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#219 • JULY/AUGUST 2022 • \$5

AGAINST THE CURRENT

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL



The Rightwing's Supreme Court Coup

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A Letter from the Editors

Coup by Supreme Court

JUNE 24 — THE OFFICIAL overturn of *Roe v. Wade* was announced as this issue of *ATC* goes to press. It didn't require a white-nationalist riot, invading the Capitol at the instigation of Donald Trump, to tear huge holes in long-established constitutional rights in the United States. Where that frontal assault failed, a flanking maneuver by the right wing has met with success — including a blatant pseudo-constitutional coup by Court.

The overturn of *Roe v. Wade* not only declares war on women's bodies and rights. As legal scholars immediately recognized, the leaked Alito Supreme Court majority opinion throws open a challenge to every basic right assumed to flow from the Fourteenth Amendment and the elementary principle of personal privacy — same-sex or interracial marriage, LGBT rights, incredibly even legal contraception.

Yes, the absurd “life begins at fertilization” doctrine creates a wide-open door to religious rightwing fanatic state legislatures to outlaw long-established methods of birth control, starting with IUDs and morning-after pills. “Parental consent” might be tested out as a legal ploy, or morning-after pills criminalized as abortifacients.

The silver lining in this deeply evil ruling is that, as the saying goes, what's done in the dark will come to the light. Whatever the motivations for leaking the draft ruling may have been, we salute those who made it public — meaning that the popular outrage could explode last spring, rather than as the Court majority intended, in the summer political shutdown preceding the November midterms.

Chief Justice Roberts is righteously outraged by a leak that violated long-entrenched secrecy of the Court's drafts and deliberations. Yes, confidentiality was established practice — so was *stare decisis*, meaning respect for precedents especially when those had been confirmed in subsequent rulings. So was some decent restraint in overthrowing established rights, and concern for the human consequences of doing so.

Alito has thrown all that in the garbage in the service of a viciously reactionary ideology. Roberts, it's reported, didn't want to “go all the way” to consummating the destruction of *Roe*, preferring to shredding its substance by upholding the Mississippi 15-week ban while leaving *Roe* stripped naked but formally in place. Roberts' concern is the precious “legitimacy of the Court.” *That legitimacy, now at a low point, is precisely what needs to be destroyed.*

The Making of a Monster

Roberts himself birthed the monster that he no longer controls. It began with the Court's negation of a century of campaign finance law, followed by the gutting of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Under Roberts' pretense that Barack Obama's election meant that racism no longer matters in election practices, he enabled the entrenchment of the WSCOTUS (White Supremacy Court of the United States) majority doctrine.

Something needs to be said here about the composition as well as the function of this Court. It was under the influence of mass social movements — Civil Rights and Black Liberation and feminism above all — that Justices like Thurgood Marshall and Ruth Bader Ginsburg got to the Supreme Court.

These were not only powerful legal minds but veteran fighters for equal rights and justice. For a couple of decades, the Court took on the appearance as a — backstop for basic rights, even if inconsistently so.

Contrast them with the current six-person WSCOTUS majority. The three Trump appointees, who've done nothing in their lives except to be groomed by right-wing dark money and the Federalist Society to reach their present station in order to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, will perpetrate whatever malicious mischief opportunity may provide. The practice began back in 1991 when Clarence Thomas, even before he lied about harassing Anita Hill, lied about never having discussed *Roe* in law school.

That set the precedent for the succession of reactionary nominees to evade saying where they stand “on cases that might come before the Court” — openly lying with impunity in their confirmation hearings.

When Brett Kavanaugh told the Senate Judiciary Committee that *Roe* was both a precedent and “repeatedly confirmed” by subsequent opinions, there was exactly one person in the whole United States who apparently didn't know he was lying through his teeth — Susan Collins, the pro-choice Republican Senator whose vote assured his confirmation.

The leaked Alito opinion, even if it might be sanitized a bit around the edges (like removing his scholarly footnote citing a 17th-century English barrister proclaiming abortion to be murder, and who also advocated the execution of witches), says very clearly that with the far right now firmly in control of the Court, what used to be rules of the legal and political game no longer apply.

Along with state legislatures running riot with anti-choice and voter-suppression and intimidation laws, legislatures are putting in place the power to overturn elections when they don't like the results.

The destruction of reproductive rights and basic democracy is a seamless whole. Beyond the right to abortion, as crucially important as that right is in itself, this opens a more intense phase of a constitutional and political legitimacy crisis that's been stewing in the United States for a decade or so.

Battles to Come

It's no coincidence that the most aggressive anti-abortion laws proliferate in the same states where maternity and infant mortality rates are already highest. Or that the most vicious anti-abortion politicians are also the most vociferous enemies of fixing this country's tattered and disgraceful public health system, costing hundreds of thousands of lives during the COVID pandemic.

This is entirely logical behavior for a misogynist and racist right wing that cares about “sacredness of life” only

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

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Neglecting Outrageous Cases: **Assange, Donziger & the DNC Media** By Cliff Conner

FOR PEOPLE WHOSE primary political values are human rights, the public welfare, and elemental justice, the cases of Julian Assange and Steven Donziger are no-brainers: They are the most blatant current examples of why the words “American justice system” have come to represent their Orwellian opposite.

Assange and Donziger have been mercilessly victimized by the very society whose vaunted principles they have at great personal sacrifice labored to uphold. Unfortunately, however, progressive political opinion in the United States has in large part failed to recognize the outrageous miscarriages of justice their respective cases represent.

One consequence of Donald Trump’s four years in office has been an intense polarization of the traditional two-party system into an extreme rightwing, overtly racist Republican Party, with the Democratic Party as its only viable electoral alternative.

As a result, many progressive-minded Americans have tended to take their political cues from the Biden administration and liberal media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and MSNBC, which tend to reflect the outlook and ideology of the Democratic Party establishment. Call it “the DNC [Democratic National Committee] media.”

Fear of the return of Trump is certainly not entirely irrational, but it does not justify the DNC media’s purposeful indifference to the dangers the Assange and Donziger cases represent. It is not only a failure on their part; it is potentially suicidal for them, because it feeds into the MAGA crowd’s narrative of the mainstream media as “enemy of the people.”¹

If the Trumpists succeed in manipulating the electorate into returning their hero or a successor sociopathic demagogue to office, a great deal of the blame will fall to the Biden administration for not only failing to address

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Julian Assange in 2014.

the existential crises of our era, but for exacerbating them. In his first year and a half as Chief Executive, Biden’s sycophancy toward the Pentagon has accelerated the militarization of American society² and has returned us to the brink of thermonuclear holocaust.³

At the same time, his unshakable fealty to the fossil fuels industry has drawn us ever nearer to the climate catastrophe point of no return.⁴

While those are the most important examples of the continuity of Biden’s policies with Trump’s, his failure to remedy the appalling judicial injustices done to Julian Assange and Steven Donziger — which he could easily do — is no less disgraceful. To understand how these extremely consequential cases have receded into a blind spot in the national discourse, it is necessary to review their treatment by the establishment news publishers.

Julian Assange in the DNC Media

The *Washington Post*’s coverage of the Assange case has been especially harsh. Its position can best be judged by official statements of its editorial board. I have been able to find

only one, which was published on April 11, 2019. Here is its headline: **Julian Assange is not a free-press hero. And he is long overdue for personal accountability.** This was its lede:

“He may ultimately face courts in the United States or Sweden, as well. If these democracies handle it properly, Mr. Assange’s case could conclude as a victory for the rule of law, not the defeat for civil liberties of which his defenders mistakenly warn.”

WaPo has also occasionally published opinion columns mentioning the threat to freedom of the press posed by the prosecution of Assange, but they are exceedingly rare. A Google search revealed only two, and here is the lede of one of them:

“Julian Assange, I think we can all agree, is a dirtbag. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s a good thing that he’s been arrested and will apparently be extradited to the United States.”⁵

Calling someone a dirtbag is hardly the way to win public support for a victim of judicial injustice, even if it’s coupled with a mild caveat about broader consequences of the case. And it should be noted that WaPo’s concern about those broader consequences seems to have manifested itself only when Trump was in office. With Biden at the helm, its coverage of the Assange case has been limited to brief news articles that prioritize unflattering assessments of Assange’s character.

The *New York Times*’ treatment of the Assange case has generally been less toxic than WaPo’s, but it has been far from adequate, especially in light of the fact that the threat to freedom of the press Assange’s prosecution represents has been widely designated “The *New York Times* problem.”

That phrase first made its appearance when the Obama administration’s Department of Justice realized that the same charges it initially brought against Assange could also be brought against The *New York Times* and many other mainstream publishers. Obama quickly dropped the charges against Assange. Trump’s DoJ reinstated them and Biden’s continues to push them.

On May 23, 2019, the *Times*’ editorial board published a statement headlined **Julian Assange’s Indictment Aims at the Heart of the First Amendment.** It warned:

“The Trump administration seeks to use the Espionage Act to redefine what journalists can and cannot publish... the effort to prosecute Mr. Assange ... could have a chilling effect on American journalism as it has been practiced for generations. It is aimed straight at the heart of the First Amendment.”

This was an effort to issue a warning about “the *New York Times* problem,” but it undercut its own effectiveness by ending on a note echoing the *WaPo* editorial board:

“Mr. Assange is no hero. But this case now represents a threat to freedom of expression and, with it, the resilience of American democracy itself.”

Although the *Times* published several op-ed pieces that warned of the dangers posed by the Assange prosecution, it also published a vicious attack against Assange by Michelle Goldberg, one of their regular columnists and a frequent commentator on MSNBC.

Goldberg didn’t call Assange a “dirtbag,” but her animosity toward him was nonetheless undisguised. She labelled him “an odious person,” and falsely accused him of “misogyny,” “antisemitism,” “a conduit for Russian intelligence services,” and “helping Trump become president.”⁶

All this echoes the standard talking points of Hillary Clinton and the Democratic National Committee, who have sought to scapegoat Assange for their electoral failure.

Again, while other *Times* opinion columnists have accurately warned that attempts to criminalize the publishing of government secrets is a mortal threat to the existence of a free press, Michelle Goldberg’s screed effectively undercut the possibility of rallying American progressive opinion behind the demand that the Biden Department of Justice drop the charges against Assange.

The Donziger Case in DNC Media

Whereas most Americans have at least heard of Julian Assange, the same cannot be said of Steven Donziger. That in itself is an indictment of the DNC media, because the bizarre persecution of Steven Donziger by the American legal system is as newsworthy as any story could possibly be. It is a David-and-Goliath narrative pitting a young, idealistic lawyer with minimal resources against a corporate behemoth with virtually unlimited resources at its disposal.

More than a decade ago, Donziger sued Chevron on behalf of indigenous people in Ecuador who claimed that 16 billion gallons of toxic petroleum waste Chevron had dumped in the Amazon rainforest had poisoned them and their children. In 2011, Donziger’s clients won a judgment against Chevron in the Ecuadoran courts of unprecedented magnitude — \$9.5 billion!

Chevron simply withdrew from Ecuador and to this day hasn’t paid a penny to the tens of thousands of people it poisoned. But

“Liberal media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and MSNBC tend to reflect the outlook and ideology of the Democratic Party establishment. Call it ‘the DNC media.’”

it has spent millions retaliating against Donziger in U.S. federal courts, which have gone all in on the side of the mighty corporation.

As a result, Donziger spent almost three years in federal detention — 993 days, to be exact.

At first, the corporate press simply reported court rulings that appeared to confirm Chevron’s accusations of fraud and corruption against Donziger. A 2016 article in the *Washington Post*, for example, proclaimed:

“It’s official: A group of indigenous people of Ecuador and their quixotic New York City lawyer Steven Donziger will not be able to turn to U.S. courts to enforce an \$8.6 billion judgment against Chevron that was won in an Ecuadoran court.”

*“The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit unanimously affirmed a lower court ruling on Monday that the judgment the Ecuadorans and Donziger obtained in Ecuador was based on fraudulent assertions and actions by Donziger and his associates and therefore could not be enforced in the United States. The court said the ‘record in the present case reveals a parade of corrupt actions’ by the indigenous Ecuadorans’ legal team, ‘including coercion, fraud and bribery.’”*⁷

As Donziger and his legal team continued to challenge the intense judicial bias, however, the establishment press shifted to not covering the case at all. In July 2021, media watchdog organization FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting) stated that the *New York Times* “has ignored this high-profile case for at least seven years.”⁸

One investigative reporter described the Donziger case as “one of the most bitter and drawn-out cases in the history of environmental law.”⁹ If that, the blatant injustice, and the multibillion-dollar penalty were not sufficiently newsworthy to attract the attention of the news media, the case also featured a shockingly flagrant interference of private interests in the American judicial system.

Federal district court judge Lewis Kaplan

charged Donziger with contempt of court, but the U.S. Attorney for Kaplan’s district refused to prosecute the case. So the court appointed a private corporate law firm to prosecute Donziger — a law firm that had previously represented Chevron!

Although the fraud and racketeering charges of which Chevron accused Donziger are felonies, the contempt of court charge he was actually arrested and held on was a mere misdemeanor. As Donziger himself observed:

“No matter what you think of me or Judge Kaplan, isn’t it newsworthy that an American lawyer is under house arrest for two years on a misdemeanor? It’s just a newsworthy story!”¹⁰

Donziger also pointed out some glaring conflicts of interest that help to explain the *Times*’ silence about his case. One is that billionaire Robert Denham sits on the boards of directors of both Chevron and the *New York Times*. Another is the ironic fact that one of the lead lawyers representing Chevron in *Chevron v. Donziger*, Ted Boutros, also serves as a First Amendment lawyer for the *New York Times*.¹¹

While the DNC media was studiously averting its gaze from the Donziger case, the latter’s importance as a global environmental justice issue became obvious to environmental activists, and accordingly gained the attention of celebrities like Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, Alec Baldwin, and Sting.

Despite their best efforts, however, this *cause célèbre* has not attracted the broad support of progressive political opinion it would take to prod Biden to definitively end the legal persecution of Steven Donziger and hold Chevron accountable for its environmental crimes.

Latest Developments in the Assange Case

When Biden took office in January 2020, many progressive-minded Americans assumed, not unreasonably, that his administration would be more likely than Trump to uphold freedom of the press. First Amendment supporters expected Biden to follow Obama’s example and dismiss the charges against Assange, but that did not happen. In October 2021, a coalition of 25 press freedom, civil liberties, and human rights groups sent a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland urging the Department of Justice to drop its efforts to extradite and prosecute Julian Assange.

They declared that the espionage charges against Assange — which carry a 175-year sentence — “pose a grave threat to press freedom both in the U.S. and abroad.” The letter was signed by, among others, the ACLU, Amnesty International, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Fight for the Future, the Freedom of the Press Found-

dition, Human Rights Watch, PEN America, and Reporters Without Borders. Alas, the Biden administration has still shown no inclination to heed their appeal.

As of this writing, Julian Assange remains incarcerated in Belmarsh Prison in London, in conditions described by Nils Melzer as “psychological torture, a form of torture aimed at destroying the personality of an individual.”¹² Melzer is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. He has recently published a book on the case entitled *The Trial of Julian Assange: A Story of Persecution*.¹³

The Biden Administration has not only declined to drop the charges against Assange; it has also continued to press the Trump administration’s demand that the British government extradite him to the United States to be tried on these charges. On June 17, British Home Secretary Priti Patel upheld the U.S. extradition demand.¹⁴

Assange’s legal team plans to appeal that ruling to the UK Supreme Court and to the European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe — the continent’s leading human rights organization comprising 46 member states — has called on the British government to refuse to extradite Assange.¹⁵

All supporters of human rights should demand that the UK cancel the extradition order, that Merrick Garland immediately drop all charges against Assange, and that Assange be released from prison immediately.

Developments in the Donziger Case

On April 25, 2022, Steven Donziger was finally released from detention. Amnesty International summarized the reaction of human rights defenders:

“We are relieved that Steven Donziger will finally recover his freedom after almost 1,000 days of arbitrary detention, which included 45 days in prison and over 900 days under house arrest. He should have never been detained for even one day, as it has been clear the whole process against him has been in retaliation for his human rights work that exposed corporate wrongdoings.

“Unfortunately, the end of this sentence does not mean the end of the injustices Steven has faced. The US government must fully implement the decision of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, including launching an impartial and independent investigation into the circumstances that led to Steven’s arbitrary detention, to prevent something like this from happening



Steven Donziger hugging his son as he prepared for his prison sentence.

again, and to swiftly enact anti-SLAPP laws to protect those brave enough to call out corporate crimes. Corporations must not be allowed to continue abusing the US justice system to silence and intimidate human rights defenders or anyone else exposing their wrongdoing.”¹⁶

The struggle to hold Chevron accountable for its crimes against humanity and the environment is far from over. As one commentator observed six years ago:

“Chevron — worth \$189 billion with more than \$9 billion of cash and marketable securities — isn’t about to run out of money. And so the fight will go on.”¹⁷

What Accounts for the DNC Media’s Stance in These Cases?

The sources of the DNC media’s hostility toward Assange, and reticence with regard to Donziger, are similar but not identical. The hatred of Assange was not primarily due to the allegation that he was to blame for Hillary Clinton’s defeat; the essential motive came from the military, the “intelligence community,” and the diplomatic corps.

The Pentagon, the CIA, NSA and State Department were all shocked and appalled by Wikileaks’ effectiveness in exposing widespread U.S. war crimes, and they ardently want to crush Assange as a fearsome example to all potential successors.

Despite the apparent Republican-versus-Democrat polarization, supporting the aims of the U.S. military and its imperial objectives is entirely bipartisan.

In Donziger’s case, it isn’t the military and spy agencies that have driven the attempt to crush him, the vindictive Chevron Corporation has led the charge. Chevron’s motive is not merely revenge; it also wants to intimidate other environmental attorneys from daring to challenge their business interests in the future.

Chevron enlisted the judicial arm of the government to do their dirty work, and their ability to do so reflects how successful the Federalist Society has been in their campaign to stack the courts with rightwing judges at all levels. The most visible, of course, have been the Trump appointees to the Supreme Court, but the loathsome judges who kept Donziger in detention for 993 days at Chevron’s behest were Federalist Society products, too.

