \$27 hardcover.

AS WITH HER previous book *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein lays out an excellent case for a rapid transition to clean energy and leaving fossil fuels in the ground. Her strongest political point is that the Green transformation must be multi-issue. There are two reasons for this:

1) Logically the green transformation requires massive government involvement against narrow market-oriented private interests.

This fundamental restructuring of the economy must take up housing, education and re-education for the new green jobs; opposition to the U.S. military, the largest single user of fossil fuels in the world; support for Native peoples trying to preserve the earth; the need to transfer wealth to the Global South to deal with climate devastation; the need to allow in climate refugees and hence oppose xenophobia; redistribution of wealth from the top 10-20%, the largest contributor to climate change; and more.

2) In order to build a strong enough movement to bring this about, all sectors of poor and working people need to be involved. This demands a “just transition” for workers, ending environmental racist policies, taxing the rich so that the burden of transition doesn’t fall on the people the movement must mobilize, etc.

The author stresses that she *agrees* with rightwing opponents of a Green transition in one key respect: It will require a *fundamental transformation of the economy and society*. They oppose it not just because they want to protect fossil fuel profits, but because they want to preserve the wealth and power of the top one percent in all respects.

This implies that the strategy of soft-pedaling what it will take to make the transition is wrong. Ecosocialists cannot

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logically deny that the need for a radical transformation will upend current power and economic relations.

We won’t fool the right wing by a “moderate” strategy, and we won’t successfully mobilize everyone who needs to be mobilized by appealing to the middle of the road. Climate denial will not be beaten by radical change denial!

Klein points out that it is not just climate change deniers against whom we need to organize. The reality of climate change is so clear that many hard right people have become “Eco-Fascists,” whose ideology says that declining living standards and access to resources means that what is left should be saved for the superior race, for U.S. citizens. etc.

Their “solution” to the climate crisis is to further victimize the poor and people of color: Close the borders, kick out immigrants of color etc. This was the clear position of the mass murderer of Muslims in ChristChurch New Zealand. His massacre ironically caused a police crack down which ended a rally against global warming nearby! (42-47)

Capitalism is the Disaster

More generally, Klein correctly sees the climate issue as the way the rich can impose even more attacks on the poor, referencing the “Disaster Capitalism” that she explained in her Shock Doctrine. Overall, she shows clearly that the solution must be collective, democratic and solidaristic rather than individualistic, hierarchical and competitive.

Finally, she makes the very important point that we need structural change. Lifestyle change will not cut it. (132). She extends this analysis to warn activists not to burn themselves out by believing that they alone can change the world. (136) We need to be part of a mass movement.

Her radical critique of the current political system extends to the Democratic Party’s version of the Green New Deal

(264) which she feels leaves out a lot: challenging the military; cancelling the debt of the Global South; and the need to leave all fossil fuels in the ground.

[On many of these points, see Howie Hawkins’ extensive discussion of “The Real Green New Deal” in *Against the Current* 203, November-December 2019 — ed.]

Naomi Klein is an excellent writer and as usual makes a solid case for radical transformation of the energy system.

Yet this is exactly what’s frustrating about Klein’s writing on this topic. Her prescriptions don’t meet her analysis. Just as with *This Changes Everything*, she sees “capitalism” as an enemy of ecological sanity, but her definition of capitalism is often limited to its current brutal form of “neoliberal capitalism.”

Thus, even while targeting capitalism her solutions often assume the continuation of the market system. Accordingly, she also has too much faith in the ability of the capitalist state to enact the changes needed, even if under mass pressure. This alternates with her suspicion of central government and a call for local initiatives.

Her proposals (page 82 onward) show this clearly: 1) Expanded public sphere; 2) more planning in a mixed economy; 3) regulate the corporations; 4) local initiatives; 5) cut consumption of the top 20%; 6) tax the rich. These are mostly fine as partial measures, but assume the continuation of capitalism and therefore don’t get at the root of the problem.

Capitalism, not only in its neoliberal form, is anti-ecological in multiple ways:

1) It relies on continual expansion without regard to ecology or real human need.

2) Its commitment to profit, which is enforced by competition, means that pollution is considered an “externality.” Each competitive unit must cut its costs, both in terms of labor and its relation to the environment.

3) In its current form, capitalist production relies on fossil fuels. The whole industrial system is founded on this. It’s not just the oil, coal, natural gas, etc. industries that benefit economically from global warming, it is all the industries interconnected with them.

4) The capitalist state must support those industries in order to compete in the world market and system of states. This state is run for and by capital. It is not dem-

continued on page 37

REVIEW

A Voice of Resistance Revisited By David Finkel

Culture and Resistance

Conversations with Edward W. Said

By David Barsamian

Haymarket Books reissue (first publication South End Press, 2003), 193 pages + notes and index, \$17.95 paperback.

WHAT WOULD IT be worth to have the wisdom and passionate commitment of Edward Said with us today? What would Said have to say about the U.S. confrontation with Iran, the Syrian catastrophe, the ever-deeper bloody impasse of Palestine/Israel, devastating climate change, Donald Trump and so much more — especially the apartheid-annexation “Deal of the Century” atrocity that Trump-Kushner and Netanyahu have dumped on the Palestinian people?

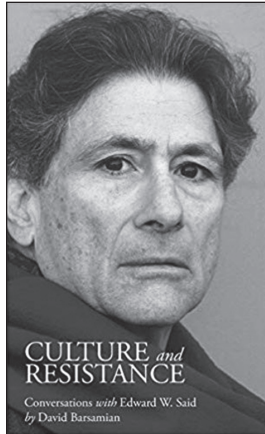
Sadly, we can’t know because Edward Said died in 2003 after a long and painful struggle with leukemia, “in and out of hospitals, about to begin treatments or recovering from them” as David Barsamian wrote at the time (Introduction, xvi).

This collection of extended interviews was conducted by Barsamian between 1999 and February 2003, and its welcome republication now by Haymarket Books serves as a reminder of Said’s thinking as well as a primer for readers who may not be familiar with this brilliant scholar, critic and engaged advocate of Palestinian freedom.

For those readers, Said’s political commentary and philosophical reflections may serve as bridge to the heavier lifting in reading *Orientalism*, his classic 1978 pathbreaking and controversial exploration of the distorted images of Arab and Eastern peoples in the imaginations of Europe and the United States, and how these have shaped dominant assumptions behind government policy, media portrayals and popular culture. Those topics are touched on here, but not in great depth.

For the most part, this collection could have been titled “Palestine and Resistance.” The role of culture is addressed mainly in the concluding discussion, “At the Rendezvous of Victory,” where Said refers to *David Finkel is an editor of Against the Current and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace in Detroit.*

the “whole assembly of cultural expression that has become part of the consolidation of Palestinian persistence and identity,” an observation that obviously pertains to many other peoples’ struggles.



He continues: “Culture is a form of memory against effacement... But there is another dimension of cultural discourse — the power to analyze, to get past cliché and straight out-and-out lies from authority, the questioning of authority, the search for alternatives. These are also part of the arsenal of cultural resistance.” (159)

“There’s no way of overestimating the pressure that all Palestinians feel. Here we are, being killed by a ruthless enemy, and all we have in our defense are young men throwing rocks at tanks and missiles and helicopter gunships.”

Grassroots Power

This means that cultural resistance threatens not only the direct oppressor — which is why Israel has gone to extreme lengths to smash up Palestinian institutions and steal their historical records and archives — but also established leaderships of oppressed people’s movements.

Although Said served for a time on the Palestine National Council, he was known as a fierce critic of the Palestinian institutional leadership for corruption, bureaucratic incompetence and accommodation to U.S. and Israeli dictates:

“There’s no way of overestimating the pressure that all Palestinians feel. Here we are, being killed by a ruthless enemy, and all we have in our defense are young men throwing rocks at tanks and missiles and helicopter gunships. That is the basic reality. We have a leadership that is unable to lead, for whatever reason.