As for the establishment press, it is a different bipartisan motive that led it to turn a blind eye to the legal assault against Steven Donziger. For all their progressive window-dressing, when push comes to shove, the *New York Times*, *WaPo*, and *MSNBC* are no less devoted than Fox News to serving the interests of

corporate America and its billionaire investor class. To channel Walter Cronkite: “And that’s the way it is.” ■

Notes

1. Trump tweet, April 5, 2019: “The press is . . . truly the ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.”
2. Compare Trump’s last military budget proposal (\$740 billion) with Biden’s current one (\$813 billion).
3. Tensions over the faceoff between Russia and the U.S. over Ukraine have amplified the danger of a thermonuclear exchange that could annihilate the human race.
4. Biden has approved new drilling permits on public lands at a pace faster than Trump’s, and has opened a record number of acres of the Gulf of Mexico to offshore oil and gas drilling. See: Emma Newburger, “Biden Administration Proposes Oil and Gas Drilling Reform but Stops Short of Ban,” *CNBC*, November 26, 2021.
5. Paul Waldman, “Don’t Celebrate the Indictment of Julian Assange,” *Washington Post*, April 11, 2019.
6. Michelle Goldberg, “Is Assange’s Arrest a Threat to the Free Press?,” *New York Times*, April 11, 2019.
7. Steven Mufson, “Chevron Claims Another Round in Endless Jungle Fight,” *Washington Post*, August 12, 2016.
8. James Baratta, *fair.org*, July 2, 2021.
9. Sharon Lerner, “How the Environmental Lawyer Who Won a Massive Judgment Against Chevron Lost Everything,” *The Intercept*, January 29, 2020.
10. Steven Donziger, interview with BreakThrough News, June 5, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5km4S7jcjo>
11. “Steven Donziger Says Chevron Lawyer Working for *NY Times* Is ‘Conflict of Interest,’” *The Hill*, June 8, 2021.
12. Nils Melzer, “State responsibility for the torture of Julian Assange,” a speech by UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, at the German Bundestag, Berlin, November 27, 2019.
13. Nils Melzer, *The Trial of Julian Assange: A Story of Persecution* (Verso Books, 2022).
14. Megan Specia, “Extradition Order for Julian Assange Approved by Britain,” *New York Times*, June 17, 2022.
15. Council of Europe Portal, “Commissioner Calls on UK Government Not To Extradite Julian Assange,” May 18, 2022.
16. Amnesty International, “After Almost 1,000 Days of Arbitrary Detention, Steven Donziger’s Release Highlights Urgent Need for Action Against SLAPPs,” [amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org), April 25, 2022. SLAPP is an acronym for Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.
17. Mufson, “Chevron Claims Another Round in Endless Jungle Fight.”

Faculty Governance: The Competence Curse

By Purnima Bose

CONTRARY TO THE cliché that universities are ivory towers disconnected from everyday matters, they are microcosms of the societies in which they exist.¹ The larger cultural and political ethos permeates universities, which are subject to shifts in what Raymond Williams calls “structures of feeling,” emergent ways of thinking not yet codified in policies or regulations.²

Over the last few years, aspects of the former Trump Administration’s disdain for expertise has infected the upper echelon of management and governing boards of institutions of higher education, resulting in the “competence curse.”

By this term, I name how expertise and experience in university settings has become a liability, even disqualification, for landing a position as a dean or top-level administrator. “In recent years,” Lee Gardner observes, “higher education has experienced a vogue for ‘nontraditional’ leaders, especially politicians, former military leaders, and business-people.”³

Why should it matter if top-level administrators are recruited from outside academia? When upper administrators lack academic expertise and university work experience, faculty governance and academic freedom suffer. In turn, this undemocratic model spreads beyond the university. Universities not only reflect, but also shape the societies around them.

In the United States, a large percentage of the population over 25 years of age has spent time in college; 42% of that demographic has earned an associate, bachelors, graduate or professional degree.⁴

Institutions that educate and train such a significant percentage of the adult population deserve our attention because college graduates play an outsized role in businesses and public life even as the university experience can be formative in their lives.

What Kind of Model?

Universities not only seek to impart analytic skills and the content of different disciplines, but they also provide spaces for

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May 9, 2022 special faculty meeting at Indiana University to support graduate student unionization and to demand no retaliation against strikers. The line to enter the meeting extended several blocks.

civic and international engagement through classroom discussions, sponsorships of speakers, extra-curricular student groups, and a multitude of service learning courses and internships opportunities, among other things.

What kind of democratic model do we set for our students, many of whom will become leaders in their communities, when we have limited sovereignty in our work places? How do faculty inculcate civic values such as freedom of speech and the right of association in our students when those are increasingly challenged by administrators hired from the outside bent on curtailing the agency of those they purportedly serve?

The current infatuation with hiring campus leaders from the military, government, and the private sector is fueled by corporatization. As Eva Cherniavsky argues in this issue of *ATC*, faculty governance has a long history of being constrained by the structural limits imposed by capital.

The slow creep of the corporatization of universities in the last few decades has augmented those constraints.⁵

Some of the tangible manifestations of the contemporary corporate university include the conceptualization of academic units as revenue centers, the pressure to churn out mission statements and strategic plans, the creation of managerial bureaucracies, and the ballooning of administrators.⁶

I want to focus on how mission statements and strategic planning documents, in

particular, erode faculty governance through blueprints for the creation, restructuring and elimination of academic programs under the guise of “maintaining excellence,” “innovation,” and increasing institutional efficiencies.

The structural reorganization of traditional academic departments into new professional schools has meant the creation of more administrative positions whose ranks are increasingly filled by candidates from outside academia.

An Invented “Fiscal Crisis”

At Indiana University (IU), where I work, the former president appointed a committee in 2010, the New Academic Directions Committee, largely consisting of administrators, whom he charged with asking “hard questions about [the university’s] academic structures to ensure they are of the highest quality, that they best serve the broad mission of the University and that they function in the most efficient and effective ways.”⁷

The committee nominally sought input on the strategic plan from faculty through a website. As my colleague Scott O’Byrne remarked, all faculty input “disappeared into a big gaping maw of silence.”

At the time, we were two years into the 2008 Great Recession, and IU’s state appropriation had dropped precipitously. Perhaps for these reasons, the committee represented the College of Arts & Sciences as a problem in its final report, pointing out that the College’s “market share” of credit

hours had declined.

Even as the committee claimed the College was fiscally unsustainable, it acknowledged that “the College does not face a near-term fiscal crisis. In fact, over the last decade the College has eliminated a large accumulated debt and has gradually enlarged its cash reserves, so that it is now in compliance with the minimum cash reserve guideline set by the IU Trustees.”⁸

As a response to this invented fiscal crisis, the committee recommended a number of new, smaller schools be created within its administrative structure. The end game appears to have been that these new schools would eventually spin off into their own revenue centered units, thus, effectively heralding the slow death of the College.

The report generated by this committee resulted in a Bicentennial Strategic Plan that mandated the creation of the School of Public Health, the School of Informatics and Computing, the School of Global and International Studies, and the Media School.

Several of these schools siphoned core humanities faculty from the College and received significant support for additional hiring, which was curtailed for most of the College. The new schools are by-and-large professional schools geared toward undergraduate education that is oriented to the market. The creation of these new schools offers two lessons.

Marketing Interdisciplinarity

Lesson number one: Be wary of new institutional arrangements that tout interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinary as a selling point.

At my institution, the creation of these professional schools has been internally marketed in part by appeals to the interdisciplinary nature of these units and claims that they are on the cutting edge of research. Over the years, I have become cynical about interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary academic programs, which seem to offer avenues to exploit faculty labor.

Programs at IU such as Cultural Studies and Southeast Asian & ASEAN have elaborate websites advertising numerous faculty and dynamic degree certificates, all of which enhance the university’s academic reputation. In actuality, most of these programs have no dedicated faculty lines and rely on a beleaguered graduate assistant or staffperson to run the quotidian operations.

They also depend on the goodwill of faculty members, who, because of their intellectual commitment to interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, contribute service to these programs on top of their responsibilities in their home departments. (These programs can be important intellectual hubs provided they are adequately resourced and not subject to the capitalist-administrative imperative for continuous growth, along with



Graduate students strike at Indiana University.

IGWC-UE.

expectations for unrealistic outcomes.)

The creation of professional schools and new departments also relies on this type of goodwill, much of it coming from associate professors, whose research agendas can be sidelined out of a desire to be good institutional citizens and the excitement of creating seemingly dynamic new programs.

One consequence of the added service burden of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary is that many faculty are too exhausted by the frantic pace of the academic calendar, and the unrelenting stress of the daily requirements of professional life, to have the energy, let alone the desire, to organize against encroachments on faculty governance or to agitate for a more equitable workplace.⁹

What I have described is an indirect effect on faculty governance of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary; a more direct example inheres in the creation of funding mechanisms for clusters of faculty across disciplines.

In theory, collaboration between colleagues and departments is a good thing. However, such initiatives can also be a method to bypass departments for the determination of hiring priorities.

In 2016, as part of the Bicentennial Strategic Plan, the university announced the Emerging Areas of Research initiative, which would award about six multi-disciplinary projects upwards of \$3 million.

The grants were to demonstrate the university’s commitment to investing in those familiar buzzwords, “innovation” and “excellence” in research. Each grant also enabled the research clusters to hire 1-3 tenure track faculty.

As a department chair, I was astounded to learn that several research clusters had proposed faculty hires in my department without first consulting with our elected Executive Committee or me. Hiring priorities are typically generated in departments on the basis of discussions to determine field needs, a protocol which the Emerging Areas

of Research ignored.

“Qualified” Without Credentials

Lesson number two: Pay attention and participate in the appointment of administrators to head these new units. Many large institutions hire headhunting firms to produce a slate of “qualified” candidates for upper administrative posts. For professional schools, that slate is likely to contain candidates from outside academia, who do not have PhDs or any experience of academic institutions.

University presidents and provosts seem enamored by finalists who hail from inside the DC Beltway. Lawyers and former government officials increasingly comprise the ranks of upper administration. I have been astonished that the administrators with JDs (Juris Doctor — ed.) often seem careless with procedure or devise ways to circumvent it in order to achieve their desired outcomes.

Administrators who arrive on campus with Washington experience on their resumes can be disdainful of faculty expertise. Such disdain is particularly alarming among those who oversee tenure and promotion committees even though they themselves do not have doctoral degrees. They seem to distrust the collegial goodwill and judgment of the faculty they oversee, believing they have a better sense of curricular matters and hiring decisions.

As in the upper reaches of the former Trump Administration, expertise has become a liability. Those qualifications that would seem essential in a university administrator — namely, an advanced degree and experience in academia — now appear to be disqualifications. I have yet to see someone removed from upper administration as a result of a poor review, or a university president or a provost admit that academic restructuring was a mistake.

An Action Program

In light of these grim realities, I want to make five suggestions for enhancing faculty governance.

First, when faculty challenge initiatives, we are often told that resistance is futile and the train has left the station. Our responses are often too belated: we are running down the platform, chasing a train that has left us far behind.

More of us need to be vigilant and willing to become active earlier in the process even if that means cutting into our research time and creative activity. We can’t always expect the same small number of colleagues to organize around issues; more of us should

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Why Should You Care?

Faculty Governance in Academia

By Eva Cherniavsky

THE CONCEPT OF faculty governance — that faculty should have a meaningful say in the management of the universities where they are employed — is a recent and relatively fragile thing.

Within the academy, faculty governance is viewed with skepticism by a significant proportion of the professoriate, in large part, no doubt, because the practice of faculty governance has been so thoroughly vitiated and its mechanisms (faculty senates and councils) so thoroughly commandeered by university administration.

Beyond the walls of the academy, where the default vision of the college professor is (still) that of an over-educated, privileged elite reveling in the outrageous luxury of career-long job security, no one at all is much concerned with the erosion of faculty power. Yet they should be, for the same reasons that we should be concerned about the dis-organization of labor and escalation of managerial power in the myriad public and private sector workplaces where basic public goods (such as education and healthcare) are provided.

In these contexts, the exploitation of service providers (via understaffing, stagnant pay, and elaborate structures of managerial surveillance that further exacerbate workload escalation and erode morale) is directly connected to the under-provision of those who rely on these services (clients, patients and students).

In universities, labor is comprised of faculty and graduate students (those who actually conduct the research and deliver the educational product) and staff (who directly support their research and teaching mission). Over the past several decades, the governing boards and executive officers of universities nationwide have vigorously held the line against all three components of the university's labor force.

This agenda has been realized (among other ways) through the exponential growth of the administrative ranks (administrators who, as Purnima Bose aptly notes in her

contribution to this issue, often have no background in education whatsoever), the casualization of the faculty, and the reduction of faculty governance to so many pointless and time-wasting committee meetings.

My position in this essay is that (re)building faculty power is critical to protecting the interests of faculty and students alike, as well as necessary to forging real solidarity with graduate students and staff.

Yet I argue that such a (re)building must be grounded in a wholesale re-conceptualization of what we mean by “faculty governance.” In what follows, I attempt to sketch what such a re-conceptualization would require.

Generational Divide

Within the academy today, one encounters chiefly two attitudes towards faculty governance, split roughly, though by no means exclusively, along generational lines.

An aging cohort of Boomer-era faculty choose to imagine that faculty governance matters — and surely is better than nothing.

Younger vintages of faculty believe, with some justice, that faculty governance was never real, but also that the very animus of faculty governance is elitist. It is a structure designed to protect the academic freedom of tenure-line faculty, with little or no capacity to address the proliferating class divisions among faculty — the growing ranks of teaching faculty, lecturers, and part-time lecturers, who now comprise the majority of the professoriate.

This perspective often dovetails with the view that the university is a lost cause — always already committed to the social reproduction of capital. What these colleagues tell me is not simply that they have no interest in faculty governance, but no stakes in the future of the academy.

My own view is neither of these. The circumstance that the university is necessarily bound up in the existing configurations of economic and political power does not mean that it is not, at the same time, a crucial site for understanding and for intervening in those configurations.

I have spent my career in public, research universities — and I think it is an institution worth fighting for; certainly, as good a place as any to make a stand, and perhaps

better than most. But after years of trying to figure out how to build collective power to contest state defunding, skyrocketing tuition, the casualization of the faculty, the rule of intellectual property, fealty to donors, and the myriad other, all-too-familiar features of the neoliberal university, I have come to the conclusion that established structures of faculty governance are more often than not a hindrance to faculty organizing.

“Shared Governance” vs. Real Power

By most accounts, faculty governance — or “shared governance” — dates to the mid-20th century, specifically to the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Interestingly, as the timing suggests, the statement was not just a reflection of faculty demands for distributed authority in the post-WWII boom years of higher education, but also a response to the Free Speech movement and student demands for a voice in the governance of the academy.

Interestingly, too, part of the impetus to the 1966 statement was the felt urgency of arraying the full power of the university (what the statement calls a “community of interest”) to negotiate with external funders and state legislative bodies: “The academic institution,” the authors observe, “must be in a position to meet [legislative and executive governmental authorities] with its own generally unified view.”

Both the import of the statement and the unsteady balancing act between it performs between a top-down and a distributed model of authority are perhaps best gauged in its discussion of budgetary matters:

“The allocation of resources among competing demands is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty. Each component should therefore have a voice in the determination of short- and long-range priorities, and each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long-range budgetary projections. The function of each component in

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budgetary matters should be understood by all; the allocation of authority will determine the flow of information and the scope of participation in decisions (my emphasis)."

We might translate this tellingly obscure section of the statement as follows: Faculty governance clearly requires that faculty have a degree of real authority over the allocation of resources. At the same time, the extent of that authority is delimited in advance by the hierarchical organization of the university, which gives to the governing board and the president (and to other executive office holders) the power to control information flows and determine the scope of faculty participation.

The statement is mute on the question of how exactly to reconcile a voice for faculty with this top-down control of information. I will return to this point shortly.

Whatever it was or might have been in the past, faculty governance in the current moment reduces to a process of non-binding consultation, where university administration reserves the sole prerogative to define the parameters of decision-making.

In this regard, it is worth reading what university administrators have to say to other university administrators about shared governance: they are all for it. It's simply good management, writes one administrator, whose job, it appears, is to train new cadres of university bureaucrats recruited from the corporate world and habituated to top-down decision-making.

"[A] little extra time on the front-end to make sure everyone is on board is smarter than weeks of cleanup after a program or policy has been adopted," she writes in a piece for *Chronicle Vitae* entitled "Why University Administrators Should Love Shared Governance."

More candidly still, Scott S. Cowen, President of Tulane at the time of Hurricane Katrina, in a 2018 piece for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* titled "Shared Governance Does Not Mean Shared Decision Making," celebrates the efficient reorganization of his institution that was possible in a post-Katrina state of emergency.

"A crisis narrative, when based on facts and conveyed effectively by a leader," Cowen writes, "can generate the sense of coherent purpose that pulls the community together and spurs people to action with or without a bona fide crisis."

This stunningly disingenuous statement — after all, if there is "no bona fide crisis," then the "crisis narrative" is precisely not based on "facts" — captures what is nonetheless an all too familiar managerial formula: construct a regime of permanent austerity, in which the options can be framed, over and over, as deep cuts versus insolvency and collapse.

Insist that any vision of the university not

"No one at all is much concerned with the erosion of faculty power. Yet they should be, for the same reasons that we should be concerned about the dis-organization of labor and escalation of managerial power in the myriad public and private sector workplaces where basic public goods (such as education and healthcare) are provided."

based on scarcity and zero-sum competition for inadequate resources is simply out of touch with the hard economic reality that only trained administrators have the expertise to confront. This is, of course, why there is always more money to hire more administrators wielding more metrics and instituting more accountability measures to spur the non-managerial ranks into ever greater attainments of "efficiency."

In this kind of environment, shared governance becomes a vacuous consultative process, designed precisely to ensure that a chastened and demoralized faculty will comply with the exigencies of defunding, consolidation, escalating workloads, and stagnant or effectively declining compensation.

Thus we return to the reservations at the center of the 1966 statement: where administration controls the budgetary narrative, there is no meaningful faculty voice.

In practice today, and especially when detached from other forms and structures of faculty organizing such as collective bargaining, faculty governance generally amounts to partnering with the administration in the implementation of austerity which is always, invariably positioned as a necessity, a regrettable but intractable fact.