For one, the leadership is in prison...

“The other reason is ignorance. The Palestinian elites, including intellectuals, still think that there’s a shortcut to influencing America, which is the main actor in this besides Israel.”

Said points out that grassroots activism, directed toward the American people and targeting corporate complicity in the Occupation, gets results.

“But what you need is a new leadership, an alternative leadership of intellectuals who make that kind of action a principal focus and don’t get diverted by things like worrying about the Arab League or whether the British or the Germans are going to do something.” (76, 77)

This remark in 2001 presciently foreshadows the Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions (BDS) movement, which arose from Palestinian civil society — not the official leadership — four years later. Unfortunately, Said himself would not live to see it.

A committed humanist as well as a Palestinian partisan, Said was clear that Israeli society and its people “are not epiphenomena, like Crusaders or imperialists who can be sent back somewhere. It’s very important for us also to insist, as I often do, that Israelis are Israelis. They are citizens of a society called Israel. They’re not ‘Jews,’ quite simply, who can be thought of once again as wanderers, who can go back to Europe. That vocabulary of transitory and provisional existence is one that one has to completely refuse.” (22-23)

In other discussions here, Said lays out his views on “a one-state solution” for the Palestine/Israel crisis, the “origins of terrorism,” the Palestinian Intifada, the 9/11 catastrophe, and his own life trajectory. It’s remarkable how current many of his observations remain almost two decades later, except that in most respects things on the ground have become even worse.

The book comprises in all six extended interviews in the same style that David Barsamian has conducted with Noam Chomsky, Eqbal Ahmad, Arundhati Roy and Howard Zinn among others. Barsamian produces the Alternative Radio program (<https://alternativeradio.org>), which has been running for more than three decades.

The republication of the present collection reminds us of how much Edward Said gave us, and how much he’s missed in the present catastrophic global situation. ■

REVIEW

Decaying Teeth, Decaying System By Rachel Lee Rubin

Teeth:

The Story of Beauty, Inequality, and the Struggle for Oral Health in America

By Mary Otto

New York: The New Press, 2017, paperback edition 2019, 304 pages, \$20 paperback.

WHEN I FIRST learned about Mary Otto's book, I was both immediately drawn in and internally shaken. I am from Baltimore — where, as it turns out, much of the book is set — and I've objected for years to the way poor people, especially Appalachians (many of whom ended up in Baltimore), are frequently mocked for their teeth: in Halloween costumes, in movies, in cartoons.

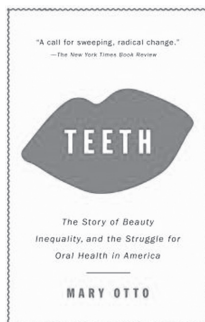
I was particularly offended recently by a book someone gave me that satirized wealthy right-wing politicians as monsters — because one was represented as a “hill-billy” with bad teeth. Indeed, pretty much every Halloween I end up seeing someone wearing a costume with rotting and missing teeth, and pretty much every Halloween, I want to approach and say, “Oh, it's so hilarious that people don't have equal access to dental care!”

In fact, my Baltimore construction-worker brother struggled — and failed — to obtain dental care, which he needed for multiple reasons that are taken up by Mary Otto, a *Washington Post* journalist who is the oral health topic leader for the Association of Health Care Journalists, and for years has steadily linked health care and class.

Otto's book is admirably successful at confronting and presenting the class-based health care inequality that is manifested through teeth. Her authorial strategies are multiple and deft; she combines particular examples in a sometimes-tragic, pull-no-punches way with careful historical research and contextualization. (Her effective use of oral history and class-based analysis make it not at all surprising that the book received a grant from a Studs Terkel fund.)

In addition to oral history and broader historical contextualization, Otto addresses dental care from an economic perspective, a philosophical perspective, a business perspective, a geographic perspective, and more. She addresses dental care as a health issue, but also as something that functions as a standard of beauty — in short, convincingly

Rachel Lee Rubin is a professor in the American Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.



are held personally accountable for the state of their teeth in ways that they are not held accountable for many other health conditions.” (vi-vii)

This is startlingly true despite the fact that dental insurance is separate from health insurance (Maryland, Otto notes, is one of a small group of states with no adult dental benefits under Medicare) and therefore for many people taking care of teeth is challenging. It is startlingly true despite the fact — as Otto points out multiple times, with convincing historical evidence — that many dental organizations and individual dentists resist preventative care and only perform treatment after dental problems emerge.

It is quite compelling that Otto's focus on the significance of “the integration of medical and dental records” (86) is still rare and striking. This is a second way I found Otto's book compelling on a personal level: she discusses how medical and dental treatment are still separated, which I confronted due to the fact that cancer treatment can have a damaging effect on teeth — as do other serious medical conditions, as Otto points out.

Health, Beauty, Overtreatment

The book approaches dentistry from two significant angles. First and foremost is health: in her usual combination of gripping personal stories and useful historical analysis, for instance, she writes about a disabled miner who lost his insurance when he had to leave the mine and how he suffered as a result.

She also explores the significance of dental care (and, it must be noted, economic class) to social standards of beauty — and again, adroitly connects these standards to class through personal stories, quoting for instance a waitress who worries that she will lose her job if she has “bad teeth.” (34)

Meanwhile, Otto points to an editorial

demonstrating that teeth are overly commodified, and that this commodification has far-reaching influence.

In the book's Preface, Otto notes that bad teeth “confer the stigma of economic and even moral failure. People

by a prominent Utah dentist that calls out certain cosmetic “oral overtreatment” as “nothing less than overt dishonesty.” (25-26)

A particularly good example of Otto's use of a case study to make institutional claims is when she takes up the fact that — as she quotes dentist and instructor Martin Goldstein saying at a gathering of dentists — “weddings are a terrific way to incentivize people to get their smiles done.” (12)

Otto also explores how an extreme instance of what she considers a shady “selling” of dentistry is the number of people with body dysmorphic disorder who are exploited by cosmetic dentists. In addition to exploring industrial habits and policies, she tracks the story of a beauty pageant contestant who worried deeply about her (healthy) teeth.

The book is usefully divided into three sections. The first is called “Bad Teeth,” where the author lays out how “bad teeth” are defined and how they influence health and beauty culture. In the second section, “The Dental Art,” she approaches teeth through health care and consumerism.

The final section is called “A Sentinel Event,” and here she bundles a great deal of analysis on the tragic story of an underserved 12-year-old boy, Deamonte Driver, who died when an infection in his teeth — which his family could not get treated — spread to his brain and killed him.

This section presents one of the most effective aspects of the book. Otto is able to hang a great deal of social commentary on individual experiences — particularly, but not only, class-based commentary. For instance, she points out that nearly half of young children (3-5 years) in Special Start have untreated tooth decay.

As Deamonte Driver's story indicates, one of Otto's most effective approaches overall is her use of particular stories to draw in readers and convey the cruelty of our country's approach. (In addition, Deamonte's story spread widely and was used as a carrier of commentary in many places, including on the Congressional floor.)

But then she gracefully pivots, using those stories as a lens on systemic injustice. In other words, she is able to turn sympathy and pain into a national story without turning her work into a series of numbers that are in their own way disturbing, but not

quite the gut punch of children dying — or being orphaned after their parents die.

But as effectively as Otto uses individual stories, one of the most admirable aspects of the book is its persuasive systemic commentary. A powerful example is how, in a chapter called “The System,” Otto directly confronts the many ways that dental organizations have pushed back against efforts to change our dental system and make it accessible, preventative, and not only cosmetic.

For instance, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (and others) called for national health insurance, a dental journal referred to it as a “monster of exploitation of the dental profession.” (143-144) Similarly, the American Dental Association stood up against a study showing a worthwhile service provided by dental therapists in other countries, writing that “throwing more ‘treaters’ into the mix amounts to digging a hole in an ocean of disease.” (169)

The ADA has long used a range of strategies to push back against accessible care, including what Otto refers to as “a rich war chest” for making campaign contributions and hiring lobbyists and legislative experts in Washington, DC. (170) Otto also notes that the ADA has resisted training so that there would be enough dentists to treat everyone — despite the fact that they had also pushed against national insurance by saying that there were *not enough* dentists.

Race, Class and Neglect

While Otto focuses usefully on how many reasons dentists and dental organizations give for not accepting Medicaid, she also pays attention to people who have tried to help bring access to dental care.

She writes about an occasion in Lee

Questions — cont. from page 34

ocratic and cannot be made to be so.

All this means that the creation of ecologically sane capitalism through reform is impossible. The movement for ecological sanity can win reforms that lessen capitalist destruction. However, since the root of the problem is capitalism itself, the whole system must be replaced.

The capitalist state needs to be eliminated, replaced with actual democratic structures that can transform the economy. To end the threat of global ecocide, we need to eliminate private and bureaucratic ownership, not just regulate it. We need complete democratic control of the economy from the bottom up. Profit must be eliminated and replaced by human need.

On the way to this goal, *On Fire* — *The Burning Case for a Green New Deal* is a useful analysis of the problem, even if its prescriptions fall short. ■

County, Virginia, when temporary tents were set up to give dental service to people without other access. Before dawn, Otto notes, more than 400 people were already there waiting, many of them experiencing a great deal of pain due to untreated dental conditions. (33)

Similarly, she writes about a mobile dental clinic at an elementary school (and movingly describes the reactions of some children who had never been to a dentist before). Otto is careful to note that lack of access to dental care is not just about ability to pay for the care. For instance, many people can’t get time off work, and don’t always have adequate transportation or phones.

Of course, race and class in the United States have always been mutually shaping — but Otto effectively takes up the racialized nature of dental care in the United States, writing, “In America, access to health care has always been divided along racial lines.” (181)

She takes this up in two ways: segregation being maintained longer than many readers might think, and the ways in which American racial history has left a physical mess. Certain diseases, for instance, are far more widespread in “minority children.” Some African Americans, she quotes an African American doctor as saying, who were kids during legal segregation, have seriously “paid the price for not getting oral health care as a child.” (184)

Meanwhile, from the other end, Black dentists had to form their own professional organization in 1913. Otto’s chapter on race takes up both patients and dentists. While she explores reasons for insufficient dental care, she remains a little bit optimistic about the future, at least in some states. But she notes that “dental care has remained far scarcer for poor children,” and that adult dental care visits have “have been in a state of decline.” (124)

With her usual adept and strategic application of an individual story, she writes about a blacklisted dentist — who worked hard to bring good dental care to poor Californians, which included many African Americans — who was called before the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities. (Happily, he pushed back hard.)

Although she does not state the concrete specifics of his political alignment, this man’s story does indicate that capitalism is against health care for all, for he is seen as a traitor for wanting to expand access to dental care.

Another significant approach of the book is the author’s confronting of the relationship of drug abuse to dental health. Once again, she is not blaming of addicts — instead, she movingly confronts a social

problem that has been getting more attention in the last few years because use of certain dangerous drugs has shifted to wealthier users.

She also flips this assumption to note that not only do certain drugs have a bad effect on teeth, but that suffering from dental pain frequently leads to poor Americans turning to both “legal and illegal drugs, folk remedies, and in some cases, pulling out their own teeth.” (38)

In addition to drug abuse, lack of access to dental care causes children with poor oral health to be nearly three times as likely to miss school, as a result of dental pain.

It is easy to think of the effects of missing school as building up and becoming more and more dangerous — a kind of avalanche — and while the author is not direct about this, it reveals that lack of access to dental care is not only due to class position, but also works to keep poor people trapped in their class position.

Finally, Otto’s historicizing is ambitious and successful. She introduces significant figures and their discoveries and assertions before the Civil War, and notes that cultural depictions of teeth go way back as well. For instance, she quotes a short story about a young woman selling her good teeth in 1833 to “ease her father’s dying days” and points out that graverobbers frequently stole teeth from buried bodies. (99, 102)

The one shortcoming of the book, in my opinion, is that Otto writes as though lack of access to dental care is largely ignored or unknown (although one-third of Americans have insufficient access), when the fact is that it is also frequently mocked — culturally as well as personally.

In fact, how teeth are mocked is quite telling as well. In my office, for instance, I have two offensive versions of costume teeth from the same company: what started as “hillbilly” teeth is now packaged as “junkie” teeth.

Perhaps the most summary and telling line in this incredibly engaging book is “The rate of dental suffering is a grim kind of economic indicator.” (37) I personally think it is, indeed, an economic indicator — one that is read by many and rarely evokes enough sympathy among well-off Americans.

Overall, this is a deeply ambitious, engaging and significant book — successful in terms of both content and rhetorical strategies. Otto’s writing is, at times, impressively efficient. Indeed, there are multiple phrases that, when I read them, made me think, “That would have made a good title!” But perhaps the most summary line in the book is a reference to insufficient access to dental care as “America’s silent epidemic.” (ix) ■

REVIEW

Escaping the Debt Trap

By Michael McCallister

The Debt System: A History of Sovereign Debts

and Their Repudiation

By Eric Toussaint

Haymarket Books, 2019, 280 pages,
\$19.95 paper.

YOU CAN'T REALLY understand the world, especially global North-South relationships, without understanding how foreign aid works. *The Debt System* will help you do that. The book argues for the necessity of a radical restructuring of global finance.

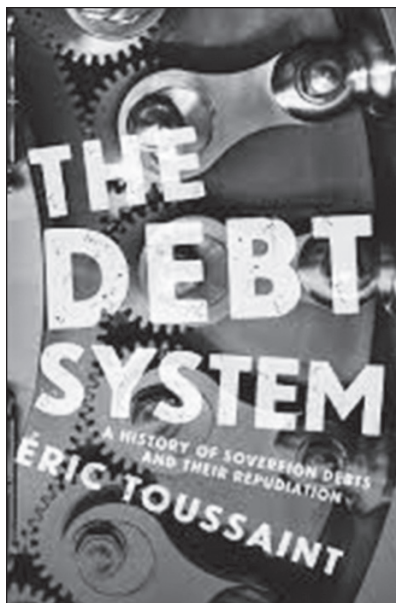
Eric Toussaint is a leading figure in the Fourth International and president of the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debts (CADTM), based in Belgium. The committee's website (www.cadtm.org) provides a compendium of important information about the debt problem. Toussaint's previous book was *Bankocracy* (Resistance Books, 2015).

In this work, Toussaint aims to explain the history of international development loans between the imperialist countries of the global North and the (neo)colonies to the South. Over the first seven chapters Toussaint outlines instance after instance "from Latin America to China, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire [where] the ruling classes in the global North have used debt as a means of accumulating wealth and as a weapon of domination." In short, you understand *the imperial power always profits from a loan to a colony*.

Toussaint tells some colorful stories from the records with a familiar pattern. The colonial collaboration regime runs to the European power with a plea for a loan to make war on a regional rival, or simply to keep the government running. European bankers come to the rescue, but at an interest rate that the colony can never afford. But hey, there's more money to borrow where that came from.

The cycle keeps repeating. That is, unless/

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until the debt is repudiated — which is the second theme of this book.