Among other consequences, this means that participation in faculty governance demands that we acquiesce at the outset in the reality of an increasingly class-differentiated faculty.

A Necessary Mobilization

I believe the future of the public university, if it has one, depends on faculty mobilization across the ranks. It requires that we read and engage not budgets (which are fictions), but financial reports. It requires that

we become proficient in forensic accounting.

My own institution, the University of Washington, where the rule of austerity continues apace to decimate what we now call the "non-STEM" fields, indeed where tenure lines and working conditions erode even in the STEM disciplines, has nearly eight billion dollars in assets. It cleared last year (2021) with a net gain in position of two billion dollars.

Despite what the administration daily proclaims, there is no *bona fide* crisis. Indeed, ironically, the wealth of the institution (built on the backs of underpaid staff and faculty, indebted students, and under-resourced programs) is part of the reason that the state legislature turns a deaf ear when the President makes her occasional, half-hearted comments about reversing state de-funding.

Our fully corporate Board of Regents remains mum on the issue of a state capital gains tax, which would accrue primarily to education, including higher education in the state of Washington.

Meaningful and effective faculty governance, then, rests on organizing to refuse the austerity narrative. It means not just understanding the deliberately opaque formulas used to allocate funding, but also having the capacity to reject those formulas, especially when they serve to undermine the core teaching and research mission of the institution.

It means campaigning for substantial faculty, staff, and student participation on governing boards (not just the token, non-voting student or faculty regent). Simply put, it means refusing the defeatist compromise embedded in the 1966 statement and not conceding to the chain of administrative authority the power to determine the scope of our participation at the very outset.

In effect, *real faculty governance rests on faculty unionization*: I see no other framework in which faculty can reclaim a measure of control over the construction of the university's financial reality.

Faculty governance bodies (the senates and councils) have only advisory power — and, indeed, the institutionally-fostered timidity of their leadership usually works to ensure that they do not deploy even this limited power to optimal effect. In any case, there is nothing to prevent or deter university administration from shrugging off the faculty's various advisory recommendations.

Faculty thus require an autonomous organization, or union, one that does not depend for its authority on the receptivity of administrators (whose job descriptions, I might add, virtually requires their allegiance to the rule of austerity), but that can, in fact, compel administration to negotiate.

The labor of building (and sometimes, of rebuilding) faculty unions is not for the faint of heart: in addition to the familiar challenges

of labor organizing, faculty union organizers must contend with a class of workers who, all too often, can barely see themselves as workers, choosing to imagine that their educational attainments, professionalism, and (or) free-spiritedness make them intellectuals or “creatives,” rather than workers.

Yet nothing could offer better instruction in the meaning of the labor/management divide than the conduct of university administrators: treat your faculty like labor, and eventually they’ll figure out that’s what we are.

No doubt, unions are not panaceas — and union-building entails its own strug-

gles to ensure democratic structures and processes that allow for broad member participation in decision-making.

But absent the capacity for collective bargaining — ideally, in a configuration where a wall-to-wall faculty union can bargain for the common good in solidarity with staff and graduate instructor unions — the broken remnants of faculty power will continue to erode, and higher education will continue as a debt-financed product, delivered less and less well, by burnt-out faculty, instructors and staff, whose dedication to their students and their disciplines and their research will no longer compensate for untenable work-

ing and learning conditions. ■

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The Competence Curse — continued from page 6

enter the fray.

Second, we need to create alternative networks committed to faculty governance and institutional equity across campus.

As both Cherniavsky and Ben Robinson argue in their contributions to this issue, the older model of governance through committee discussion is ineffective; we need independent bodies to advocate for the interests of faculty and our academic missions.

Local chapters of the American Association of University Professors can provide an independent framework for organizing around campus-specific issues, with the added benefit to the membership of being able to draw on the experience and expertise of staff in the national AAUP office.

The creation of a local chapter or some other group outside the official governance structure of the university means getting to know colleagues in other departments and having an infrastructure in place to mobilize faculty around specific issues. (Listservs are essential organizing tools.)

Third, we should reclaim our faculty senate or similar governing body. This body has been officially sanctioned to function as our representative, but all too often becomes the place to park ineffective colleagues who seem to have the time to attend endless meetings and engage in pointless discussions.

We need to elect competent colleagues to our senates so they can set agendas in the interests of our academic mission and a more equitable institution.

Fourth, we should subject vision statements and strategic plans generated from the top to peer review. Here I am taking my cue from Amitabha Bose, the former president of the faculty senate at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, who responded to a 2014 university strategic vision plan which bore little resemblance to the initial one created by the faculty. (Full disclosure: Amitabha is my brother.)

He sent the plan to 16 colleagues in different departments across campus, asking them to write a reader’s report on it. The

senate president then presented the provost with the list of reviewers (all highly respected on campus) and their reports, which were submitted anonymously. Taking these reviews into consideration, the provost revised the strategic plan, which the senate as a whole abstained from approving because of the provost’s earlier violation of procedure.

While the university did implement the revised plan, the provost was put on notice that he must consult substantively with the faculty, and that they must have considerable say in academic matters.¹⁰

And fifth, we should agitate to have faculty representation on Boards of Trustees, which are generally composed of political appointees drawn from the corporate world.

These governing boards typically also include student and alumni representatives, but no faculty members.

It is a strange irony, and yet another example of the expertise liability, that the

boards overseeing institutions of higher education noticeably lack members with graduate degrees or concrete experience with the challenges facing universities today. (Fewer than 10% of trustees on these boards have any professional experience in higher education.)¹¹

Faculty are thus doubly cursed by (in) competence. Academic expertise renders faculty unfit to serve on governing boards, while the lack of such expertise among board members makes governance less competent.

Most faculty know that we do not have the expertise to run a corporation. Robert A. Scott points out that “It is hard to imagine a Wall Street firm or a Silicon Valley company declaring that 90 percent of its directors have no experience in the core activities of the enterprise.”¹²

Why then should business executives feel they know how to oversee a university? ■

Notes

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Graduate Employee Unionization: Renewal of Shared Governance?

By Benjamin Robinson

GRADUATE STUDENT EMPLOYEES at

Indiana University Bloomington, organizing with the United Electrical Workers, went on strike for campus recognition between April 13 and May 10, 2022. The strike was then suspended for the summer, with plans for broader and deeper participation when it resumes the fall.

I will share a timeline of key events relating to the Bloomington faculty's participation in the graduate student efforts. Then I will move on to reflect on what union organizing tells us about how the terms of shared governance have changed since the canonical 1966 AAUP "Statement on the Government of College and Universities" (discussed in Eva Cherniavsky's contribution to this issue).

No Substitute for Bargaining

In short, I'll argue from faculty experience with the Bloomington graduate strike and claim that shared governance institutions need to have mechanisms to formulate interests distinct from those of management. These interests should be publicly articulated as a working agenda before joining efforts with university administration.

Cooperation in committee, the standard operating procedure of established shared governance, is not the same thing as bargaining. The inclination to acquiesce to administrative priorities has led to what increasingly appears to be a catastrophic erosion of public priorities and instructional budgets in U.S. higher education. Further, it has led to a redesign by university administration around revenues based on degrees marketed for their return on investment, partnerships targeted for their intellectual property potential and endowment growth. These are key elements of what Purnima Bose calls in her contribution the "corporate university."

What especially galvanized faculty on the Bloomington campus, beyond the baseline group of members sympathetic to unionization, was the hardline anti-labor response by campus administration, which refused any dialogue with representatives of the union, the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition-United Electrical Workers (IGWC-UE).¹

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IGWC-UE

The standoff between the graduate organizers and the administration led to the increasing involvement by faculty over the course of the 2022 spring semester. Largely organized through the campus AAUP chapter and the Progressive Faculty and Staff Caucus listserv,² arguments increasingly erupted at regular meetings held by the College dean with chairs and directors; by associate deans with directors of graduate and undergraduate studies; and in the routine meetings of the system-wide Graduate Faculty Council.

Unsurprisingly, the established forum for shared governance, the Bloomington Faculty Council (BFC), was slow to act and assumed no leadership role (on the contrary).

An AAUP-sponsored resolution calling on the provost and administration to begin dialogue with the union passed on a roll-call vote at a special meeting of the BFC the first day of the strike. Yet no member of the executive committee voted for the resolution. The BFC resolution was mentioned by the secretary (who didn't support it) in an email to the campus faculty, but otherwise was given little fanfare and received no response from the provost.

Emergency Meeting

That relative indifference by the main established organ of shared governance, however, quickly showed it was out of touch with faculty sentiment. Two weeks into the strike, members of the Graduate Faculty Council and the AAUP convened an emergency faculty town hall meeting. There

the faculty spontaneously organized a petition for the BFC Executive Committee to convene, in accordance with the rules of the faculty constitution, a special all-Bloomington faculty meeting. This would be the first such all-faculty meeting since 2005.

The petition, which had four times the required number of signatories, proposed resolutions that would discuss, among other things: voluntary union recognition by the administration; faculty authority over associate instructor appointments; no retaliations against graduate students for participation in the strike; and a potential no-confidence vote in the provost for failure to engage graduate employees.

The faculty council executive committee did convene the meeting for May 10th, the day after campus commencement and the final date for turning in grades. Despite the late date, the meeting, held in the cavernous IU Auditorium, saw a turnout of over 722 faculty members.

Although the executive committee unilaterally removed the no-confidence item from the town hall petition, two resolutions from it appeared on the agenda.

The first reasserted faculty authority over graduate instructor appointments and emphasized existing due-process protections, even calling for an immediate end to the provost's retaliatory non-reappointments.

The second called on the Board of Trustees and provost to set up the framework for voluntary union recognition and to begin immediate negotiations.

At the meeting, the administration-friendly items were either withdrawn or voted down; the two resolutions supporting the graduate employees passed 683-39 and 623-75 respectively.

Although there was a quorum for conducting business, despite the unprecedented numbers, there was not a quorum for ratifying resolutions. As a result, the resolutions were sent to all faculty for an electronic vote the following week.

Despite the administration's efforts to sway the vote, the results confirmed the clear will of the faculty to see the graduate student union recognized. The first resolution passed 1605 yes to 308 no (83.8% yes)

and the second 1404 yes to 508 no (73.4% yes).

Inside the Discussions

While the timeline gives a blow-by-blow account of key events, it does not give insight into the discussions that so decisively shaped faculty opinion. Of those, I want to focus on the most telling one.

Many faculty with a pragmatic interest in the success of their departments' academic mission were persuaded by reasoning that asked, "Do we want our graduate workers and our administration to bargain as partners over wages, hours, and working conditions, or do we want adversarial bargaining through strikes and protests?"³

Faculty who would not otherwise be concerned with unionization — a common anti-union refrain among faculty council members held that "graduate students are not Amazon workers" — nonetheless recognized that a significant number of our peer and aspirational institutions with unionized graduate students ranked higher than our university did in terms of the Carnegie metrics for research activity.

It thus seemed unlikely to them, despite the warnings from the provost that the culture of shared governance would be eroded by the presence of an industrial union from outside the campus, that the sky would in fact fall if the union were recognized.

It is good such faculty were persuaded by pragmatic arguments that unions are a way to keep up with the R.I.-Jones while achieving domestic peace among campus stakeholders. But the effort to find common ground (what the 1967 Statement on Government calls a "community of interest"⁴) among distinct campus parties — the graduate students who called the question of collective bargaining, the governing board and administration alarmed by the union threat to their prerogatives, and a faculty largely unaware of the details campus labor conditions but deeply concerned with their core academic missions — should not imply that unionization is simply about finding a new way to integrate graduate students into the administrative process and reestablish the quiescence to which earlier forms of shared governance have fallen prey.

As both Bose and Cherniavsky point out, the modern university is increasingly corporatist rather than collegial in organization.

While the race, class, and gender homogeneity of older forms of campus collegiality have been weakened, so has the idea of normative governance based on the action of informal leadership *collegia*, such as deaneries and faculty committees. Not only has the civic ideal of the university being run "for the common good"⁵ increasingly succumbed to the disillusioned pragmatics of securing returns on investments, but the management structures — by which the governing

board of a university and its executives are responsible for delivering nimble decisions regarding endowment foundations, real estate, medical businesses, corporate and federal grant administration, and translational research — are becoming ever more professionalized and hierarchical, a matter of strategic plans, policies, and statutes rather than collective priorities.⁶

This past year members of the IU presidential search committee were for the first time all required to sign non-disclosure agreements, a tool common in the high-stakes worlds of intellectual property management and corporate secrecy, but only recently in collegial searches. And perhaps unsurprisingly, the presidential search wound up being just such a shadowy affair, marked by the trustees bypassing their own gagged search committee to secure an appointment better in accord with their unstated goals.⁷

In short, old models of shared collegial governance have become unsuitable for today's universities. While universities haven't entirely abandoned the democratic ideals imagined for them in John Dewey's turn-of-the-century Progressive Era, they fall under a heavier obligation to serve as centers of corporate revenue generation in the contemporary knowledge economy.⁸

The Lesson of Unionization for Shared Governance

The lesson of unionization is thus not that unions are a new way to achieve campus business as usual by locking instructional assistants into contracts with no-strike clauses and a strictly circumscribed list of items eligible for negotiation. On the contrary, what underlies the exciting revival of shared governance that the unionization efforts on the Bloomington campus have fostered is the importance of the *associational* over the *structural dimension* of unionization.

The unified campus response against the administration's harsh anti-labor line has demonstrated that graduate employees are not seeking a transactional outcome, but a participatory process of interest formation and public representation.

They have chosen to affiliate with the United Electrical Workers, a union known for its rank-and-file democratic locals and emancipatory political and community orientation.⁹ As the UE itself formulates their distinction in the labor movement, the "UE's founders were determined to avoid the bureaucratic, top-down control that was characteristic of the existing craft unions."¹⁰

Faculty shared governance needs to focus on precisely this dimension. It is significant that the governing councils of the AAUP and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) decided this past March 2022 to pursue affiliation, cementing a focus on campus labor that took clear shape in 2012 with the

election of Rudy Fichtenbaum and his Organizing for Change slate to the leadership of the AAUP.¹¹

It is not a final collective bargaining agreement that is central in this evolution of shared governance, but the principle that key stakeholders meet together to develop their values and positions *before* they come to the bargaining table.

In this way, shared governance can begin to move universities away from the mentality of zero-sum budgeting, which seeks to grow revenues for institutional priorities distant from the classroom, library or laboratory, while maintaining that every increase in a graduate stipend or staff salary has to be financed with a cut in faculty pay or the number of tenure track positions.

If faculty re-establish the institutions to deliberate not only within the corporatist framework of strategic plans and blue-ribbon committees, but also together with those stakeholders who share an interest in reinvesting in instructional budgets, expanding access to knowledge, building an equitable civil society, and reinvigorating the ideals of the university in the service of the public good, then they can play a substantial role in redirecting higher education toward the real social and not merely technical challenges of our times. ■

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A Letter from Kevin Cooper

AGAINST THE CURRENT received this letter from Kevin Cooper at San Quentin Prison. For information on Kevin's long struggle against a wrongful murder conviction and death sentence, visit www.freekevincooper.com and www.kevincooper.org (Media Website).

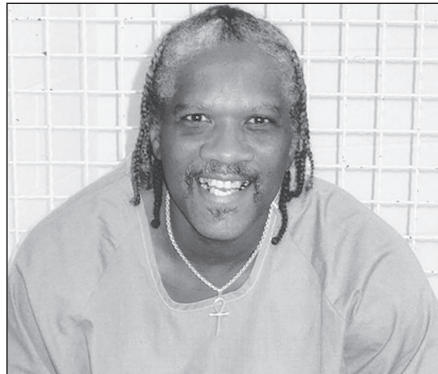
I AM RECEIVING the issues of your great magazine, and I do receive them on a regular basis, then share them with other like-minded inmates in my situation here at S.Q.

I am well, and healthy and COVID free as I have had both regular vaccinations and a booster shot. AS FOR MY STRUGGLE, I am still here on death row at San Quentin prison waiting for the law firm that Governor Gavin Newsom appointed to do a Innocence Investigation on my case. (Newsom signed the executive order for an independent investigation in May, 2021.— ed.)

This is the only time in the history of California that any Governor has had an Innocence Investigation done in a death row inmates case. "We," meaning my legal team, believe that we had to prove our case in order to get an investigation of this type, especially since California as a state does not have an innocence commission to do this type of investigating.

It's been about 10 months since this Innocence Investigation was ordered. May 28, 2022 will make one year since it was ordered. In the meantime, my attorneys from the law firm of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP have been cooperating with the law firm Morrison & Foerster, whom the Governor appointed to do this investigation.

The office of the San Bernardino county district attorney posted on its website the day after the Governor granted me this innocence investigation that "Governor Newsom Did Not Have The Authority" to grant me an Innocence Investigation. They



Kevin Cooper, still on death row.

are not cooperating in this investigation, I was told by my attorneys.

The COVID-19 situation here on death row has leveled off, meaning that there have not been any more inmate deaths here on death row from COVID-19. While every once in a while an inmate tests positive for COVID-19, we are put back on quarantine status, which means no contact visits with family, friends or attorneys.

We stay in that status for about 21 days, then if there are no more positive cases, we go back to what's called normal programming, meaning a return to contact visiting. We still have to wear masks inside the unit we live in, and during visits. We can take the masks off whenever we go outside to the yard for exercise, which is every other day.

Transfers

The Governor is trying to close down death row in this prison, and he said in a press conference in February 2022, that in two years he wants all inmates on death row to be moved and housed in other prisons in general population.

Many inmates, about a little over 100, were transferred to other prisons in a pilot program, which has since been ended. The pilot program came about because of a voter approved ballot measure called Prop.66 a few years ago.

Its purpose was said by the Republicans whose ballot measure it was, to speed up the death penalty, and to require death row inmates with restitution ordered by the court that convicted them, to be moved to other prisons in the state and to work in order to pay their court-ordered restitution.

The Governor is using this to empty out all of death row, even inmates like me who do not have court-ordered restitution. While all of this is going on, I and my family, friends, attorneys, supporters and even anti-death-penalty people around the world are waiting for the results of the Innocence Investigation.