Consider Emile Erlanger. Toussaint describes him as "one of the most prominent bankers in the financial centers of Paris and London in the second half of the 19th century." He shows up in 1863 with a pile of money for the bey (king) of Tunis,

to help the bey pay for consular buildings for France and Britain, not to mention the French rifles he needed to replace a batch of useless weapons from Belgium.

"Genuine Swindle"

Erlanger sold Tunisian bonds worth 500 French francs for a bargain rate of 480 francs, with annual interest of 35 francs for 15 years. In turn, the Tunisian government received 415 francs for each 500-franc bond sold, and had to repay the investors 1025 francs for the same bond.

Meanwhile Erlanger pocketed a little over five million francs in commissions. Ten years later, a French treasury inspector described this loan as "a genuine swindle."

The bey and his prime minister were paid in cash, and deposited the funds in a special account, which never found its way into the government treasury. Presumably, the bey and his ministers pocketed all the money.

Meanwhile, the various creditors pressured the bey for repayment. No worries — the bey doubled the annual tax on each person in Tunis! This "caused a general rebellion in the country." It took the bey almost a year to quell the uprising.

Erlanger came to the rescue a second time, offering 36.87 million French francs. Tunisia only saw 20 million of that, but had to repay 75.4 million francs!

The cycle continued, until the French invaded Tunisia in 1881 to enforce debt collection.

A different set of events following the same general pattern led to the military occupation of Egypt by the British in 1882.

Debt Crises Then and Now

The book lives in the shadow of the Greek debt crisis in the last decade, and Toussaint reminds us that "The lives of Greeks have been blighted by major debt crises no less than four times since 1826." (59)

The first, in 1830, resulted in the Hellenic Republic overthrown in favor of a monarchy at the behest of a *troika* of the British, French and Russian monarchies.

When even the Greek king could no longer find the money in the treasury to service the debt, he suspended payments in 1843. Despite a series of popular rebellions, the *troika* attempted to impose another debt plan requiring massive public sector layoffs (including all but 26 university professors), wage cuts, and canceled public works programs.

When even those efforts failed to get the sufficient revenue for the *troika*, the British and French navies seized the port of Piraeus in 1854, and collected all the customs revenue for two years. Yet again, the *troika* insisted that the original loan from 1824-5 had not been paid in full.

The Greek debt was restructured yet again in 1878. Noting that Greek budgets delivered a surplus every year but two in the period 1837-1877 before the debt service was paid, Toussaint concludes that "Once debt repayment enters the picture, it becomes clear that it (debt service) was the sole cause of the unsustainable debt burden."

Toussaint reviews several Latin American debt crises in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even the continent's "liberator" Simon Bolivar was forced into agreeing to borrow from the former colonial powers in the 1820s.

Toussaint includes a useful chronology as an appendix, offering brief descriptions of debt crises. These include several not touched on in the main text, from 1815-1992.

Successful Debt Repudiation

Sometimes the debtor countries manage to win small victories against crushing debt. Toussaint explains in great detail how 20th century revolutionaries in Mexico and Russia successfully repudiated debts

incurred by their respective *ancien* regimes.

Toussaint describes the aftermath of the 1910 revolution in Mexico, leading to the establishment of what would become known as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that dominated Mexican politics for a century. In February 1919, a cartel of bankers from the creditor nations formed to bring Mexico to the bargaining table to resolve its debts.

Three years later, Mexican president Alvaro Obregon acknowledged a public debt of \$500 million. Toussaint contends that figure was twice what was actually owed (\$220 million from the previous dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, plus another \$30 million from 1910-1922). "On top of that," Toussaint writes, "he agreed to add \$200 million as default interest."

Mexico began repaying on this doubled debt, but suspended debt payments on June 30, 1924 after the budget deficit got too deep. After several cycles of resuming and suspending payments, the Mexican Congress canceled the most recent agreement between the government and the bankers in January 1932, at the height of the global Depression.

In 1941, just before U.S. entry into World War Two, President Franklin Roosevelt insisted that the bankers' cartel give up trying to enforce debt payments from Mexico

and Brazil. The cartel reduced the \$510 million bill it was trying to steal from Mexico, and agreed to accept just \$50 million (capital and interest).

The post-revolutionary debt situation in Russia was more complicated, but settled in an equally decisive manner. The Soviet government suspended payment of all international debt just months after the October Revolution of 1917, and all czarist debts were repudiated in February 1918. [Eric Toussaint describes the subsequent struggle in detail in ATC 195, "The Soviets and Tsarist Debt," online at <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/195> — ed.]

Soviet debt repudiation was one reason for 13 countries invading Russia to support the counterrevolutionary White forces in the civil war that followed the revolution of 1917. In April 1922 Great Britain, France, Belgium, Japan and Italy hosted a conference to force the Russians to again acknowledge the repudiated debt and stop demanding global revolution.

"The Western capitals believed that Soviet government to be on its knees and were convinced they would get what they wanted by making the new loans and investments Russia needed conditional upon the acknowledgment of previous debts and compensation for expropriated Western companies." (194)

The Bolshevik government proposed to

resume partial payment of the Tsarist debt if three conditions were met by Western powers. (195) These were:

- Diplomatic recognition of the Soviet government
- Bilateral loans
- Encouragement of private firms that were demanding payment for expropriation to accept concessions to exploit natural resources in Siberia and other locations as compensation.

Five weeks after the start of these negotiations, Russia dropped out, with foreign minister George Chicherin declaring that "Governments and administrations created by revolutions are not bound to respect the obligations of the governments which have been overthrown." (203)

Aside from a brief reference to Argentina's debt suspension from late 2001 to March 2005, *The Debt System* does not discuss today's international debt. Readers interested in current topics should closely follow the CADTM website.

Theories of Odious Debt

Chicherin's declaration is an excellent summary of the theory of "odious debt." Toussaint turns more theoretical in Chapter 8, where he describes the theory of "odious debt" that Chicherin summarizes so well. The phrase comes up frequently in the preceding historical chapters, but he offers a more thorough explanation of the concept here and in the following chapter.

Alexander Nahum Sack is considered to be the originator of this concept, which suggests that in exceptional cases, debts may be written off by new regimes: Sack wrote:

"If a despotic power contracts debt, not for the needs and interest of the state, but to strengthen its despotic regime, to oppress the population that combats it, that debt is odious for the whole state. The debt need not be recognized by the Nation: it is a debt of the regime, a personal debt of the power that contracted it and consequently falls along with the power that contracted it." Les Effets des Transformation des Etats sur leurs dettes publiques et autres obligations financières: traité juridique et financier, Recueil Sirey, Paris, 1927, 157, quoted in Toussaint, 131

Since 2008 CADTM has campaigned for "a new doctrine of illegitimate, illegal, odious, and unsustainable debt" cancellation. This doctrine includes considerations of whether the debtor state is democratic, whether it respects human rights, whether the debt is incurred within the framework of "structural adjustments" (enforced austerity), and includes all debts incurred to pay back previous odious debts.

On grounds of global social justice, *The Debt System* makes a strong case for this new doctrine. ■

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REVIEW

Class, Race and Elections By Fran Shor

Merge Left:

Fusing Race and Class, Winning Elections, and Saving America

By Ian Haney Lopez

The New Press, 2019, 288 pages, \$27 hardcover.

THE LEFT IN the United States has historically floundered over how to develop a political strategy that recognizes all the contradictions inherent in the intersections of class and race. Early 20th century socialists, like Eugene Debs, believed that attacking the class system embedded in capitalism would, in itself, solve the “Negro Question.”

On the other hand, the Communist Party USA during its “Third Period” in the late 1920s and early 1930s, raised the slogan of “Self-Determination for the Black Belt,” not with regard to the actual wishes of African Americans (North or South) but in obedience to the doctrine of the Communist International that dictated a nationalist line.