If I am cleared by this investigation, and shown to have been framed by the San Bernardino county sheriff's department and the district attorney's office, my case can be the final nail in the coffin of the death penalty in the state of California. In the meantime I continue to read history books, and books that I find are relevant to the continuing fight for our human rights, and against all forms of oppression. I continue to learn, to grow and to contribute to the struggle. ■

The Case of Derrick Jordan

"A CHILD IN Prison" is a video produced by the family of Derrick Jordan, serving a prison sentence of 86 years in Illinois for a 1993 murder in which he has always maintained his innocence.

The video recounts Jordan's arrest at age 14, the abuse he received under questioning by a Chicago detective who was a close associate of the infamous police torture ringleader Jon Burge, his "identification" in a highly prejudicial police lineup, and grossly incompetent legal representation in his case when he was tried as an adult. Because he was sentenced as a teenager, he will have a re-sentencing hearing August 4.

For more information on a case that deserves close scrutiny, visit <https://justiceforderrickjordan.com/>. ■

CALIFORNIA GOV. GAVIN Newsom (D) signed an executive order Friday calling for an independent investigation into the case of Kevin Cooper, a Black death row inmate who has proclaimed his innocence for decades in a high-profile quadruple-murder conviction that's been met with scrutiny and questions, even allegations that it was three White men who did it.

Newsom, who had previously ordered new DNA testing for evidence in the case, said the international law firm of Morrison and Foerster will examine Cooper's "claims of innocence" and application for clemency by reviewing his trial, his appeals and "the facts underlying the conviction." Cooper, 63, was sentenced to death for the brutal 1983 slayings of a married couple, their 10-year-old daughter and an unrelated 11-year-old boy in a home in Chino Hills, California. (*Washington Post*, May 29, 2021)

“Humanitarian Aid Is Not Enough” Ukrainian Leftist Speaks

an interview with Taras Bilous

IN THE DAYS following the Russian invasion, Ukrainian leftist Taras Bilous' “Letter to the Western Left” in *New Politics* went viral, not only among left-wing circles but well into the liberal media sphere.

Excoriating what he calls “campists” who ignore the crimes of non-Western states in deference to a perceived “anti-imperialist” obligation, Taras called on leftists in Western Europe to acknowledge Russia's culpability, support the shipment of weapons by their respective governments, and abandon an “anti-imperialism of idiots” that, in his view, had come to dominate how the Left thinks about geopolitics.

Taras Bilous is an editor at *Commons* magazine and an activist in the organization Social Movement. To get his perspective on what has unfolded since his letter was first published, Ivo Georgiev of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's Kyiv office recently sat down with Taras to discuss the war, the debate around weapons shipments, and whether he thinks Ukraine will emerge from the war united or even more divided.

Ivo Georgiev: Your “Letter to the Western Left” sparked an important debate. You appealed to the Western European Left to rethink its positions and stop blaming Russia's aggression on NATO. What have the responses been like?

Taras Bilous: Many people have written to me. They thanked me for my letter and expressed their solidarity. It has been translated into many languages, even Chinese, which came as a surprise to me.

However, I still do not understand what this means for my future activities or the future of our magazine. I will reflect on it after the war, now we are facing more urgent problems. I joined the Territorial Defence Forces and I have very little time for work as a *Commons* editor or on my texts.

IG: In Germany, many people have read interviews or texts by *Commons* editors. They argue that the Western European Left misconceived and underestimated Russia's neo-imperialist intentions and in some cases even repeated

This interview with Taras Bilous, an editor at Commons magazine and activist in the Ukraine organization, Social Movement, is reprinted from <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/46677/humanitarian-aid-is-not-enough> and abridged for space here. We encourage readers to view the full text with links.

Russian propaganda to justify the invasion. Your criticism provoked a debate on the German Left. One of the recurrent opinions in the debate is that it is better not to discuss whether assessments of Russian aggression are right or wrong because of the bad timing — these critical remarks allegedly could weaken the international Left. What is your reaction to this?

TB: I understand that the war is splitting the Left and can weaken it. The Ukrainian Left experienced this in 2014.

However, uncritical debates weaken the Left even more and a wrong stance on the war discredits the socialist movement. Good examples here are the statements of the International Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America and the British Stop the War campaign. They only discredit the Left.

Even before our publications criticizing the Western Left, the mainstream Western media harshly criticized such statements, using them to attack all anti-capitalist leftists. It is naïve to hope that the Left will make stupid statements and our class enemies will not take advantage of this.

In the early days of the war, I saw that the Left mostly reacted to the war by taking a defensive stance and trying to justify the campists. An example is an article by David Broder that influenced my decision to write “A Letter to the Western Left.” Such a stance is wrong. It will only contribute to the marginalization of the radical Left.

Criticism of the hypocrisy of Western elites is unconvincing if its author defends an obviously erroneous policy. As I wrote, we must distance ourselves from the “anti-imperialism of idiots” and be honest about our mistakes. A good example of such honesty is an article by Daniel Marwecki and I am sincerely grateful to the author for it.

At the same time, I understand that discussions on contentious issues take too much time. I am well aware of the fact that too much controversy can provoke conflicts within the Left and weaken it. Specific answers as to how to balance the need to respond to war and to contain these conflicts depend on the specific circumstances.

Debates in the Left

IG: How did the Ukrainian Left react to the war in Donbas in 2014 and later?

TB: In 2014 I was not a leftist yet, just a

person torn by internal conflicts due to the war in Donbas. I took a great interest in the debates of the Ukrainian Left. These debates played a role in my becoming a leftist.

At the same time, the experience of the Ukrainian Left shows that it is important to try to stay within certain limits when engaging with the controversy. When the war is raging in your country, it complicates things. Thus, the heated controversy, unfortunately, also played a role in the decline of the Ukrainian Left.

Today it is clear that some of the ruptures that happened then were detrimental, that it would have been better to continue a dialogue with some of the opponents, and that it was necessary to break with the others. Especially with those who now openly support Putin or deny the Bucha massacre or actively circulate Russian propaganda.

After the mistakes and splits of 2014-2015, a significant part of the Ukrainian Left (especially those whose position was significantly different from the mainstream one) avoided talking about the war. If they continued those discussions, they tried to do so in private and looked for a format that would facilitate a dialogue rather than intensify a conflict.

This applied, in particular, to the organization I belong to, the Social Movement. Even one of our activists, who fought for a short time in 2014 in a Ukrainian volunteer battalion, often repeated “do not rush to quarrel over the issues that are outside our influence.” Those for whom Donbas was a personally important issue, including me, dealt with this issue outside the organization's activities.

When it became clear that there was a great risk of a new war, we had to change our policy dramatically. When I initiated the anti-war appeal, I had to overcome the opposition of some of our activists who believed that avoiding this topic was best.

In the editorial office of *Commons* magazine, we approached this topic with much caution as well. We paid attention to every word and polished our materials to avoid any misinterpretations. We could afford to lower our requirements for texts on other topics, but when we published about the war, those were only really good texts.

Such caution helped us to recover from

the difficult period of 2014-2015, but it did not protect us from all the mistakes. In particular, it is now clear that we underestimated the threat posed by Russia and paid insufficient attention to Russian imperialism. I was in the wrong too. We used to look at all post-Soviet politicians as cynics interested only in power and their enrichment. Now it is obvious that this perception is wrong.

Things I said about the Social Movement and the *Commons* were true about the times of a “semi-frozen” conflict. Now the conditions are completely different, and the international Left cannot remain silent.

Discussing past mistakes is less important than reconsidering policies and supporting the struggle of the Ukrainian people for freedom. We are not only victims, but we also have our perspective on the future of our country and are ready to fight for it.

IG: *The National Security and Defence Council and President Zelensky recently banned 11 political parties accused of having links with Russia. This ban is possible under martial law, but will this step help in the current situation? For example, we see that a part of the Opposition Platform for Life (OPL), which is represented in the Parliament, is actively involved in the country's defence and is fighting side by side with “pro-Ukrainian” forces.*

TB: Among the banned parties, only the OPL had a faction in the Parliament. The party unites two oligarchic clans: a group around Boyko and Lyovochkin often called a “gas clan” by Ukrainian journalists because of the importance of gas production and trade in their business, and a group around Medvedchuk, who is a close friend of Putin.

One of the members of the second group, Ilya Kyva, who was expelled from the Parliament shortly after the war escalated, recently called on the Kremlin to launch a nuclear strike against Ukraine.

After the Russian invasion, the union with Medvedchuk became toxic to the Boyko-Lyovochkin group. According to *Ukrayinska Pravda*, the group's leaders were looking for ways to solve this problem, so they were even happy with the party's ban. It opened up the possibility of launching a new party, as it happened in 2014 after the Party of Regions disbanded.

Other banned parties did not have any significant influence in Ukraine — some had only a few dozen members. Six out of the banned parties positioned themselves as leftists, but in reality this meant that they used nostalgia for the Soviet Union for their own ends. Some of them were quite conservative or even openly racist. For example, Natalia Vitrenko's Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine cooperated closely with the Eurasian Youth Union connected to a neo-fascist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin in the 2000s.

Nevertheless, the ban is a pointless and counterproductive step that poses additional

threats in the future. It jeopardizes the unity among people that emerged in the early days of the war — fortunately, as far as I can tell, its effect was not too significant.

More importantly, it provides additional arguments for Russian propaganda and undermines international solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

War is Changing Society

IG: *The distinction between “pro-Ukrainian” and “pro-Russian” political forces has played a major role in Ukrainian politics over the past eight years. Today, this distinction seems to have lost its relevance due to the war and the incredible hardship the country is facing. How is Ukrainian society changing? Has there been more solidarity, a will to unite in the face of the threat of occupation, and more cooperation between different parties and movements? Is anti-Russian sentiment growing?*

TB: Of course, anti-Russian sentiment is growing and it will remain strong long after the war is over. This is understandable under the current circumstances. Certainly, solidarity is stronger — many old conflicts have become irrelevant.

Yet future changes in a society strongly depend on the way war activities will unfold. If over the course of negotiations Ukraine is forced to accept painful compromises, the search for scapegoats will begin, and revanchist sentiments will be on the rise.

However, if Ukraine wins, a joint victory will be able to overcome old divisions in society and make political debates within the country more open.

IG: *What can the citizens of Germany and Western Europe do to help Ukraine and, in particular, the Ukrainian Left?*

TB: The Western Left can financially support the Ukrainian Left, collect humanitarian aid for Ukraine, and support Ukrainian refugees. This is what many European leftists are already doing. Yet this is not enough.

The international Left must support the struggle of the Ukrainian people at least by their texts, and better yet support the supply of weapons to Ukraine.

Many leftists continue to repeat a dogma that weapons supply will protract the war and lead to an increase in casualties, yet we see clearly that this is not the case. The international Left must realize what stands behind the Russian occupation.

The more territories the Russian army occupies, the more civilians will be persecuted and murdered. The more missiles our air defences take down, the fewer of them will reach their targets and kill people.

If anyone believes that stopping the weapons supply will cause Ukraine to surrender, they are wrong.

A major part of Ukrainian society will not accept surrender. If the Ukrainian authorities do so, they will be toppled, plunging

Ukraine into even greater chaos. We should not forget the experience of Ireland, where more people died in the civil war after the peace treaty with Britain was signed than in the war for independence. I do not want this to happen in Ukraine.

It is appalling that some Western leftists are urging Ukrainians to surrender and stop resisting imperialist aggression. It is not for the West to decide when to stop the resistance and what compromises to make, but for the Ukrainians. This should be our decision.

I understand the fear that the weapons may fall into the wrong hands, but from my experience here, the Ukrainian state now controls the situation much better than in 2014. In the first days of the war, when the future was completely uncertain, in some cities rifles were given to almost everyone volunteering to join the defence. However, the state recovered control rather swiftly. In addition, air defense systems that we desperately need nowadays are less likely to hit the black market compared to guns.

I would like to say to the Western Left, if our words do not convince you, then listen to the Russian anti-war left, who support the provision of weapons to Ukraine. Moreover, take a note of what Russian left-wing intellectuals Greg Yudin and Ilya Budraitskis have to say about the fascism of the Putin regime.

Faulty Logic

IG: *The Western Left in part argues that the war in Ukraine is in NATO's interests: it weakens Russia, so we should oppose supplying weapons. In your opinion, what position should the Left take in this inter-imperialist conflict?*

TB: There is a fallacy to the logic that if we are against NATO, we cannot support weapons shipments. It is more important to assess the potential consequences of the various scenarios for ending this war.

If Russia wins, it will reinforce the inter-imperialist rivalry and, consequently, intensify the arms race. It is difficult to resist militarization in the face of a real threat from Russia, we know this from our experience of the last eight years in Ukraine.

Instead, if Ukraine wins, it will be easier to resist militarization and there will be better conditions for a policy aimed at global nuclear disarmament. After all, Ukraine's victory, even with the help of Western weapons, will show that the Russian army is not so omnipotent and that we urgently need general and complete disarmament.

As far as I can tell, many Western leftists still see their role as critics of the confrontation between the West and Russia, they think in terms of “de-escalation.” Yet after the invasion, it is no longer relevant.

The main thing is that although the defeat of Russia is currently in the interests of both Western governments and the socialist

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Discussing the Case of Nigeria: **COVID and the Global South** By Emilia Micunovic

THIS MARCH MARKED the second anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaration that COVID-19 is a global pandemic. Since then, we've developed life-saving tools and vaccines to protect our most vulnerable and get the world up and running again.

Now, governments are relaxing restrictions, essentially declaring the end of the pandemic. The UK has officially declared a "Living with COVID" strategy, making it the first country to do so. Governments in Europe and North America are already administering second booster shots.

In scientific circles, there is an emerging conversation advocating for COVID-19 to be accepted as an endemic disease — like malaria and TB. This comparison, however, highlights the way that endemic infectious diseases are manageable in the global North but still devastating in the global South.

As four infectious disease experts succinctly wrote in *The Atlantic* in March 2022:

"Infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS that are now seen as 'Third World diseases' were once serious threats in rich countries, but when incidence of these diseases began to decline there, the global North moved on and reduced investments in new tools and programs."

Research indicates that boosters are important to protect people from severe disease. Yet low-income countries are still struggling to get first doses into arms. Currently, the death rate among the unvaccinated is between four and 12 times higher than vaccinated populations, even without booster shots. Unvaccinated populations are also at risk for future, life-threatening variants.

For millions of individuals living in poverty, the pandemic is far from over. What's more, the decision to deem COVID-19 endemic is made by leaders of rich countries in the global North — without consideration

Emilia Micunovic works in the London office of ONE, an internationally coordinated campaign to end extreme poverty and preventable disease. She interviewed Rafiat Atanda and Zigwai Tagwai, who volunteer with ONE in Nigeria. They are professional women in their 20s. For more information about ONE see <https://www.one.org/international/about/>. This article has been edited from a longer version. Reference links will be available in the online version.



Boss Mustapha, chair of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, announcing extended 2020 lockdown in Kano State. TV 360 Nigeria

of how it will impact marginalized people and exacerbate race and gender inequalities.

As some countries adjust their strategies to live with COVID-19, rich nations are essentially leaving the global South to fend for itself against a highly contagious virus without the tools and vaccines it needs to protect their populations and economies.

The reality is that COVID-19 has made the world even more unequal. Not only has the pandemic exacerbated inequalities in the global South, but women are disproportionately affected by slow COVID-19. This decreases the likelihood of African women reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Gender Equality.

The Impact on Women

Rafiat Atanda and Zigwai Tagwai, who work on community development campaigns in Nigeria, offer some insight into the ways that these inequalities in COVID-related health care have impacted women in their country.

Tagwai outlined the pandemic's severe consequences:

"Nigeria was challenged in having a limited

number of COVID-19 isolation and treatment centers, beds, health workers and critical care equipment such as oxygen and ventilators. The pandemic overwhelmed the health system that was unable to minimize COVID-19 mortality and contain the spread of the disease. The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of Nigeria's health care structures and system."

The Nigerian federal government relied on obtaining vaccines from developed countries. Yet they were unable to do so as the global North hoarded vaccines to prepare for second vaccinations and booster doses.

Tagwai reported that Nigeria has been unable to achieve the target set by the World Health

Organization that all countries vaccinate 10 percent of their population. As of the 25th of February 2022, just 17.6 million Nigerians have been vaccinated with the first dose, while 8.1 million Nigerians have received the second. *This means that only four percent of Nigeria's 206 million people have been fully vaccinated.*

Commenting on the health system, Rafiat Atanda remarked,

"Generally speaking, Nigeria's healthcare is comatose. Many of the hospitals aren't adequately equipped and healthcare professionals aren't well compensated. Thankfully, a state like Lagos, which was the epicenter for obvious reasons (a diverse and densely populated state in Nigeria), responded quite impressively well with the outbreak of the virus."

Still, despite positive government responses, a lack of access to vaccines means the effects of COVID will continue to plague Nigeria, particularly women:

"Women in Nigeria have definitely had a more difficult time through the pandemic. Some experienced poor maternal care during their pregnancies as some health centers were unavailable as they were converted to isolation

or treatment centers. This posed a danger of infection to both mother and child.”

Zigwai Tagwai added that gender inequality in every aspect of Nigerian women’s lives widened:

“As students had to stay out of school for almost six months, by the time schools were re-summing, some girls had become victims of sexual abuse, became pregnant and could not return to school. We also had a hike in the number of domestic abuse cases.”

“A number of women who are petty traders, and dependent on income from small and medium enterprises for the upkeep of their households or personal development ran into huge losses during the restriction and lockdown periods. The household chores for most women doubled as children and spouses had to be home all through the day, and women were catering to the needs of the family. With so much to deal with at the same time — loss of jobs, hike in the prices of goods and support for the family — some women’s mental health deteriorated.”

She explained COVID impacted her both in her work and social life through isolating her. Although as a project manager she had access to android phones and laptops, others on her team had unstable power. This meant that the freewheeling brainstorming in-person sessions proved difficult remotely.

Disastrous for Safety

Reinforcing Tagwai’s comments, Rafiat Atanda explained just how catastrophic the pandemic had been on the physical and mental safety of women:

“According to a report compiled by Partner West Africa, the sexual and gender-based violence related offences across the country since the lockdown were staggering. As a result of restrictions, women were forced to spend longer hours with their abusive partners and the breadwinners amongst them endured transferred aggression from toxic masculinity.”