Ian Haney Lopez, a University of California-Berkeley law professor and author of *Dog Whistle Politics* (2014), in his important new book, *Merge Left: Fusing Race and Class, Winning Elections, and Saving America*, tries to navigate between a “class” left that continues to subordinate issues of racial justice under a banner of “economic populism,” evident at times in the Bernie Sanders campaign (141-45), and racial justice radicals who dismiss class as a determining factor in addressing the persistence of white supremacy. (98-116)

Acknowledging the co-determining role of class and race, Haney Lopez proposes a race-class approach that he believes will engender racial and economic justice.

There is much to admire and emulate in Haney’s analysis and strategy. At the same time, in his efforts to formulate a political strategy that goes beyond what he sees as the underlying “moral” arguments of racial justice advocates and downplaying of racism by the class left, Haney Lopez’s positions become problematic precisely to the extent that they focus almost exclusively on electoral politics and the reliance on a “winning”

Fran Shor is a Detroit area activist and retired Emeritus Professor of history at Wayne State University. His book Weaponized Whiteness. The Constructions and Deconstructions of White Identity Politics (Brill) is forthcoming in paperback from Haymarket Books in September 2020.



consistently vote Republican — are susceptible to coded messages about threatening or undeserving people of color but are not consciously committed to defending white dominance.” (20)

In relying on polling data that are framed around ideological messaging for electoral campaigns, *Merge Left* diminishes the role of collective struggle that contests class and race rule and the identity structures that prop up racial resentments.

On the other hand, Haney Lopez’s analysis provides much insight into how racial resentments are mobilized by politicians, especially with what he calls, following George Lakoff, “core narratives.” Those narratives, which work to reinforce the rule of a white oligarchy, are: “1. Fear and resent people of color; 2. Distrust government; 3. Trust the marketplace.” (73)

Yet *Merge Left* never provides a thorough analysis of the neoliberal context for the later two core narratives, a context that would do much to anchor those narratives in the social and economic conditions of the times.

Politics of “White Fragility”

Certainly, Haney Lopez acknowledges how the policies and positions adopted by the Reagan and Clinton Administrations reinforced, to differing degrees, these core narratives. His ability to reveal how dog whistle politics inflamed racial resentments and played upon what Robin D’Angelo has labeled “white fragility” is exemplary.

In addition, his analysis of how Trump “epitomizes the connection between white racial spite and widespread economic ruination” (220) offers the historical opportu-

nity for contesting the ugly remnants and resonances of white supremacy.

The key point, stressed by Haney Lopez and his associates who provided the polling data extensively used for his analysis and strategy, is that “most Americans — including many who do not

rheto-

However, there is a lack of understanding of how deeply rooted connections among national identity, citizenship and whiteness informs a white identity politics that appears impervious to the kind of cross-racial solidarity that Haney Lopez champions.

In other words, race and class are also confounded by the constraints and contradictions of nationalism and imperialism.

On the other hand, the book helps to make very clear how “racial resentment and economic hardship exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship.” (140) Linking this to the vicious feedback loop of racial resentment and class rule, *Merge Left* skewers those politicians and their economic masters in the following insightful manner:

“Racial resentment helped build enthusiasm for dog whistle politicians, who then did favors for the economic royalty, which caused economic misery, which set the conditions for more racial scapegoating, which built more support for dog whistle politics serving the interests of plutocracy, more wealth being siphoned skyward, more scapegoating, and down the country slumped.” (140)

To break this vicious cycle and to win over electorally those “persuadables,” whom Haney Lopez contends are not wedded to white dominance, it is incumbent upon those on the left to find the right messaging. This messaging, which is provided by examples throughout the book, balances the class-race arguments, not tipping too far in either the class or race direction but always framing the message of how race is used to increase class deprivations.

The Power of Struggle

While *Merge Left* pays homage to collective struggle outside the electoral arena, the commitment to messaging that relies on a finely tuned electoral discourse undercuts the important role of collective struggle in breaking the class-race negative nexus.

There are myriad examples of how multi-racial collective struggles can create real breakthroughs and establish solidarity. One example is from Studs Terkel’s *Working*, where a former KKK member becomes a union activist in a local dominated by Black women. In the process of striking and building their solidarity, the racist scales falls from the eyes of this white union activist.

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REVIEW

Surveillance Capitalism & Resistance By Peter Solenberger

The Age of Surveillance Capitalism:

The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power

By Shoshana Zuboff

New York: Public Affairs/Hachette Book Group, 2019, 704 pages, \$38 hardcover.

Activists and the Surveillance State:

Learning from Repression

Edited by Aziz Choudry

London: Pluto Press, 2019, 264 pages, \$29 paperback.

Permanent Record

By Edward Snowden

New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2019, 352 pages, \$30 hardcover.

SURVEILLANCE IS CONSTANTLY in the news. As I began writing this review, a major surveillance story broke that Facebook-owned WhatsApp is suing the NSO Group, an Israeli spyware company, for compromising mobile phones running WhatsApp.

WhatsApp encrypts voice, text, image and other data and is used by activists and journalists in many countries to communicate securely. The encryption is end-to-end, so that even WhatsApp can't see the content. The NSO Group sells spyware that can be remotely installed via a seemingly innocuous WhatsApp message and then tracks and reports every conversation, text or image before encryption.

The NSO Group sells its spyware to governments and police forces around the world. The WhatsApp suit revealed that the Indian government is using the software to monitor critics of its authoritarian Hindu-nationalist policies. The Saudi government used NSO Group software to spy on journalist Jamal Khashoggi before it assassinated him in October 2018.

Facebook, which owns WhatsApp, is itself notorious for compromising users' data. In July 2019 the Federal Trade Commission fined Facebook \$5 billion for failing to secure its users' data. In a scandal unmasked in March 2018, Facebook's "partner" policies had allowed Cambridge Analytica, a rightwing political consulting company, to access the data of 50 million U.S. Facebook users to help Donald Trump win the 2016

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presidential election. (See "Far-right 'researchers' steal Facebook info" at https://solidarity-us.org/facebook_cambridge_analytica/.)

Facebook is attempting to disguise itself as a defender of internet privacy by suing the NSO Group and resisting demands by governments to create a "backdoor" in WhatsApp so that they can get around the encryption. It is suggesting that it might encrypt Facebook messages too.

End-to-end encryption of messages is important but it doesn't touch Facebook's main surveillance business: collecting, storing and selling the unencrypted information users give it. And Facebook can figure out most of what it wants to know from messages without seeing their content.

From its own and other surveillance sources Facebook knows about the people

sending and receiving messages: names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, family, friends, likes, dislikes, browsing history, purchases, credit scores, property ownership, travel, voting records, etc. It can add message metadata: who communicates with whom, when, where, how long, how much data. Putting all that together it can see networks and infer content, to the extent it needs to.

Governments with sophisticated surveillance agencies can see all this too. But the pressure to go beyond metadata to access encrypted data is pervasive. Police demand access to "fight crime." Security agencies demand access to "fight terrorism."

Well-intentioned advocates demand "backdoors" to stop hate speech, incitement to genocide, fake news, and child pornography. As I began writing, a *New York Times* article castigated Apple for end-to-end encryption of its messages, which allow them to be used to distribute child pornography. Yet encryption is the only practical method most people have to thwart corporate and government surveillance.

This is just following the thread of one day's stories.

Three Books on Surveillance

Not surprisingly, authors have begun writing books about surveillance. Three books published in 2019 investigate the pos-

sibilities opened by technology to improve work and life and the way contemporary capitalism ruins those possibilities.

The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power by Shoshana Zuboff exposes corporate surveillance by Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon and now an avalanche of companies.

Zuboff, a Harvard Business School professor emerita, wrote two previous books on technology and society: *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power* and, with her late husband James Maxmin, *The Support Economy: Why Corporations Are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism*.

The Age of Surveillance Capitalism is an indignant exposure and a demand that

democratic governments reign in corporate surveillance so that people can freely express their humanity.

Activists and the Surveillance State: Learning from Repression, edited by Aziz Choudry, is a collection of essays on surveillance and repression in the name of national security and resistance to it.

The essays recount experiences in English-speaking capitalist democracies: the United States, Canada, Britain, Mauritius, South Africa,

Australia and New Zealand. All the authors are activists. Most are academics or journalists. Choudry is an Associate Professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Activists and the Surveillance State has a more radical perspective than *Surveillance Capitalism*. Its contributors are anticapitalist and anti-imperialist, veterans of campaigns on behalf of national liberation, antiracist and indigenous, environmental, women's and queer struggles. All have run up against surveillance and political policing and resisted it.

Permanent Record is Edward Snowden's memoir of his journey from computer geek in a family with a long military tradition to whistleblower on mass surveillance by the U.S. "intelligence community." Snowden thanks writer Joshua Cohen for having "taken me to writing school, helping to transform my rambling reminiscences and capsule manifestos into a book that I hope he can be proud of."



The book would make great fiction: a coming-of-age story, a story of moral conflict, a spy story, an action adventure complete with an evil empire and an heroic but seemingly doomed resistance, and a love story. Except that it's true.

In the course of telling his story Snowden recounts in very accessible terms how the U.S. government collects, stores and mines data on the digital communications of almost everyone connected to the internet. Encryption and use of the "dark web" (the TOR network and others) can thwart the surveillance, but thwarting it gets you tagged too: "What do you have to hide?"

Surveillance Capitalism

Jacob Silverman reviewed *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* for *The New York Times* on January 18, 2019 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/18/books/review/shoshana-zuboff-age-of-surveillance-capitalism.html>). His review captures the appeal of the book to readers open to a critique of capitalism run amok with information technology.

Enter, as a critical guide, Shoshana Zuboff, who has emerged as the leading explicator of surveillance capitalism. With decades of experience studying issues of labor and power in the digital economy, Zuboff in 2015 published a paper, "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization," which has since become an essential source for anyone looking to reckon seriously with what she described as a distinct, emerging economic logic.

Now she has followed up that paper with a doorstop of a book, an intensively researched, engagingly written chronicle of surveillance capitalism's origins and its deleterious prospects for our society.

The Age of Surveillance Capitalism tells the story of the rise of surveillance capitalism. Google was formed in 1998 and developed a slick internet search engine by collecting, storing, indexing and accessing vast quantities of data from crawling the internet (moving from website to website via links) and from saving users' queries and clicks to see what they wanted.

The problem for Google and other internet technology companies was that they hadn't figured out how to make money from their marvelous toys. Hence the dot-com bust. Then Google figured it out. They knew the who, what, when and where of searches and could combine that with what they knew from previous searches and from

other data sources.

This allowed them to target ads more precisely, to report whether users clicked on the ads, and to charge higher prices when they did. The more Google knew about users, the better their targeting, the more clicks, and the more they could charge.

This set off a scramble to collect data. Google offered not only free searches but also free email, email groups, docs, drives, calendars, maps, browsers, operating systems, messaging, whatever they could think of. As users contributed more and more data, Google mined it, charged more for ads, and got richer and richer.

So far the data appropriation depended on users typing in data. But why stop there? Google Assistant and Google Home could answer voice queries — and listen to whatever else was happening in the vicinity. Android devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones, watches, etc.) and apps could report where users were and, with the help of various sensors, what they were doing.

Google wasn't the only villain. Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon and others quickly followed. Cars, appliances and other devices became internet-connected. You look at your television, but it also looks at you and reports what it sees. Smart thermostats, nanny cams, garage door openers, even refrigerators spy.

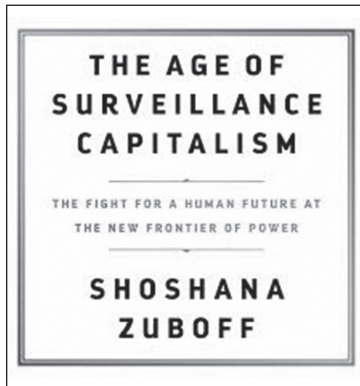
The tech companies claim that surveillance is "personalization," and to a certain extent it is convenient. But as Zuboff points out, every "privacy policy" is really a surveillance policy.

While the story is fascinating, the edifice Zuboff builds on its foundation is much less satisfying. She overtheorizes her findings. For example, she coins the term "behavioral surplus" to describe the data the surveillance capitalists extract beyond what's needed to improve the digital product and says this is the basis for a new capitalist exploitation, superseding the exploitation of workers in production.

The reality is much simpler. Surveillance capitalism is good old government-supported monopoly capitalism using new technology.

Zuboff overstates the effectiveness of surveillance capitalism. The targets of advertising can ignore it, as consumers have ignored "hidden persuaders" in all previous media.

Surveillance capitalists dream of behavioral modification to get people to buy what



they direct them to buy and to think what they direct them to think. If capitalism really could satisfy human needs, they might succeed. But the contrast between the fiction of a "good life" under capitalism and the reality generates dissatisfaction, alienation, anger and thought.

Zuboff underestimates the danger of government spying using the new technology. True in China, she says, but it couldn't happen here. But we know that a revolving door connects Big Tech and the "intelligence community" (IC).

We know that Cambridge Analytica used Facebook data to build a "friends list" of 50 million people they thought might be persuaded to vote for Trump. They or the IC could as easily have created an enemies list for harassment, blacklisting and blackmail.

Finally, Zuboff puts too much faith in the possibility of reforming surveillance capitalism and restoring the good old days of the New Deal, with capitalism regulated by the "double movement" of markets and democracy. She dismisses Marx as a utopian, but her proposed solution of democratic capitalism seems far more utopian than socialism.

The Surveillance State

Activists and the Surveillance State focuses on more traditional surveillance by political police. Almost exactly a century ago the Palmer Raids rounded up and jailed or deported activists in the "Red Scare" following World War I and the Russian Revolution. A. Mitchell Palmer, the Attorney General under Democratic Party hero Woodrow Wilson, led the repression.

Palmer picked 24-year-old J. Edgar Hoover to head the newly formed General Intelligence Division (GED) of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation. The GED's task was to investigate, infiltrate and destroy radical groups. Fifty years later Hoover was still at it, with the Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) against civil rights, Black Power, Puerto Rican Nationalist, Native American, antiwar, feminist, environmental and socialist groups.

Activists and the Surveillance State examines the experience of activists with surveillance, political policing and resistance. It deals only in passing with digital surveillance, but the traditional methods of observation, infiltration, agents provocateurs, arrests, interrogation, torture, trials, prison and assassinations are even more effective, if also more labor-intensive and expensive.

The book consists of eleven essays. The first two analyze the surveillance state not as an aberration, but as a "rational" (from the capitalists' standpoint) development of the capitalist state. Exploitation, oppression, repression.

The following eight essays, present case studies from the U.K., Mauritius, South Africa, the United States, Australia, the Canadian state, and New Zealand. The final essay argues for continued research into and exposure of corporate and state spying and political policing.

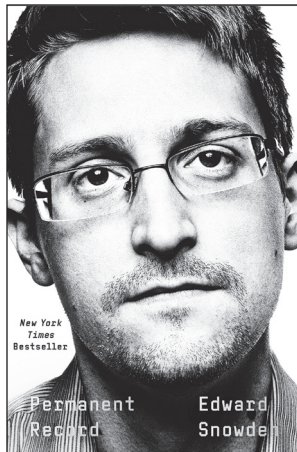
It is well worth reading for activists experiencing or thinking about what Choudry describes as “the sharp edge of state power.”