Considering that for many African countries the pandemic is far from over, an endemic COVID-19 will mean that nations will have to continue to put in measures to curb the spread of the virus. This means building stronger health systems and an infrastructure that can carry out the research and proactive surveillance necessary to avoid a catastrophe.

Over the years the work environment for Nigerian health care workers has been uncomfortable. It begins with poor remuneration, lack of safety insurance and persistent insecurity. Working conditions are inadequate, including having to deal with unstable power and water supply and a lack of the right equipment for diagnosis and treatment. These conditions have gotten even worse with the COVID pandemic.

Rafiat concluded by saying that “All of these result in poor service and an inability to effectively carry out assigned responsibilities.

If not addressed, the health care system cannot withstand an endemic COVID-19.”

Tagwai noted that even before the pandemic, “There has been a huge loss of locally-trained medical professionals to foreign nations in 2021, creating a huge vacuum in the already strained staffing structure within the healthcare system in Nigeria.”

Atanda outlined a scenario:

“Imagine that the workers in the informal sector are unable to go about their day-to-day activities because of COVID-19! The economy will not only suffer, but there will also likely be an uprising and a new variant of the pandemic — not called by a virus but food insecurity.”

Continuous Turmoil

Nigeria’s informal labor sector contributes over 60% to its GDP. Without the health mechanisms to protect the livelihoods of informal workers, people are left to fend for themselves when outbreaks and lockdowns occur. A new report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Ukrainian Leftist Speaks — continued from page 14

movement, we have different perspectives on who should pay for the war. Western governments are still trying to fight while minimizing losses for Western capitalists. The Left must demand that the capitalists, not the working class, pay for economic losses.

International leftists could also support the idea of establishing an international tribunal to investigate Russian war crimes. It is uncertain whether the US and UK will approve such a project, as it could become a model for, say, an Iraq War tribunal.

In addition, leftists around the world must support the Syrian opposition, which demands that the Syrian issue be considered not by the UN Security Council but by the UN General Assembly, as per the “Unity for Peace” resolution.

Future Prospects

IG: What will happen in Ukraine after the war? Can you imagine that, after the war, issues of social justice and the welfare state will have a bigger role than before?

TB: Unfortunately, social justice has receded into the background during the war. In addition, as the limitations on labor and employment rights introduced on 15 March 2022 proved, the Ukrainian government continues to follow neoliberal dogma, even though they do not help in wartime. Still, after the war, there is a chance to improve the situation. It will depend on many factors, and first of all on the outcome of the war.

After 2014, the defeat in the war in Donbas provoked bitter and revanchist sentiments in the politically active part of Ukrainian society. At the same time, the protracted semi-frozen conflict caused war

stressed that the low-income countries are finding it harder to recover economically. Labor markets are unable to recover while the public debt remains stubbornly high.

Tagwai stresses that “An endemic COVID-19 is disastrous for the world. It’s an interconnected world and no one is safe until everyone, everywhere is safe.”

While governments in the global North are putting the “endemic COVID” narrative into practice, we simultaneously allow infectious disease to circulate among largely unvaccinated populations — like Nigeria — without capacity to manufacture their own vaccines. This will result in the emergence of new variants that will again affect all nations.

We cannot tell how severe the next variant could be. It might put a swift end to our “Living with Covid” strategy. Unless the global North ramps up in a coordinated effort to vaccinate the world, rich countries cannot say that they are taking seriously the effort to address gender inequality worldwide. ■

fatigue among the politically passive part of society and increased its atomization and alienation from politics. This was one of the preconditions for Zelensky’s phenomenal rise in 2019.

If this war ends with a painful compromise, most likely its consequences will be similar. If it ends with a victory for Ukraine, there will be a chance for some improvement. History knows examples of wars causing a turn to more socially responsible policies. Mobilized masses learn how to fight, and when they return home, they will expect and demand better lives.

Moreover, the last year in Ukraine was marked by a “de-oligarchization” campaign. Last autumn a conflict between Zelensky and the richest Ukrainian oligarch, Akhmetov, escalated and led to a tax hike for Akhmetov’s companies. On the brink of war, the Ukrainian media actively discussed the flight of oligarchs from Ukraine. This increased class hatred towards them.

We do not know what comes next — it will depend on many factors. The politics of the European Left is one of them. In 2014, the inadequate response of a large part of the Western Left to the war in Donbas discredited the Left in Ukraine. If the international Left contributes to Ukraine’s victory, it will change the situation.

As we stated in the anti-war proclamation of the Social Movement in January this year, “the future of the socialist movement in Ukraine depends on international solidarity.” Ultimately, the future of the global socialist movement may also depend on how much of the international Left will take the right position and support Ukrainian resistance. ■



Ukrainian Americans in Metro Detroit demonstrate in solidarity with Ukraine. They are raising money and material aid.

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A World of Imperial Rivalry: After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

By Ashley Smith

RUSSIA'S WAR OF imperial aggression against Ukraine is the most important geopolitical event since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It opens a new epoch of imperialism, one of intensifying rivalry, deglobalization, sharpened conflicts over trade blocs and geopolitical alliances, increased militarization, and proxy wars between great powers over spheres of influence and oppressed nations.

The war exacerbates all the crises of global capitalism: a world economic slump, inflation, climate change and migration. To these it has added new ones, most importantly a new debt squeeze on the Global South as well as famine in countries faced with the loss of Ukrainian grain shipments and a dramatic spike in the price of food. Austerity, destitution and hunger stalk the world's poorest countries.

All these cascading crises will deepen fractures between states throughout the world. They will also aggravate the already profound political polarization to the right and left within countries as well as trigger both reactionary and progressive uprisings from below. In turn, the capitalist establishment in each state will turn to authoritarian methods to enforce the existing order.

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The Ukrainian resistance, backed by NATO's military and financial support as well as unprecedented sanctions on Russia, has dealt Moscow a severe blow. China, which has struck an alliance with Russia, has been forced on the defensive, caught in a contradiction between its support for Vladimir Putin's regime and dependence on Western markets and technology.

The beneficiary of Russia's war will be, at least for the moment, U.S. imperialism, which has tried to re-legitimize its reputation so tarnished by its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, reassert its global supremacy, and expand its NATO alliance.

But the multiple crises of the system combined with sharpening conflicts between states and revolts from below will make it very difficult to reimpose U.S. hegemony on the world system. The international left must rise to the challenge of this new epoch and rebuild the tradition of internationalist anti-imperialism.

Roots and Nature of Russia's War

The roots of this war lie in an imperial conflict between, on one side, the United States, NATO and the European Union, which have expanded their reach into Eastern Europe, and on the other Russia, which has tried to reassert its status as an imperial power, especially in its former empire in the region.

Many states that have been under the thumb of Russia

throughout their history opted to join NATO and the EU, to ensure their security and in the hopes of benefiting from integration with European capitalism.

This conflict explains but does not justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is a war of imperial aggression against Moscow's oldest colony. Putin crudely laid out his reasons in speech after speech. He aims to rebuild Russia's old empire by seizing Ukraine, a country's whose very existence he dismisses a creation of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

To this he adds a predictable list of lies and self-serving rationalizations: that the country is ruled by an unpopular, U.S.-installed Nazi regime; Russia's war will liberate the people, especially its oppressed Russian speakers; and Moscow is acting in self-defense against NATO aggression.

Putin has turned to assertion of military power to compensate for Russia's relative economic decline since the Great Recession. He has used this imperialism to whip up domestic nationalism, put down revolts against his regional allies, and crush his domestic opposition. With increasing ferocity Russia has intervened in Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), Syria (2015 to the present), Belarus (2022), Kazakhstan (2022), and now most dramatically Ukraine for a second time.

Putin believed the time was right to seize Ukraine. Biden appeared to be a weak, unpopular leader. At home he was unable to push through his tepid program of liberal reforms. Abroad, Biden had conducted a shambolic withdrawal from Afghanistan, struggled to get Washington's NATO allies to economically disentangle themselves from China in high tech and Russia in energy, and was more preoccupied with confronting Beijing than Moscow.

Putin catastrophically misjudged Ukraine, as well as underestimating U.S. imperialism. Russia expected to win and quickly install a puppet government, but instead met fierce resistance not just from the Ukrainian state and its military, but also from the Ukrainian people including Russian speakers, who volunteered in the tens of thousands for the country's Territorial Defense Forces.

Their heroic struggle for self-determination has forced Putin to abandon his goal of regime change to annex Donbas and establish a land bridge to Crimea, which Russia had seized in 2014, and potentially expand it along the southern coast to Transnistria, a Moldovan territory Moscow has controlled since 1992.

While the US and NATO had supplied Ukraine with weapons and training since 2014, they like Russia expected Ukraine to fall quickly. Nevertheless, they responded with surprising unity, imposing an unprecedented regime of sanctions that strike at the heart of the Russian economy and Putin's regime.

Under pressure from Ukraine, they also supplied increasing amounts of defensive weapons and financial assistance to power the resistance.

With Russia repositioning to capture Donbas and partition Ukraine, the United States and Britain in particular have adopted bellicose increasingly stances, threatening to use Ukraine to "weaken Russia" (Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin) and even depose Putin (implied by Biden).

This may just be brinkmanship in response to Putin's threats to use of his nuclear arsenal, as the rival imperial powers prepare to cut a deal behind Ukraine's back not in the service of its interests. Yet we should not rule out the possibility

that this war of self-determination against Russian aggression could turn into a war between great powers.

Given the nuclear stakes, however, this scenario is highly unlikely, and a rotten peace deal amenable to both imperialist sides much more so.

End of the Unipolar Order

This entire course of events represents a radical departure from the unipolar world order the United States had superintended since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union. Coming out of that bipolar conflict, Washington had devised a grand strategy of incorporating all major economies in the world into a neoliberal order of free trade globalization it envisioned through its international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization.

To enforce the norms of this system, the United States expanded its security footprint through the expansion of NATO and its empire of bases to prevent the rise of any peer competitor that might challenge its hegemony. It launched wars for regime change against so-called "rogue states," conducted so-called humanitarian interventions to impose order on societies like Haiti ripped apart by neoliberalism, and to isolate and crush any government that bucked the Washington Consensus.

This is the venerated "rule-based order" that U.S. imperialism policed for the last four decades. Several developments undermined it. The neoliberal boom and the globalization of supply chains enabled the development of new centers of capital accumulation, even while it drove whole swathes of the world into greater poverty.

From this process, China emerged as the second largest economy. It retained state ownership of strategic industries, backed private ones as national champions capable of competing in the world economy, and required multinationals in China to share their technology. It thereby leapt up the value chain to become increasingly competitive with the United States, EU and Japan.

While China stands out as the most important new global player, it was not alone. Russia rebuilt itself into a nuclear-armed petro-power at the center of Europe's energy system and several states such as Brazil and India established themselves as regional economic powers.

Aware of these developing changes, Washington attempted to lock in its dominance through the so-called War on Terror. The barely disguised aim of the interventions in Afghanistan and especially Iraq was to secure control of the world's strategic energy reserves, a control that would enable the United States to blackmail and bully China and other potential rivals that depend on the region for oil and natural gas.

Those wars catastrophically failed, leading to what retired General William Odom called "the greatest strategic disaster in United States history." Instead of advancing U.S. power, the wars of the 2000s exposed and contributed to its relative decline against its emerging rivals.

The Great Recession following 2008 then hammered the U.S. and European economies in particular, weakening their global position. China, at least for a while, became the main growth center of world capitalism based on its massive state stimulus and state spending, which sucked up raw materials from countries throughout the world.

But given its deep integration into the world economy,



Ukrainian refugees who fled to Poland demonstrate in Kraków March 6, 2022.

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China too succumbed to the global slump, with declining growth rates exacerbated by the recession triggered by the pandemic. China's newfound difficulties have only made it more aggressive in asserting its interests.

All these developments have ushered in a new asymmetric multipolar world order with a three-cornered strategic rivalry between the United States, China and Russia over the Eurasian heartland of global capitalism as well as countries in its periphery. Of course the United States remains the global hegemon, but now faces these imperial rivals as well as a host of regional ones.

In this new order, ruling classes, their states and conflicts are not the only players. The Great Recession and consequent global slump have also set off one of the largest waves of protest and revolt in nearly every corner of the world.

From the Arab Spring to Black Lives Matter, workers and oppressed people have risen up for democracy, equality and liberation. At the same time, a new far right has emerged globally led by Putin, Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Viktor Orban and Marine Le Pen to name a few, that has galvanized the petty bourgeoisie and shattered sections of the working class to offer reactionary solutions to the system's problems.

Growing Rivalries

The great powers have responded by coopting and repressing the progressive forces, adapting to the right, ratcheting up nationalism, and doubling down on conflicts between one another often over subject nations in their spheres of influence. Each have become more assertive of their ambitions. China, sensing its opportunity with the relative U.S. decline, has become more aggressive economically, militarily and geopolitically.

Under Xi Jinping, it launched its massive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for infrastructure development in over 70 countries. China's aim is to incorporate them as spokes around a Chinese hub. It paired this with an industrial policy,

China 2025, designed to increase its high tech industry's competitiveness against the United States, Japan and the EU.

With its economic ascension, China has become more geopolitical-ly assertive, building new alliances like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, deepening its partnership with Russia, and challenging U.S. hegemony in international affairs, especially since NATO's intervention in Libya.

To back these efforts up with credible force, it has revolutionized its military, established bases in the South China Sea, and begun to establish foreign military bases beginning with one in Djibouti and

two others, one planned for Equatorial Guinea and another for the Solomon Islands.

Russia similarly rode its economic recovery based on energy and weapons exports to contest NATO's eastward expansion. Faced with its relative economic decline, democratic resistance at home, and growing waves of revolt in its former empire, Moscow has intervened more aggressively most importantly in Syria and Ukraine and turned to China as its key counterweight against the United States.

Beyond these key strategic rivals, Washington's traditional allies and a few regional powers also became assertive. Countries in the EU balanced between their traditional alliance with the United States and their increasing economic and energy integration with China and Russia, while Japan relied on the U.S. security umbrella despite its deep economic relations with China. Lower down the hierarchical state order, various powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Brazil, India, and others staked out their own interests.

The United States, faced with its own relative decline, has tried to defend its global hegemony against emerging imperial and regional rivals. Obama started the shift away from the War on Terror toward great power rivalry with his "Pivot to Asia" to rally allies to contain and discipline China, sanctioned Russia for its seizure of Crimea in Ukraine, and pressured the EU against further integration with China and Russia.

Trump made great-power rivalry Washington's explicit grand strategy, naming Beijing and Moscow as its two antagonists. But his erratic and transactional approach to both rivals and allies left the United States if anything weaker, reeling from the pandemic he catastrophically mishandled and the deep recession it triggered.

Biden came into office declaring "America is Back." He promised to restore the United States to the center of the world system, rebuild its alliances so damaged by Trump, redevelop the country's domestic infrastructure, and introduce an

industrial policy to ensure U.S. supremacy in high tech against China.

He carried over Trump's commitment to ending so-called forever wars and carrying out great power rivalry against Beijing and Moscow. Unlike Trump, however, he attempted to rally U.S. alliances to join a sophomorphically named "League of Democracies" to defend the "rules based order" against autocracies and their violations of human rights.

While all this stank of hypocrisy from the butcher of Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington was serious about it, going so far as to call a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics, where Xi and Putin consolidated their "friendship with no limits."

New Stage of Imperial Rivalry

Thus, even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, inter-imperial rivalries were heating up. The war will intensify these, exacerbate and multiply global capitalism's crises, deepen political polarization, and launch yet more progressive as well as reactionary movements.

As previously noted, the United States is the immediate beneficiary of Russia's stalled attempt to seize its former colony. Washington rallied its North Atlantic allies to join its sanctions regime, compelled them to raise their military budgets, forced Germany to suspend operationalization of Nord Stream 2, and pressure Europe to lay out plans ending dependency on Russian oil and natural gas.

In the process it's consolidated NATO, revitalized the military alliance, and will likely expand it by adding at least Finland and Sweden. Thus, Putin's alibi for invading Ukraine has become its own self-fulfilling prophecy. Washington will use NATO to fulfill its longstanding purpose, in the words of its first Secretary General Lord Ismay, to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

By all measures, Russia will suffer its worst strategic defeat since the collapse of the Soviet Union's empire. It will remain at best mired in a protracted standoff with Ukraine over occupied territories while it suffers an economic depression triggered by isolation and loss of energy export markets and geopolitical isolation, driving it into an increasingly subordinate relationship with China.

Beijing will be happy to take advantage of the situation to secure cheap energy exports from a weakened Russia. But Putin's war is double-edged for China, which wants to preserve its alliance with Moscow but, on the other hand, needs export markets in North America, Europe, and Japan, maintenance of supply chains with their multinationals, and their continued foreign direct investment.

China is thus caught in the contradictions of inter-imperial rivalry amidst an integrated world economy. To overcome this predicament, it is developing a dual circulation economic strategy, which would continue its export model while it focuses on expanding its internal market.

On the geopolitical front, China has closely watched how U.S. and NATO support Ukraine. It no doubt consider this an ominous precedent for how they will respond to China's assertion of power in the Indo-Pacific, especially in the case of any aggression by Beijing against Taiwan. Already, Washington is encouraging its ASEAN allies to increase their military budgets, especially Japan, which for all intents and purposes has voided its pacifist constitution.



As a result, while China has whipped up a domestic propaganda campaign in support of Russia, it has adopted a cautious approach internationally, blocking with Moscow in the Security Council but at this point abiding by the sanctions regime and not sending military aid to its ally.

Nevertheless, Beijing shows no signs of retrenching its regional and global ambitions. While the United States has staked its claim to continued hegemony against Russia and China, there are already signs of the challenges it faces. As economic consequences of the war begin to hit not just Russia but the EU as a whole, key states like France have already begun to push for negotiations to bring the crisis to a conclusion.

The United States has also had difficulty compelling capitalist states outside its North Atlantic alliance to join its sanctions regime against Moscow. Many states in the Global South have opted to balance between NATO powers and the Chinese-Russian alliance, with 35 abstaining from the UN resolution that condemned the invasion.