Permanent Record

Edward Snowden was born in 1983, the year the internet was born, as the Defense Department separated its military network from the public one. He came from a military and government family. His father was a Coast Guard officer, an engineer, and his maternal grandfather a Coast Guard rear admiral.

His ancestors had served in every war the United States fought. His mother worked for the government. Snowden grew up with a strong sense of duty, but also with a sense of justice. His family served their country because it was just.

As a boy, Snowden was quite good with computers, which led him into the world of online hacking, not for money or malice but for the fun of it. He saw no conflict between his hacking and his sense of duty. His hacking uncovered inconsistency, incompetence, irrationality and hypocrisy. But he maintained his sense that sometime, somehow, someone with good intentions and smarts would intervene to put matters right.



ries and instead approved contracting on a dodgy cost-plus basis.

So Snowden got a job working nominally for Dell but really for the IC. He became a systems administrator. His job was to make sure that all the databases in his area were up and running and communicating with each other.

In the course of his work he began to realize that the IC had much more data than made sense if it was engaged in targeted surveillance for national security. Without public knowledge or legal authorization or oversight, the IC was engaged in mass surveillance.

He was torn between duty to the ideals that had brought him to the IC and his own comfort and safety. He had work that challenged him and paid well. He was living happily with Lindsay Mills, the love of his life. Why rock the boat?

As we know, Snowden decided to rock the boat, or rather blow the whistle. He copied and encrypted a huge trove of data which proved that the U.S. government was engaged in mass surveillance of its citizens and most of the online world.

He got the data to journalists Glenn Greenwald, Laura Poitras, and Ewen MacAskill, and they published stories in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*. Other media picked up the story.

After a dramatic international odyssey, Snowden and Mills are living in political exile in Moscow. Not the happy ending they deserve, but they are heroes to those who care about democracy.

Beyond Surveillance

What can activists do to stop or limit corporate and government spying? The article on Cambridge Analytica cited above has some suggestions about protecting yourself on the internet and promoting noncapitalist internet alternatives. Probably the most important of these online activist sites is the Electronic Frontier Foundation (<https://www.eff.org>).

But these are something like recycling

Snowden enlisted in the army after 9/11, continuing the family tradition. He was injured in basic training too badly to serve in combat. Routed out of the army, he decided to join the CIA, NSA or some other agency of the intelligence community. But Congress wouldn't approve hiring more government workers or raising their sala-

and promoting community recycling to fight climate change — important, but far from sufficient to solve the problem.

Stopping or significantly curtailing surveillance would require a movement far beyond what exists now. The movement would have to link up with other movements, since working people struggling to support themselves and their families, pay debts, and enjoy limited time off are not immediately going to see the need to mobilize to stop targeted advertising or what the IC euphemistically calls “bulk collection” of data.

They'll see the need to mobilize against surveillance when it affects them, when they're blacklisted by employers for union activity or targeted for protesting police violence, immigration raids, attacks on abortion clinics, or environmental destruction.

The ongoing demonstrations in Hong Kong show how connections can be made. The demonstrators took to the streets to protest inequality, corruption and rollbacks of democracy. The police attacked them, so they learned that they had to fight the police too.

The police used surveillance to identify protestors, so they learned to smash CCTV cameras and to wear masks. The government prohibited the wearing of masks, so they had to fight that too. The connection was made.

The three books reviewed above expose corporate and state surveillance. They suggest a world in which technology would be used not to spy on workers, but to make work easier, less time-consuming, more flexible, more engaging, not to market whatever the corporations want consumers to buy, but to make consumption more satisfying, more fulfilling, less wasteful. They invite resistance today to bring that future forward. ■

Class, Race — cont. from page 40

Alternatively, Haney Lopez could have more fully explicated these passages from the excerpt he cites in Keenga-Yamahta Taylor's compelling book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*:

“Solidarity is only possible through relentless struggle to win white workers to antiracism... to win the white working class to the understanding that, unless they struggle, they too will continue to live lives of poverty and frustration, even if those lives are somewhat better than the lives led by Black workers.” (Taylor, 215; Quoted by Haney Lopez, 181)

Without constant reinforcement and creation of real solidaristic environments, calling for class-based cross-racial solidarity through race-class messaging in electoral campaigns will most likely never achieve the transformative politics that *Merge Left* advocates. Nevertheless, as Haney Lopez reminds us, we cannot afford to neglect either class or race (or gender for that matter) as critical co-determining factors in how we build a multi-class and multi-racial solidarity. ■

As the Fires Turn...

IN A MEDIA world where cascading new crises crowd out coverage of the previous ones, the catastrophic Australian wildfires induced by climate change have faded from the nightly news. Massive rainstorms have quenched many of the New South Wales fires (although they're liable to return), but the effects remain horrific and threaten many unique species with extinction.

We refer our readers to an article by Pip Hinman in *Green Left* (Australia), on how the tragedy may be changing the political climate as well as the ecology of that continental nation. It's in their February 11, 2020 issue, online at <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/will-apocalyptic-bushfires-be-turning-point-australia-climate-emergency>. ■

Margaret Jordan *ipresente!* By Dianne Feeley & Johanna Parker

MARGARET SHAPER JORDAN, a founding member of Solidarity, died early January 3rd. She is survived by her partner, Mike Parker, and her daughter, Johanna Parker.

Margaret grew up in Berkeley, California. Her parents Hans and Lore Shaper, whose parents were murdered in the Nazi concentration camps, fled Germany in 1939. Margaret was born in 1942 and her brother, Andrew, four years later.

Attending the University of California Riverside, Margaret then taught first and second grades in Richmond public schools. She became a specialist in teaching math to elementary school students. An early marriage to Joel Jordan ended but her lasting partnership with Mike Parker began in the late 1960s.

Over the course of her work life Margaret was a teacher, nurse and then received a doctorate in psychology at Wayne State University in 1993.

In her job as a psychologist at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, she trained doctors to relate to their patients. Working with physicians new to Detroit, she explained how racism was fundamental to understanding the health conditions of an African-American city that suffered segregation and white flight.

As a young teacher in the 1960s she was drawn to civil rights activity and then to the Independent Socialist Club, which was influenced by the revolutionary socialists from a previous generation, Anne and Hal Draper.

The ISC transformed into the International Socialists (IS) in 1969. They were one of the first left groups to prioritize implanting its membership in key industries. Adopting a rank-and-file perspective they moved much of their membership into Midwestern cities such as Gary, Indiana and Detroit, Michigan. Margaret and Mike moved to Detroit in the mid-1970s.

She worked with the Red Tide youth group on the campaign to free Gary Tyler, a young Black man unjustly sentenced to death in Louisiana. (He spent 41 years in prison and was only released in April 2016 after a long chain of judicial decisions that *Dianne Feeley was a friend of Margaret Jordan and Johanna Parker is her daughter.*



resulted in a plea deal.)

She and another member of the IS, Elissa Karg, attempted to set up Women Against Racism but the group never developed a base and later disbanded.

As the IS merged in 1986 with Workers Power, Socialist Unity and a collective in Madison to form Solidarity, she participated in women's seminars and on the Detroit branch executive committee, bringing her distinctive approach of organizing spaces where people could enjoy each other. In one workshop her talk discussed how feminist ideas were surfacing in teen-age magazines.

She encouraged members to go out for dinner after branch meetings. She and Mike opened their home to a Superbowl/anti-Superbowl party where the branch could invite its members and friends over for a relaxing evening. This is now a tradition of the Detroit branch, which also uses the event as a fundraiser for a local organization or campaign.