In short, the US will not be able to reconstruct the neo-liberal world order it has superintended for the past four decades. In fact, globalization is already in relative decline. Growing inter-imperial rivalries, combined with the pandemic, are driving states to pressure multinational capital, which is heavily invested in the current structure of global supply chains, to implement near and onshoring of them, a process that could lead to the reemergence of trade blocs.

Crises and Revolt from Below

None of this reordering of global capitalism's imperialist order will be peaceful, either between states or within them. Indeed, the war has already disrupted and destabilized the system. It has dramatically increased the cost of energy, driving up inflation and slowed growth, evoking panic among central banks about a return to the stagflation that wracked the world economy in the 1970s.

In response, the U.S. Federal Reserve has raised interest

rates even at the at the risk of triggering a global recession. Its hike will cause another debt crisis in the Global South as countries are forced to borrow at higher rates and abide by structural adjustment measures that will further cut their welfare states and lower workers' living standards.

The war's disruption of the global grain market has an even more devastating impact on the Global South, which disproportionately depends on shipments from Ukraine and Russia. The suspension of these has led to massive price increases and shortages of staples essential to life like bread. Hundreds of millions more people will be subject to famine.

The war's interruption of the international energy market will exacerbate the climate crisis. While states will turn to more so-called green energy (a toxic extractivist industry in its own right), they will also increase drilling and fracking to replace Russian oil and gas exacerbating global heating.

War, economic crisis and climate change will drive more people from their home countries adding to the already record flow of migrants around the world. While states have opened their doors to Ukrainian refugees, they have on the whole doubled down on building their border regimes to criminalize migrants, blocking many and reducing those that evade capture to a disenfranchised, cheap labor force for capital to super-exploit.

These crises will further polarize politics within states, opening space for the far right as well as the far left. It will also increased both reactionary and progressive uprisings throughout the world. The massive revolt in Sri Lanka is one taste of things to come, as is Le Pen's record vote total in the French election. These will drive the capitalist establishment to turn further to the right as well as use repression to maintain social order.

Faux "Anti-Imperialism"

The international left is ill-prepared for the challenges of this new period of crisis, rivalry, polarization and revolt. We are coming out of several decades in which opposition to U.S. imperialism was seemingly the sole geopolitical task for the left and antiwar movement.

Therefore, we have little experience opposing other imperialisms like those of China and Russia, responding to their conflicts with the United States — and standing with all oppressed nations like Ukraine without exception.

In this new circumstance, social democrats have in the main lined up with the United States and NATO. They have uncritically supported Biden's use of the Ukraine crisis to build his "league of democracies" to confront "authoritarianism" in defense of the so-called "rules based order." In other word, they are loyal to U.S. imperialism, even with its record of barbarity from the Spanish American War through Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq as well as its support for apartheid Israel's colonialism and for Saudi Arabia's horrific war in Yemen.

On the other hand, sectors of the far left like the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) have resurrected a version of the old Stalinist tradition of campism — taking the side of any state or grouping of states opposing the United States, even when these states crush movements for democracy, popular revolutions and national liberation struggles.

Thus, they backed the Iranian regime against the Green Movement's struggle for democracy, Syrian dictator Bashar

al-Assad's counter-revolution, and the Chinese state's repression of Hong Kong's democratic uprising — all struggles from below that they dismissed as "color revolutions" orchestrated by the CIA.

In the case of Ukraine, they have recycled Putin's lies for invading, in particular blaming the U.S. and NATO as the aggressor and dismissing Ukraine's defensive struggle for national survival as a mere pawn of Western imperialism.

Sometimes the campists adopt a pacifist guise, calling for "ceasefire and negotiations," even if that ratifies Russia's partition of the country. This is neither anti-imperialist nor internationalist, since it legitimizes Russian imperialism and betrays Ukraine's right to self-determination.

This campist position often interacts with pacifist parts of the antiwar movement like CodePink, who tend to take a stand against all violence on principle. Thus they oppose Ukraine's call for arms and its military resistance to Putin's invasion. Such a position would deprive the Ukrainian resistance of arms and pave the way for Russian conquest against a defenseless people.

Tragically, sections of the international left like the British Socialist Workers Party, who should know better, have adopted a position of geopolitical reductionism that simplifies the Russia invasion to an inter-imperialist war between the United States and Russia. While supporting Ukraine's struggle on paper, they too oppose Ukraine's right to secure arms for its self-defense, a position like that of the pacifists that in practice enables Russian imperialism.

For Internationalist Anti-Imperialism

We must build an alternative to these disastrous positions. We must oppose all imperialisms in the new asymmetric multipolar world order; support all struggles for equality, democracy and liberation regardless of which "camp" they occur in; and build solidarity from below among progressive and socialist forces throughout the world.

Applied to Russia's war in Ukraine, that means supporting Ukraine's fight for self-determination and defending its right to secure defensive arms to resist Russia's invasion. We must oppose Russia's war, and support the Russian left and antiwar movements' fight against Putin's regime.

At the same time, we must resist the U.S. and NATO's use of the war for their own purposes. It has little to do with Ukraine's national liberation and more to do with their goal of preserving Washington's hegemony over global capitalism. We must speak out against both Washington's threat to expand the war into Russia or any plan to cut a deal behind Ukraine's back that does not serve its interests.

We must also oppose all the imperial and regional powers' rush to expand their arms budgets in preparation for more conflict. They are diverting funds into their war machines that could otherwise go to reforms to address the multiple crises from the pandemic to climate change, risking nuclear Armageddon in the process.

Throughout, the international left must build an independent pole of attraction for workers and oppressed people to all capitalist parties and states. They each have their stake in the existing order that is the cause of today's crises, growing inter-imperialist conflicts and wars. Only a principled position of internationalist anti-imperialism can guide a new left to offer the alternative, however emergent, of socialism from below against the horrors of global capitalism. ■

A Personal Account of the I.S. To the Working Class, 1969-1980

By Dan La Botz

IN 1969, THE International Socialists, of which I was a member, started a national discussion about how to move toward the working class. Our collective discussion, carried out over a couple of years in the IS discussion bulletins, convinced many of us that the only way to reach the American workers was to go to work, to get a job.

The years 1968 to 1971 saw some of the biggest labor movements and strikes in U.S. history. The Black Lung Movement and Miners for Democracy struggled to overthrow the corrupt machine of Tony Boyle. In the auto plants, African American workers created rank-and-file shop-floor organizations and union reform groups such as the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to fight both company and union racism.

Telephone workers in New York engaged in a weeks-long strike. Steel haulers in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio created the Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers (FASH) to fight both employers and the Teamsters union bureaucracy. Other Teamsters rank-and-file truck drivers and dockworkers established Teamsters United Rank and File (TURF) to fight for better pensions and to reform the union.

We in the IS decided that what made most sense was to seek work in jobs, plants, companies, cities, industries and unions that had a strategic role in the American economy as well as a history of struggle. We began to come up with a list of target industries: mining, steel, auto, telephone and trucking. Beginning in 1970, many of the 300 IS members began the move from campuses to big cities, mostly in the Midwest, and to take jobs in heavy industry.

We chose the traditional industries like steel and auto over services or the public sector. While many of us had had wonderful educations and had dedicated ourselves to studying the economy, society and politics, we did not foresee at all that we were moving toward the past rather than the future.

While we were moving toward the Midwest, the nation's population and industry were moving toward the West and South. Capital was pouring into new industries in what would become the microchip, the computer, and new wireless tele-

THIS CONCLUDES A series of articles written by leftists who, under the direction of their socialist organization, took working-class jobs in order to root themselves and their organizations deeper into the U.S. working class. In recent years, an emerging generation of socialist labor activists has become keenly interested in the history of that experience and lessons to be learned for today.

The Democratic Socialists of America's Labor Committee (DSLCL) hosted three panels in early 2021 to investigate what previous generations of socialists who took working-class jobs had done. Their responses became the preparatory readings for the panels and are the basis for these articles.

This issue features Dan La Botz's account of the International Socialists' orientation to industrializing, which was born out of the workers' upsurge of the '68-71 period. We are also adding a poem from Sam Friedman, who wrote about the Teamster struggle in that period.

ATC would like to thank the DSLCL members Steve Downs and Laura Gabby, who worked to put together the panels.

—The Editors

communications sectors. The world was being drawn into a new global economy.

As the nation headed toward the conservative 1980s, we were attempting to move back to the social upheaval of the 1930s. We would not awaken to these problems until the 1990s.

Getting Industrial Jobs

We called this program "industrialization," meaning we were getting jobs in industry. We intentionally promoted industrial work over jobs such as teaching or social work in which some of our members, myself included, had been involved. We had made this decision collectively and democratically, and now we attempted to implement it through peer pressure.

We urged our members in those white-collar professions to quit and get a job in auto, steel, telephone or trucking. In retrospect, we may wonder if this was the right decision. Should we have attempted to build a political organization with a broader

conception of the working class? Yet if we had not taken jobs in industry, could we ever have had the same impact that we did?

The first task was to get a job. In Chicago, where I had gone, one member headed up our socialist employment agency. He analyzed industries, companies and particular plants. He studied the unions, their histories, their current officers, their finances and their membership.

Our comrade made lists of likely areas and companies where our members might find work and sent us out to apply. He explained how we could create phony work records so people would hire us — no one wanted to hire a graduate of UC Berkeley or the University of Chicago to work in a steel mill or to drive a truck. He created names, phone numbers and letterhead for the fictitious companies and became the person who answered the phone to confirm our phony work records.

Within a year or two, we had a few members working at U.S. Steel South Works who became members of the United Steelworkers. We had a couple of members at an International Harvester plant represented by United Auto Workers Local



TDU demonstration at the Kingsley Inn, Bloomfield Hills, 1979.

<https://jimwestphoto.com>

6. We had one member working at Illinois Bell Telephone Company who became a member of the Communications Workers of America.

Later we would have members, I was one of those, in a few trucking companies who became members of the Teamsters. Our members began to join in shop floor struggles and to participate in union meetings. The rhythms of contract negotiations and union elections soon came to set the pace for the work of our branch.

Within a couple of years, we had made the transition from a student organization involved mostly in the antiwar movement to a socialist organization made up of *déclassé* members active in the working class — which was not to say that we had become a working-class organization.

In the mid-1970s, we had a discussion about whether we should have separate priorities for our women members. Should they seek jobs in male-dominated industries and attempt to become activists and leaders there among a mostly male workforce, or should they seek jobs where most workers were women, so they could become women leaders of women?

We all considered ourselves feminists by that point, and a feminist could make a good argument for either position. Women would be most effective as leaders of women perhaps, but they should not hesitate to become leaders of men either. In the end, we decided that male and female members should seek jobs in the same heavy industries.

So we had women members who became telephone operators, but also auto workers, steel workers, truck drivers and dock workers. And many of them did become leaders of the small groups of women in those industries, and sometimes leaders, as well, of the male workers in their plants or unions.

All that was admirable, but at the same time there was a price to pay by working in the industrial unions. Women in our organization became separated from broader currents of feminism in society and from working women's organizations, such as the new 9-to-5 union that developed outside of industry among Chicago's female office workers.

I Became a Truck Driver

In 1974, I was living in a low-income neighborhood in Chicago. I attended truck-driving school paid for by a federal anti-poverty program and became a qualified truck driver. My goal was to get hired into a large trucking company that would be represented by one of the major Chicago freight locals: Teamsters Local 710 or Local 705, or the Chicago Truck Drivers Union (Independent).

I put in applications at all the big companies where the IS was attempting to get people hired: Roadway, Yellow Freight, and Consolidated Freightways. While waiting to hear from them, we also went and applied at local cartage companies, and, as it happened, one of them was hiring.

Workers at F Landon Cartage were represented by the Chicago Truck Drivers Union (Independent), a union that

was not part of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters but was covered by the Chicago Teamsters agreement, which paralleled the national freight contract that covered most companies.

I worked at Landon for the next three years, from October 1975 to the end of 1978 and later, for a few more years, at other trucking companies. I had gotten the job at Landon in order to be an activist in the Teamsters union, but Landon Cartage's drivers and dockworkers would never form a base for such activities.

The workers, if not exactly delighted with their jobs, were not highly dissatisfied either. Mostly men with a high school education or less, they held a union job that paid a relatively high wage, about \$12 an hour, and usually got about 10 hours of overtime (sometimes more) each week paid at time and a half. The employer did not treat us badly — in fact, a driver's job was easy; no doubt a dockworker's job was harder.

If a worker had a problem, the union would usually intervene and save the worker's job, unless he had been caught red-handed drunk, fighting or stealing. Few were caught red-handed.

Working at F. Landon Cartage must have been one of the best jobs in the trucking business in the city, though it was not completely out of the ordinary. The trucking industry, which began as a competitive and cutthroat business in the 1930s, had been brought under Federal regulation in the 1930s, controlling new entrants, establishing routes and rates.

The Teamsters union in the period between 1934 and 1964 had through a series of strikes brought the industry under the National Master Freight Agreement (NMFA), a pattern agreement covering most companies and workers. Between Federal regulation and the union, employers secured their profits and the union protected the workers' jobs and wages.

Just as I entered the industry in the 1970s, employers began to try to change the thirty-year old system. First, they pushed for greater productivity from dockworkers and drivers and then they pushed to dismantle or to escape from the NMFA.

Later Congress passed deregulation, which dismantled the whole system. Before all that, however, when I went to work as a driver, for the most part jobs were secure, wages high and conditions pretty good. But things were changing at the cross-country freight lines.

During the 1960s and 1970s regional companies had merged into national freight lines such as Roadway, Yellow, and Consolidated Freightways. Those companies were making the big push for productivity. United Parcel Service, the package delivery company, had developed intense supervision methods and high productivity demands that the others began to emulate.

All the national companies were trying to get Teamsters to work faster and move more freight. Regional carriers found themselves in competition and adopted the same strategy. My impression is that such pressure hadn't at that time worked itself down to the smaller, local cartage, drayage or haulage companies. Later, however, some would be driven out of business by the more efficient regional and national carriers.

The base of the movement we were organizing would be the dockworkers and drivers at the larger companies, workers who were feeling the pressure from employers for productivity and profits.



TDU's first convention, Kent, Ohio, 1976.

<https://jimwestphoto.com>

The Chicago Truck Drivers Union

The Chicago Truck Drivers Union, to which I belonged, was a very strange union in many ways. In the early years of the Teamsters, around the year 1905, several Chicago Teamsters locals, disappointed by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) failure to support a Chicago strike, left the union and became independent.

Later during the Prohibition era, many Teamsters union locals fell under the control of the Mafia, which took control of the trucking industry in order to move illegal booze. Several of the Mafia-dominated Chicago Teamsters locals left the International Brotherhood of Teamsters during that era.

In 1933, pressured by local business interests tired of dealing with extortion by violent crooks, the government decided to get rid of the mob. Chicago Mayor Edward J. Kelly and Illinois State's Attorney Thomas J. Courtney, working with John Fitzpatrick and Edward Nockels, progressive leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and with Teamster President Dan Tobin, joined together to force the Mafia out of the Chicago Teamsters and bring the local unions back into the IBT and the American Federation of Labor.

One of the Chicago Truck Drivers Unions, however, remained independent under autocratic leadership. After the mob assassinated the former president Mickey Galvin in 1936, Edward Fenner became the head of the union with a title unknown in the regular Teamsters unions, "executive director."

The union under Fenner was not mobbed up, but it did not hold monthly union meetings like other unions but called a meeting only once every three years to announce the terms of the new contract. The union had no union hall, but rather an office over a bank on the corner of Halsted and Madison.

There was no union newspaper, no union mailings, no union literature whatsoever. Fenner and the other business agents — wearing three-piece suits, homburg hats, and dark overcoats in the winter — were all chauffeured around in big black Buicks. They looked more like a crew of funeral directors than union representatives.

Local Caucuses

The IS had developed the strategy of attempting to create reform caucuses in the unions where we had become involved. In each of the cities where we worked, we attempted to find

local activists who had been involved in fighting the companies and the union bureaucracy and to form an alliance with them.

We always had the sense of a symbiotic relationship between ourselves as radicals entering the working class and Teamster activists who had been there, often for decades.

We believed that we had things to communicate to workers about U.S. imperialism, American politics, capitalism, and the struggle for socialism. We also had skills we had learned in the civil rights and anti-war movements, skills as organizers, writers and speakers. We knew how to design and print a leaflet or a newspaper.

We recognized that they too had things to teach us. They understood the local employers, the union, and the mentalities of their co-workers far better than we possibly could. As we shared our perspectives and information, we influenced one another.

Once we had reached agreement with the Teamster activists on some local goals and objectives, we began to organize by publishing an opposition newspaper in each locality. By early 1976 we had local groups in Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and New York, and later we added a few others.

Each of those groups put out a monthly local newspaper discussing problems in the companies and in the union. By 1976 we must have had 25 members working as Teamsters in about seven or eight cities, a very small group but with a strategic placement in important companies and local unions.

Those members had established close working relationships with other Teamster activists with whom they had come to agreement on the need for reform in the union. What we needed now was the courage and commitment, the discipline and energy to try organizing something big.

A National Rank-and-File Movement

In 1975 we first attempted to use our socialist politics and our strategic ideas to set this large-scale project in motion. Rather like using a series of pulleys to lift a heavy object, the tiny IS, an organization of a few hundred, would build and lead caucuses that numbered in the hundreds or thousands, which could in turn move the unions, whose membership numbered in millions.

What we called “class struggle unionism” could influence tens of millions of others in the working class. With this block-and-tackle conception, our efforts would be multiplied a thousand-fold.

We aimed to establish a class-struggle pole, and in fighting for reforms, to set millions of workers in motion against their employers. We foresaw reform caucuses taking power in those major industrial unions, transforming the AFL-CIO and eventually reaching unorganized workers as well.

In doing so we hoped to create a new sense of workers’ power in American society, a power that would move America to the left.

To do this, we had to overcome an enormous obstacle. We understood that U.S. labor unions were highly bureaucratic and conservative; that is, the character and structure of the union officialdom had become solid defenders of the capitalist status quo and an obstacle to workers’ interests and struggles.

The character of the labor bureaucracy was clear to see: union officials were a caste apart. They received high salaries, often many times those of an ordinary worker. In the

Teamsters union they reached \$500,000 when an ordinary dockworker, driver or factory worker made \$30,000.