Johanna Jordan Parker was born in 1979, and family began to play a more central role in their lives, especially for Margaret. While Johanna was at Cass Tech High School and beginning to develop an interest in theatrical productions, Margaret developed cancer.

Her network of friends was able to help by providing dinners, arranging to take Margaret to appointments when Mike was at work and making sure Johanna got to and from rehearsals. It was a difficult cancer to contain, but after some misdiagnoses and scares she beat it back and remained cancer free until 2017.

Richmond Progressive Alliance

Margaret wanted to return to the Bay Area, particularly after Johanna moved there and began to work as a Spanish interpreter. Inheriting her parents' house after their death, Margaret and Mike moved into their home in Richmond.

During World War II Richmond had been an industrial center, with Kaiser's innovative boat construction, Ford's auto plant, Standard Oil's refinery and dozens of other plants. By the 21st century most industry had left and its population was reduced to 100,000.

Standard Oil (now Chevron) expanded, becoming the behemoth that polluted the town and dominated its political life. An independent formation, the Richmond Progressive Alliance, had begun to challenge Chevron, and Margaret plunged into the work of expanding RPA's presence.

Once again Margaret's organizational and political skills were invaluable at extending RPA's influence. She worked night and day on the 2014 city council campaign that beat Chevron's candidates and elected RPAers to the council, taking on many different tasks, including the central organizing of hundreds of volunteers on Election Day.

She played an important role in mentoring some of the developing RPA leaders. And, on another front, she was always to be counted on at Labor Notes conferences. She developed friendships with labor and social activists from Brazil to Japan.

In addition to her work with RPA, Margaret worked with a number of organizations in Richmond and the broader Bay Area to better her community. These included her neighborhood council, a Richmond organization working to improve health in low-income communities, and the local humane society. During her last year she was a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and was encouraged to see young people becoming politically active.

Although her cancer had returned and she was on medication, Margaret was active until the last six weeks of her life. She had fulfilled a longtime dream by visiting Africa with Mike, Johanna, and Johanna's partner, Matt Sylvester, last fall. A year before, she, Mike, and Johanna visited the German towns where her parents were born.

She was looking forward to a trip to England with her daughter and more trips with Mike. But around Thanksgiving she came down with a respiratory illness that became progressively worse until her lungs and kidneys failed. She died peacefully.

As a woman who fought for social justice throughout her adult life and understood that personal relations are an essential part of building a movement, Margaret is remembered by a large circle of comrades and friends. Two memorial meetings are planned: in Richmond on March 8 and in Detroit on April 4. ■

The collateral damage of this triumph is that it accelerates humanity's race toward climate-change catastrophe, but we know that is none of Trump's concern.

Even if China's involvement (e.g. in Iran's economy) and Russian military-political intervention in Syria are eroding the United States' regional hegemony, they're not fundamentally about seizing oil supplies and routes. In short, oil in itself can hardly explain the wars.

A second factor after 9/11 was the ideology of U.S. world domination. Embodied in formations like the Project for a New American Century, the neoconservative war faction saw the terrorist 9/11 attacks as the opportunity to "reshape the Middle East" on the basis of overwhelming U.S. power with the support of Israel along with the reactionary Arab Gulf states and Egypt (prior to the Arab Spring upheavals, of course).

This turn-of-the-millennium neocon scenario for an imperial feast envisioned domino-like regime-change wars where Afghanistan would be the appetizer course, Iraq the soup, Iran the main course and Syria to be swallowed for dessert. As we know too well, the Afghanistan "appetizer" couldn't be digested, the Iraq "soup" went down the windpipe and the whole festive meal turned into disaster.

Roads to Quagmire

As far as we can infer what's inside Donald Trump's brain (we don't want to go there, literally or figuratively), he appears not to want a real war, nor of course do the Iranian rulers who have their hands full with revolts within their own population, as well as in Iraq next door where Iranian as well as American dominance are both bitterly resented. But history ominously warns that wars can break out unintended, by catastrophic accident.

Anyway, ideology and presidential stupidity are no more adequate explanations than crude "fight over resources" materialism. Consider the fact that the highly intelligent president Barack Obama, who himself wanted to disentangle from Middle East wars in favor of a "pivot toward Asia," wound up getting in deeper.

In Obama's case, Libya started out looking like a humanitarian rescue, bombing Muammar Qaddafi's forces as they moved toward assaulting the population of Benghazi. It then became effectively a U.S.-led air force of a divided opposition movement, leading to the overthrow and summary torture-execution of the dictator but leaving no coherent political force to replace his regime — with Libya subsequently becoming today's bloody civil war and proxy battleground.

For president Obama, liquidating Osama bin Laden in his Pakistan hideout was supposed to be a strategic turning point for dismantling the jihadi fundamentalist "terror network." Instead, not only did bin Laden's al-Qaeda persist, but the even more brutal "Islamic State" swept through much of Syria, as that country disintegrated, and into Iraq.

Iranian-sponsored militias, coordinated by General Soleimani, became the United States' tactical allies, along with tens of thousands of Syrian Kurdish fighters, in the deadly ground war against ISIS. The Iranian general has now been assassinated, and the Kurds abandoned, on the orders of the same U.S. president who was under impeachment for extortion and blackmail of yet another "strategic ally,"

Ukraine.

Trump did send more troops, however, to guard the Syrian oil fields — just to show that crude materialism shouldn't be dismissed entirely! Overall, despite its brutality, U.S. policy looks more like serial improvisation and corrupt political opportunism than cohesive strategy.

Underlying Factors

In the course of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the U.S. weapons industry spearheaded a "permanent war economy" that became, and remains, a quite significant element of the overall U.S. economy. It's particularly important to specific states and communities, often of great electoral significance to both capitalist parties. [On the Permanent War Economy, see Marcel van der Linden's essay on the theorist Edward Sard, <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/198/permanent-war/>.]

Every attempt to close a superfluous air base brings angry howls and resistance from political leaders whose communities are impacted. And just imagine where Boeing would be, with the blood on its hands of the 346 doomed passengers and crew in its 737 Max flying coffins and the fleet indefinitely grounded, without its lucrative military contracts.

The end of the Cold War was supposed to bring a "peace dividend" without a bloated military machine. Instead, at \$700 billion Trump's Pentagon budget exceeds what even the generals asked for. The latest addition is the "space force" that promises to generate a whole new bureaucracy and inflated budgetary demands, along with the weaponization of space that will compel rivals to follow suit. The military-industrial complex carries substantial political clout in its own right, as well as serving as an important component of forces such as the "Israel Lobby."

If this discussion seems inconclusive, it may be that ultimately these unending U.S. wars and interventions in the Middle East have no single overriding dynamic — although they're no less imperialist, destructive and dangerous for that. They can be partially but not completely explained in terms of multiple factors — oil, the ideology of U.S. domination, competition with Russia and China, war profiteering, counterrevolutionary alliances, the domestic power of the "pro-Israel" lobby and the military-industrial complex, policy paralysis, sometimes inertia and in the cases of George W. Bush and Trump, big doses of ignorance.

What's inertia? As the great British journalist Robert Fisk stated many years back, as the occupation of Iraq began to unravel: "The United States *must* get out of Iraq. The United States *will* get out of Iraq. And the United States *can't* get out of Iraq."

To some degree, then, these wars may be about themselves — as self-perpetuating as they are fruitless, murderous, and in the end pointless. It's entirely clear that the American people are sick of them. But it will take a powerful antiwar movement, of a kind we haven't seen in a long time, to break the logjam. ■

THIS ISSUE WENT to press after the Democratic shambolic Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary, and before the end-of-February primaries and Super Tuesday. Our discussion of the election, and the Bernie Sanders campaign in particular, will continue in ATC's forthcoming issues. We welcome readers' comments.

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