Union officials also had expense accounts that covered their hotel bills, meals, even bar tabs. Officers at the highest levels had perquisites such as the union jet (the Teamsters had a small fleet of planes), and even low-level officials had union cars. In the Teamsters union the officials wore expensive suits and topcoats, drove Buicks, and some flashed diamond pinky rings.

Perhaps most important, most union officials had become lifetime career bureaucrats; they no longer drove trucks, loaded freight on the docks, or worked in a factory like other workers. When they retired, or if voted out of office, few indeed were the officials who returned to work. Often they took jobs with management or with a labor mediation agency or opened their own business, sometimes even setting up non-union businesses in the industries where they had formerly been union reps.

Virtually all union officials held to a view we could call “business unionism,” that is, that the job of the union was to support business and that the union itself should be run along business lines. The corporate structure of American capitalism was replicated in the hierarchy and the top-down, vertical control found in most unions.

The industrial unions also reproduced the race and gender patterns of American business institutions and society more generally, with white men heading the unions and African Americans, Latinos and women having very small roles. Many AFL craft unions still excluded African American, Latino and women members, and when forced by lawsuits or government regulations to admit them, made the newcomers’ lives unbearable and sometimes drove them out of the union.

Bureaucratic Union Caste Ideology

Union officials held their own caste ideology, that they were the best guardians of the workers’ interests. While the UAW and other former CIO unions supported the civil rights movement and the women’s movement, they often ignored the problems of workers in their own unions.

So, for decades the union negotiated higher wages and better benefits but ignored the workers’ demands to slow down the speed of the production line, to improve conditions on the shop floor, and for bosses to treat workers with dignity. Leaders of these unions saw themselves as speaking for the workers — but would not let the workers speak for themselves.

Other union leaders, the typical union officials without a leftist history, generally accepted the capitalist ideology and argued that what was good for the company was good for the workers. If the company was successful, i.e. profitable, the union could pressure the company to share some of that profit with the workers. The union’s job then was to see that workers didn’t interfere with the company’s production and profits.

Whether Republicans or Democrats — or the rare social democrat — many union officials came to see their role as policing the contract for the company. Above all, company managers and union officials collaborated to prevent workers from engaging in slowdowns, work stoppages and strikes.

In the worst of cases at that time, officials of the Teamsters, the Laborers, the East Coast Longshoremen’s union (ILA), the

Hotel and Restaurant Workers and the National Maritime Union were in some cases actually members of the Mafia. They saw the union as their property, a machine for criminal activities.

These union officials used the power of the union to extort money from both businessmen and workers. They took labor peace payoffs, that is, they took money in exchange for accepting a contract and preventing a strike.

Some literally sold jobs to workers and took payoffs from workers to keep those jobs. They controlled crime and contraband in the workplace or the job site, sometimes promoting gambling, prostitution and drugs at work.

Whether leftist, business unionist, or corrupt, union officials generally viewed workers as subordinates who had to be controlled. Workers speaking out or standing up for their rights were viewed as “troublemakers,” and management and the union often colluded to fire them and sometimes blacklist them in the industry.

In the more corrupt unions, the gangster union leaders beat workers and even occasionally murdered them — though by the 1970s the murders were rare.

Within the unions, our job would be to organize rank and file workers first to take over leadership of the union and then to fight the employers, and while doing that, we hoped to recruit the leaders of the movement to socialism.

We believed that workers — particularly the more active workers, such as union stewards — would be attracted to the rank-and-file groups we helped to create. We would then recruit the most political of those rank-and-file activists to our politics and organization, transforming the IS in the process to become a genuinely working class group.

We envisioned growing from a few hundred to a few thousand and, within a decade or so, to a socialist group of perhaps 10,000 — what we called a “small mass party.” We wanted to strengthen workers and the unions, but our goal was never simply union reform or winning a better contract.

The goal was to build a revolutionary socialist party that could play a leading role in the overthrow of American capitalism and in bringing about the establishment of a democratic socialist society. Our conception of socialist revolution derived above all from the experience of the Russian Revolution of October 1917, that a disciplined revolutionary party could lead a mass workers’ movement in overthrowing the capitalist state and establishing working class power.

The Organization of TDC

The next step after creating local caucuses was to bring all of these local groups into contact with one another, to launch a campaign around the national freight contract. In a preliminary step, we began to organize trips with Chicago Teamster activists to visit similar groups in Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

Workers felt stronger being part of the opposition if they knew there were others like themselves out there. At the same time, these trips drew us closer to the people we worked with locally, so that we became part of a team.

Our Teamster “fraction,” that is the IS members in the Teamsters union, created a national steering committee and we circulated a Teamster fraction bulletin with information on what was happening nationally and in the cities where we worked. Between 1970 and 1974, the steering committee called occasional meetings of our Teamster members on the

West Coast and in the Midwest to discuss developments and strategy.

This circulation of information and discussion helped to create a common understanding, to develop a common analysis of the industry and the union, and made our members more effective in their work with other Teamsters. Joining with other Teamsters in various regions, we launched a national contract campaign in 1974 that adopted the name Teamsters for a Decent Contract, or TDC.

During the course of many meetings and discussions, the IS arrived at a consensus about our general organizing strategy. The synergy of the interaction between IS members and Teamsters would be essential to the success of the movement. While we were socialists, we were not attempting to create a socialist movement of Teamsters. Clearly in the United States at that time, few truck drivers and dockworkers had any interest in socialism and many were anti-Communist.

We aimed, rather, to build a rank-and-file workers’ movement that could push the Teamsters union to strike against the employers. In this way we would demonstrate the power of the rank-and-file and draw more Teamsters into the struggle, while at the same time introducing them to our socialist politics.

We were clear that for the time being, we only wanted this to be a contract movement, not yet a general reform movement. We had to restrain (but not for long) some of our co-thinkers, who wanted to leap immediately into a full-scale battle to change the union.

From TDC to TDU

Under pressure from TDC’s “no contract, no work” movement, IBT president Fitzsimmons was obliged to call an official strike that lasted three days. TDC activists and members of the sister group of UPS workers, UPSurge, led wildcat strikes at freight terminals in Detroit, and briefly at UPS terminals in eight cities in the Central States region.

It was the first national IBT strike in freight, and it secured for the members a significantly improved contract.

During the TDC contract campaign, we had begun to make plans to found a permanent national opposition group within the union. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) held its founding convention on September 18, 1976 at Kent State University in Ohio. In attendance were about 200 rank-and-file Teamsters, from 44 local unions and 15 states.

TDU was created as a rank-and-file group focusing on the issue of union democracy. Although coming as it did out of a national contract campaign and a series of wildcat strikes, it was clear that the goal of the group was to transform the Teamsters into a more militant and powerful union.

When time came to elect a national steering committee, we in the IS adopted a policy that this should be an organization led by Teamster activists, not primarily by IS members. From the beginning we decided that while a few of our IS members would play leading roles in TDU, we wanted grassroots Teamsters from around the country to make up the majority of the movement’s leadership.

We rejected the idea of fighting to get a majority of our members on the TDU steering committee. We needed just a few IS members in the leadership so that we could participate in a discussion with rank-and-file leaders about how to carry the movement forward. They were, after all, the ones in touch

with the rank and file.

We also worked to nominate a committee that would include not only white male workers, who had historically dominated the Teamsters union, but also African Americans and women who had generally been excluded in the past.

The TDU founding convention adopted as its central campaign a fight for union bylaws reform that would allow members to elect stewards and business agents. We believed that this kind of reform would unleash the power of the rank and file. Ken Paff, who had organized TDC, was chosen by the Convention and the new Steering Committee as the national organizer for TDU.

Socialism in the Labor Movement

While organizing the Teamster reform movement, we were also trying to win individual Teamsters to socialism. First, we attempted to explain our socialist views and our membership in the IS to our closest collaborators. Second, when we had national TDU steering committee meetings or TDU conventions, we would schedule parallel private meetings with TDU leaders and activists to talk about the IS and socialism.

These meetings served three purposes. By explaining our socialist identity, strategy and goals, we anticipated and prevented redbaiting. If someone accused us of being socialists, our friends would say, "Sure, we know. They told us. So what?"

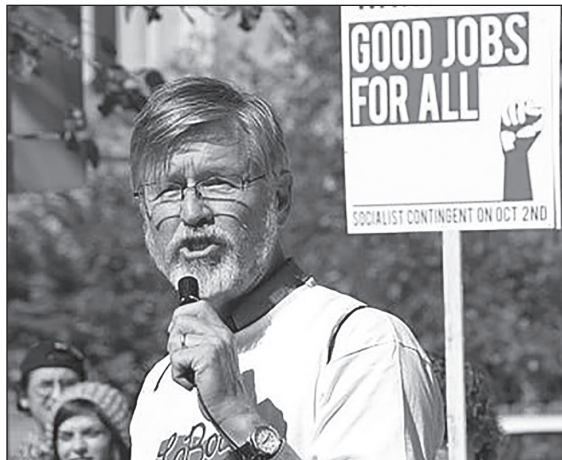
These private gatherings also allowed us to discuss long-term strategy for the rank-and-file movement with our closest collaborators in a way we could not necessarily do in TDU steering committee. Finally, they also made it possible for us to raise the idea of some of these Teamster activists joining the IS.

In addition to this personal work with specific Teamsters, we had more general work with the Teamster activists at large. The IS published a socialist newspaper, written in accessible language, called *Workers Power*, which regularly featured articles about the Teamsters and TDU, as well as all sorts of other labor union and political news.

Workers Power also covered the African-American movement and African liberation struggles as well as the radical labor movement in Southern Europe. IS members sold our paper at selected workplaces. For a few years I sold regularly at the main Post Office in Chicago, often at the change of shift at midnight. Other members sold the paper outside Teamster workplaces.

IS Teamster members also sold *Workers Power* to the Teamsters with whom we worked. In some workplaces we had regular Teamster readers who looked forward to reading our paper. *Workers Power* occasionally interviewed our "open" or "public" socialist Teamster and TDU activists and leaders, or quoted them in articles on the TDU and the IBT.

Finally, the IS distributed pamphlets such as *Building the Revolutionary Party*, *Class Struggle Unionism* and a pamphlet



Dan La Botz campaigning to be U.S. Senator from Ohio on the Socialist Party ticket in 2010.

I authored, *Conspiracy in the Trucking Industry*. At times, our role as TDU activists and socialist propagandists became hard to keep separate.

At Landon where I worked, I distributed our local paper *The Grapevine*, the TDU national paper *Convoy*, and the IS paper *Workers Power*. Even though Landon was a very conservative workplace, all the workers always took the first two, which were free, and a few always bought *Workers Power*.

Some of the dockworkers and drivers found my constant propaganda and agitation bizarre and amusing. One day when I arrived at work someone shouted, "Here comes the paper boy!"

Through this variety of efforts, during the period from about 1975 to about 1979, the IS managed to recruit about 20 Teamsters. The Teamsters who joined included rank-and-file activists and local TDU and Teamster leaders from three or four different cities.

Most of the IS Teamster recruits, with a few exceptions, were rank-and-file TDU activists who had been won over to the IS because they were impressed with our strategies and our commitment, and were therefore open to our politics. If socialism made people better fighters for union democracy and justice in the workplace, then they were eager to join up with the socialists — even if they didn't understand exactly what socialism meant.

Most of these recruits did not become well integrated into our organization and their relationship to the IS remained tenuous. The principal reason for this was the great difference between the personal and social lives of the IS members and the Teamster rank and filers.

For our younger members, their whole life was their involvement in the socialist organization and politics; most rank-and-file Teamsters, however, had responsibilities to family, community and church. Our attempt to bridge these different worlds failed partly for lack of a big enough movement that might have connected them.

Another failing was that we never established a real educational program to teach these workers about our politics, nor did we have very good educational materials for workers about the basics of socialist theory, politics, economics and unionism.

At the time, however, we did not yet see and understand these difficulties. We were proud to have some real workers in the organization. We felt we had made a breakthrough; a working-class organization in theory, we were about to become one in fact.

Crisis in the IS

We did not realize it at the time, but our success in launching a national reform organization in the Teamsters took place at just the moment that the great wave of working-class activism that had begun in the late 1960s was coming to an end.

Several factors had converged to create the labor upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s that took place among public employees, farm workers, Black autoworkers, telephone and postal workers. The most

important of those factors had been the national legitimization of social protest as a result of the African-American civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movements.

Protest became an American way of life for 30 years, and many American workers took up the picket sign and joined the strike. Inflation and the employers' push for higher productivity both affected workers' consciousness, leading many workers to strike to resist speedups and to fight for higher wages.

Taken together, these social and economic factors had generated a new working-class consciousness, one that led many workers to become not only more militant but also in some cases more radical.

Then, between 1975 and 1980, militant working-class struggle in the United States virtually crashed (with some exceptions such as the 1978 miners' strike), in part because the factors that had nurtured it — such as the Civil Rights and antiwar movements — themselves declined.

Most important for the labor movement, though, were the two devastating recessions of 1974-75 and 1979-81. In the 1974-75 "stagflation" recession, unemployment reached 10 percent for the first time since the Great Depression. In the wake of each recession came bankruptcies and the beginning of what came to be called "deindustrialization," the shutdown of many older industrial plants, particularly auto factories and steel mills.

Hundreds of thousands of workers in heavy industry lost their jobs, their union jobs. With the recessions and the plant closings, workers became afraid to fight. The era of strikes that had begun in the mid-1960s wound down in the late 1970s and was all over by 1980.

We didn't fully understand what was happening at the time. If we thought that we had only entered the doldrums, in reality we were

in the Bermuda Triangle. Our entire political strategy was predicated upon involving ourselves in workers' struggles in unions in heavy industry — and now heavy industry began to close down, even be torn down.

Unions began to shrink; workers ceased to struggle. Throughout the Northeast and the Midwest, and in other regions of the country, industrial workplaces closed. As social movements declined and labor went into retreat, conservative political organizations began to become more influential.

For the decade from 1968 to 1978 we had been swimming with the stream; after 1978 we were going against the current although, as I say, we weren't aware of all of this at the time, and what had happened would only become clear as we moved on into the 1980s.

Nevertheless, whether we were aware or not, those developments contributed to the crisis that was to practically blow apart the IS.

Factionalism Cripples the Group

Around 1976, a group of members had become critical of the IS industrial-organizing strategy. They believed that an organization as small as the IS, which was throwing itself into union reform work, would inevitably be led to give up its revolutionary politics and become a reformist organization.

They objected to industrial priorities, to students becoming industrial workers, to IS worker-activists running for union office. Believing that the organization was heading down the wrong track, they decided to organize an opposition.

Leaders of this group traveled to Great Britain and met with leaders of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP; formerly the British IS). There they proposed the initially secret creation of a faction within the American IS that would be loyal to the British leadership. They returned to publish a document called "The New Course" and used it as the political basis to create a tendency called the Left Faction.

Their document they argued that the IS had become depoliticized and that it was necessary to put politics back into the organization. In reality, these folks wanted to return to being a socialist propaganda group rather than a socialist group that sought to organize and lead working-class struggles.

They believed that during what would be a long period of "downturn," as they called it, IS members should go into professions like teaching, and the organization should reorient to college campuses to recruit students to socialism.

The Left Faction was pitted against the IS leadership. As often happens in such cases, the opening up of the faction fight led to the rise of a third group, the Political Solutions Caucus. The PSC wanted to stick with industrialization, industrial priorities and attempts to lead mass work, but also wanted to fight what it too saw as the depoliticization of the IS.

At the March 1977 convention, the IS majority leadership succeeded in winning enough delegates to expel the LF for having formed a secret faction. As a result, the IS was reduced from about 300 to about 200 members. Within a year or so, the PSC also left, taking with it a few score members.

By 1979 the IS "majority" had been reduced to a little over 100 members, many of them in industry, but with an organization so battered and weakened as to be much less effective. Moreover, as described above and with the election of Ronald Reagan on the horizon, the political situation in the country and in the labor movement was deteriorating at a rapid rate. (One positive side was a decision at the 1978 IS convention to launch what became the *Labor Notes* project.)

We would have hard times ahead. That was true not only for the IS — which joined with other groups in 1986 to form Solidarity — but for the entire labor-oriented and socialist U.S. left. Those years would open a new period for U.S. labor and the left, all the way to the events of the present. ■

Field Work by Sam Friedman

*I listened in wonder when
Alex first told of bobtailing his load
from PMT to Tarzana,
or John T recalled his years
being dispatched from the hiring hall
to haul doubles from the City of Industry
to West LA,
or Mannie Labastida moaned about
break-bulk barns that
stole the Local's jobs.*

*Within a year, I could toss these terms
of drivers and their daily struggles
like a juggler's balls,
one, two, three, even more,
flying scintillating beneath the smoggy light
but my renditions rang facile in my ears
since I had not grimaced through hernias while
piling packages
the pains of potholed kidneys,
nor daily harassment by dispatchers
that made their lingo sing.*

Home Planet News Online #5 2018

Sam Friedman is a poet, author of several books including *Teamster Rank and File* (Columbia University Press, 1982), researcher of the AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics, and member of Jewish Voice for Peace in New Jersey. This poem is from his collection *A Precious Residue: Poems that ponder our efforts to spark a working class socialism in the 1970s and after. He has also written for ATC.*

REVIEW

Migration Politics & Criminalization By Cynthia Wright

Border and Rule:

Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism

By Harsha Walia

Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2021, 320 pages. \$19.95 paperback available from Haymarket Books.

HARSHA WALIA IS an anti-capitalist, feminist, abolitionist and anti-imperialist activist and writer who is well-known in organizing networks in Canada. For over two decades, she has been among those on the frontlines of migrant justice politics through her work in *No One is Illegal*.

Reflecting her understanding of the deep entanglements of border formation with Indigenous dispossession — one of the themes in *Border and Rule* — Walia has also collaborated extensively with Indigenous-led struggles. This includes, for example, working with Indigenous women and trans people in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, one of the country's most disadvantaged urban neighborhoods.¹

Walia is part of an important layer of activists, organizers and movement theoreticians who, in the last two decades or so, have substantially re-drawn the stakes of migrant justice organizing in Canada.²

Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism and the Rise of Racist Nationalism is easily Walia's most ambitious publication to date, and has been blurbed by numerous well-known scholars, organizers and left intellectuals including Paul Gilroy, Naomi Klein, Justin Akers Chacon, Dean Spade, Mariame Kaba and Mike Davis.

Offering a powerful critique of borders and the violence that goes into their formation and maintenance, the book is anchored in Walia's varied organizing experience, diverse political commitments, and robust engagement with theorizing emerging from contemporary abolitionist, Indigenous, anti-capitalist, anarchist and other currents.

At the same time, *Border and Rule* is not directly about migrant justice and social movement organizing, the focus of her earlier

Cynthia Wright is a longtime activist who lives and works in Toronto where she teaches at York University. Among her projects are an anthology-in-progress (with Bridget Anderson and Nandita Sharma) on resistance to immigration controls and citizenship regimes, as well as a history (with Franca Iacovetta) on the anarchist legacies and intergenerational memories of Emma Goldman and her circle in Toronto.

er book, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (2013).³ Similarly, those looking for a detailed account of migrant subjectivities and of the modalities of resistance of those on the move will not find it in *Border and Rule*.⁴

Rather, *Border and Rule* is a powerful synthesis of academic literatures and journalistic accounts not often brought together in a single study. The book locates migration politics within a wide-ranging analysis of war and displacement, bordering regimes that criminalize the global working class, capitalism and labor exploitation, and racist nationalisms.

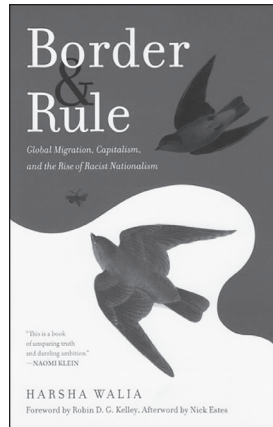
In keeping with Walia's desire to avoid "methodological nationalism" (2)⁵ in a book devoted to interrogating borders and right-wing nationalism, *Border and Rule* is not focused on a single national space or region, but rather traces transnational practices across various locales especially Canada, the United States, the Mediterranean region, Australia, and the Gulf States among other sites.

Displacement and Justice

The book is divided into four parts, each consisting of three chapters. Part One, in keeping with much critical literature on migration, argues that the "migration crisis" is in fact a displacement crisis caused by "capitalism, conquest, and climate change." (3)

This section also lays out her argument that, while often seen as disconnected struggles, migrant justice movements are in fact intimately tied to the long arc of Indigenous anti-colonial and Black abolitionist struggles. (Interestingly, the book does not engage with the growing literature on historical and contemporary Indigenous migrations, displacements and mobilities despite the fact that, in both the United States and Canada, Indigenous peoples make up a significant portion of, for example, agricultural labor migration.)⁶

Part Two, drawing mainly on examples from Europe, Australia and the United States, is devoted to understanding how borders operate and to anatomizing the making of illegalized and "undesirable" migrants through bordering strategies including offshore detention, interdiction, externalization



of borders, securitization and militarization, and much more.

Among her key arguments in this section, one tied to her signature concept of "border imperialism," is that the United States, Europe and Australia are furthering imperial relations by forcing other states and regions, via trade and aid agreements, "to build externalized infrastructures of migration control under imperial management." (5)

Broadly, border externalization is a term used by policy makers and migration scholars to refer to the diverse array of practices by migrant-receiving states of the Global North (e.g. Australia, European Union states, and the USA) of extending border and migration controls into the territories of migrant-sending states of the Global South with the aim of stopping the flow of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Among other things, this advantages states in the Global North, by transferring the political and economic costs of managing migration to migrant-sending and transit states.⁷

Border Imperialism and Deportability

Before turning to Parts Three and Four of *Border and Rule*, I want also to elaborate on this key concept of Walia's, "border imperialism," initially advanced in the introductory chapter to her first book, *Undoing Border Imperialism*. In this original formulation, "border imperialism" refers to an assemblage with four components:

1) mass displacements caused by capitalism and imperial states that simultaneously close their borders to the migrants they have displaced;

2) criminalization and illegalization of migrants, which in turn creates profits for those corporations involved in migrant detention centers and the militarization of borders;

3) expansion of racialized, gendered and nationalist exclusions in citizenship and belonging with consequential impacts on a global scale including profound violence;

4) increasing exploitation of migrant workers globally though denial of a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship in order to secure a disposable labor force.

These four features outlined in *Undoing*

Border Imperialism substantially correspond to the four parts of Walia's *Border and Rule* where they are given more detailed and up-to-date treatment than in *Undoing Border Imperialism*.

Thus, the global expansion of migrant labor programs is the focus of Part Three of *Border and Rule*. Drawing on Nicholas de Genova's pioneering work on deportability among other scholarship,⁸ this section opens with a chapter on the key features of migrant labor programs before turning to a comparison of such programs in Canada and the Gulf States.

While attentive to the regional differences in these programs globally, she argues that they are best understood as dynamic variations within "an international ordering of racial capitalism" (148), one which secures "cheapened labor without altering the racial social order through permanent immigration." (133)

Finally, Part Four, consisting of two chapters and the book's conclusion, examines the links between anti-migrant violence and racist nationalisms as well as the increasingly urgent problem of statelessness as evidenced by states that are making non-citizens out of subjugated citizens within the nation, including for example, Muslim citizens in India.

Specifically, Indian PM Narendra Modi's Citizenship Amendment Act (2019), which has been the focus of mass demonstrations opposing the measure, provides for citizenship to be expedited for refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — as long as they are not Muslim.

Additionally, those Muslims in India (including those born in the country) who cannot "prove" their citizenship, perhaps because they lack the means to acquire papers or birth certificates or they do not appear on the National Registry of Citizens for whatever reason, are now being declared "foreigners" and detained or threatened with deportation.⁹

Both measures are indexes of a profound ethno-nationalism whose violent consequences for Muslims in India are truly frightening and must concern us all.

What is Nationhood?

While Walia has a strong critique of racist nationalisms and advocates, in a brief passage at the end of the book, for a left no-borders politics, she wants to hold out the possibility of a nationalism not tied to the nation-state, in part because of her commitment to Indigenous conceptions of nationhood as articulated by some Indigenous intellectuals such as Leanne Simpson.¹⁰

Walia's position raises some important questions not explored in the book, including: nations predicated on what? Why imagine freedom through the idiom of nation?

Given Walia's strong abolitionist politics,

I would have liked to have seen the book engage with what Saidiya Hartman calls "the fugitive's legacy;" the strong current within contemporary revolutionary Black theorizing (much of it coming from Black feminists) that envisions "autonomy rather than nationhood ...the dream of an elsewhere, with all its promises and dangers, where the stateless might, at last, thrive."¹¹

How might these rather different visions of justice and liberation be brought into productive conversation with each other?

At the organizing level, anti-capitalist migrant justice organizers in Canadian context have grappled extensively and variously with the problem of articulating opposition to borders from within the space of a colonial state, often in dialogue with Indigenous people engaged in Land Back movements that are themselves thinking through problems of membership and borders.

This set of ongoing conversations is not captured in this particular book and needs to be traced through the last decade or so of movement and scholarly publications.

Walia's signature concept, "border imperialism," also has its roots in these ongoing radical migrant justice movement conversations.

In part, this concept has emerged from movement frameworks that respond to everyday needs of illegalized and precarious status migrants for immigration status — something that relies on appeals to the state — while at the same time challenging the legitimacy of the Canadian state, including in matters pertaining to immigration, through insisting on the state's colonial and imperial character.

As deployed in *Border and Rule*, the concept appears to signify both the entire displacement crisis driving migration and also, more specifically, to the ways in which powerful states compel other states, through aid and trade agreements, to agree to externalized border management and migration control on their territories.

Both points direct us to important issues, but I am not sure "border imperialism" as a concept can help us explain the broader problem: how exactly did the institution of national citizenship and the architecture of immigration controls become globalized?

In what ways, and why, did the post-independence and national liberation states that emerged after World War II contribute to the consolidation of this regime?

Strategic Vision Needed

Asking these questions can lead to a more comprehensive analysis of contemporary state-led anti-migrant discourse and violence — including in states that are not necessarily on the global far right.¹²

Border and Rule is a stark reminder of some pressing realities that need a truly

global strategic revolutionary vision. Displacement, dispossession, war and climate change mean millions need to move. (I would emphasize that human mobility is always going to exist even in the absence of these drivers of migration, all of which need to be fought not in the name of ending migration, but as part of a global struggle against patriarchal and racial capitalism.)

Immigration controls, detention, and bordering regimes kill. Yet, borders do not keep all migrants out and were never meant to, for they work to secure the exploitation of millions of illegalized and deportable racialized working-class people at enormous benefit to capital.

Anti-migrant and anti-"foreigner" discourse and violence is also leading to the un-making of citizenship in many states and is increasingly tied to rightwing, authoritarian states and nationalisms.

In short, migrant justice is increasingly central to all politics and to the fortunes of a global working class deeply divided by immigration status and national citizenship regimes. *Border and Rule* offers a lucid and expansive guide to the operations of borders and what is at stake in their abolition. ■

Notes

1. See *Survival, Strength, Sisterhood: Power of Women in the Downtown Eastside*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4ZC6q9XY> and the co-authored report by Walia and Carol Muree Martin, *Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. Available here: <https://dewc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MMIW-Report-Final-March-10-WEB.pdf>
2. There are too many people to name here, but see Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Fernwood Publishing, 2017; Nandita Sharma, *Home Economics: Nationalism and the Making of 'Migrant Workers' in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006; and various essays by Mostafa Henaway.
3. AK Press, 2013. <https://www.akpress.org/>
4. Here I recommend Maurice Stierl's excellent *Migrant Resistance in Contemporary Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
5. While Walia does not reference it, the concept of "methodological nationalism" was first coined in an article by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, available here: https://www.awimmer.com/_files/ugd/24595a_6b5f6db5e91049728683d26502957d76.pdf
6. For an introduction to the Canadian and U.S. literature, see the essay by Heather Howard and Susan Lobo, "Indigenous Peoples, rural to urban migration, United States and Canada." In *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*. John Wiley and Sons, 2013. On Mexican Indigenous migrants in the US, see Remy Ramirez, *Native Hubs*. Duke University Press, 2007.
7. For more, see Bill Frelick, Ian M. Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul, "The Impact of Externalization of Migration Controls on the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/06/impact-externalization-migration-controls-rights-asylum-seekers-and-other-migrants>
8. https://www.nicholasdegenova.com/_files/ugd/4fd32d_bb040a2262b64b94a43d4c8923531a5f.pdf
9. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy>
10. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
11. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007, 234. Ellipsis is mine.
12. For two important accounts in a growing literature on these themes, see Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Duke University Press, 2020. See also Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

REVIEW

Disability Studies from South to North By Owólabi Aboyade

Disability in Africa: Inclusion, Care, and the Ethics of Humanity

Toyin Falola and Nic Hamel, editors
Boydell & Brewer: Cambridge University Press,
2021, 452 pages, \$155.25 hardcover.

“Some people think that it is only white people who can come up with new theories, and they’re wrong!” he said and all the ministers chorused back Yeees!!!!” — Ngūgī wa thiong’o, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006)

IN THESE VIRUS days, more people than ever are familiar with or concerned about physical debilitation. Still, for those who think of themselves as regularly “healthy” or able-bodied, the lived experiences of those with impairments other than Corona or long-Covid are invisible at best and quite frequently, filled with exclusion, stereotypes and oppression.

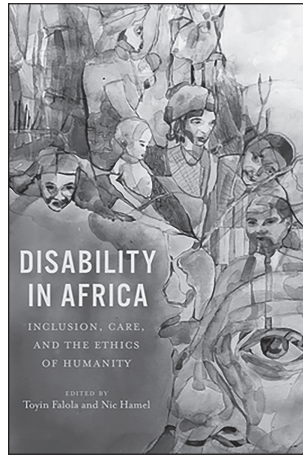
Likewise, many of what Trump calls “shithole countries” of the Global South have existed under the burden of centuries of foreign interventions and the denigration of indigenous ways of being in favor of the more successful, violent and monotheistic conquering stories of those who occupy and steal from us.

At the outset of this review, I’ll talk more about my subjectivity and how I read *Disability in Africa*.

I am a New Afrikan, a descendent of Africans stolen from the Continent. We see the political fight for sovereignty from the U.S. Empire as more fundamental than equality within it. I am a disability justice care organizer from Detroit, the Blackest city in the United States. I have lived with kidney disease for 30+ years, oftentimes presenting and being treated as able bodied.

I am a member of Detroit’s African-centered community and have studied overarching trends on the continent, but I am not a specialist in the politics and histories of specific African nations. A large part of my in-

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tellectual work is distinguishing what is different in the Black/ New Afrikan experiences of disability from mainstream dialogues on disability, and even the prominent U.S. experiences of disability justice.

I worked in the environmental justice

field for 15 years. Here I saw the complexities of embracing a disabled identity, specifically in my Detroit communities. We would cite statistics of cancers and asthma, but were unable to craft an approach to uplift the leadership or even experiences of people with chronic illness.

When I stepped away due to my own health crisis in 2017, my experience mirrored the experiences of women leaders profiled in Chapter 15 of *Disability in Africa* — our focus on institutional and policy change blocked us from meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and physically debilitated. This trend is increased when funders and the goals of “scaling up” enter the picture.

Any Good from Crippled Africans?

In the Biblical Book of John, when hearing of the prophetic word of Jesus/Yeshua, Nathanael asks “*Can there any good thing come out of Nazereth?*” (John 1:46)

Echoing that verse, philosopher Darien Pollock asks in parallel: “Can anything good come from the streets? Can anything good come from a place where the majority of society forgets to look? Can anything good come from a place where the resources are limited but the hope and creativity is not?” (<https://medium.com/@darienpollock/can-anything-good-come-from-nazareth-e8da9be706e2>)

We might ask, similarly, “*Can anything good come from crippled Africans?*”

Disability in Africa works on many levels:

It includes some keen pictures of African organizing, caregiving, creativity and post-war survival — although unfortunately you have to dig around to find these.

It challenges disability policy in Africa and shows how some important aspects don’t

come from Africa but are imported from NGOs and global thought leaders.

It includes stereotypes of African indigeneity and tradition, and some authors posit medicalization and modern policy tactics as the only way forward for the continent.

This academic collection offers a sweeping scan of disability issues around the continent of Africa. It is a book that aspires towards the field of disability studies, so its focus is theorizing disability in conversation with those who study.

The academic praxis differs from the organizing, healing or survival praxes, in the assumptions of who the reader is and what they will be doing with the text. There can be overlap, yet the purpose of establishing and validating African disability studies is fundamentally different from the purpose of compiling a book that will help African disabled peoples organize, heal, or create collective power.

Toward an African Conceptualization

There’s an ideological war being fought on the pages of this book. Like wars between international powers, sometimes it’s fought by proxy.

Some authors in this collection are writing and fighting for the modernizing force of Western knowledge including medicine and its associated concepts of rights. Some of these authors view African traditions and ancient ways as the root of the problem for disabled Africans, and argue that the solution is found by addressing “valid issues” and frameworks backed by “scientific research.”

Other authors are encouraging that Africans mine deep into African traditions and systems to find ways of conceiving collective well-being. These practices and systems of knowing can thus be used to build public health, social institutions and practices of communal well-being.

I won’t be able to summarize all of the texts in this academic anthology, but will highlight some that may be of interest to *Against the Current* readers.

Chapters 3, 4 and 6 are probably the best examples of pushing discourse towards an African conceptualization of disability. Chapter Three, “An African Ethics of Social-Well Being,” explores how disability relates to African theories of sociality and morality; and Six, “Disability and Cultural Meaning Making in Africa,” how Africans with and without disabilities make sense of experiences of impairment.

These chapters ask how African systems of thought can be the basis of practices ranging from public health and legal institutions to support groups. They shine a light on the call for inclusion — not merely to mimic the unemployment rate of able-bodied Africans in the post-colonial states, but to provide experiences of public belonging and capability that are too often denied people with disabilities.

Chapter 4, “Rethinking African Disability Studies” pushes towards a materialist or Marxist analysis of disability, asking what are the primary means of production in various African societies and the resources they collectively create, then looking concretely at how people with various impairments are treated in those societies as a result of the roles available or denied them.

This is an important text — looking at a variety of societies in Africa — because many other texts in this anthology focus on single countries whose policies are measured by the fulfillment of modern middle-class deliverables such as employment and education: Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, a few others.

Chapter 16, “Disability Policy, Movement Activism, and the Nonenforcement of a Disability Act,” is one of my favorite chapters. It is a foundation read to the entire book.

The book’s editors conclude that the United Nations’ “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)” has failed to improve the lives of those with disabilities in the global south generally.” (407)

Chapter 16 investigates these failures as it astutely looks at the pressures in Ghana to pass laws coming from the UN and other international bodies, but then shows the mechanisms and motivations for not enforcing, resourcing, or implementing them in the Ghanaian context.

Ambiguous “Signs of Progress”

The chapter points to an irony evident elsewhere in the anthology: more than a few chapters point to the passage of national laws as “signs of progress” in the disability rights struggle. Policy has become a location for international virtue signaling as well as a mechanism to develop a nation’s internal NGO infrastructure.

Chapters 8 and 10 look at representations of disabled people in African literature. Chapter 8, “Paradoxical Dramaturgies,” looks at the depictions of disability in the works of the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka in his 1971 play *Madmen and Specialists* (inspired by his imprisonment in that country’s civil war — ed.).

That work has a chorus who are described as the “vulgar disabled.” They laugh about raffling off their body parts. Their response to the overarching oppression of postcolonial Africa they are in is not

to “fight for justice,” but to laugh and try to manipulate the situation as best they can. I felt echoes of the hip hop spirit and its relationship to the violences of urban poverty systems. The overarching method of this chapter is to use cultural contexts and rituals to look at depictions of disability, providing a more nuanced understanding of what Soyinka is conveying than simply comparing them to expectations coming from disability rights, liberation, or activism.

Chapter 10, “Masculinity, Disability, and Empire in J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*,” is an analysis of African masculinity, looking at a literary depiction of a colonizer in Africa. This is unique because the magistrate in this novel (*Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1980) sees himself as a “respectful” person and tries to distinguish himself from the brutality of previous colonial administrators (dominant men).

This chapter is relevant because this book does not spend much time connecting Europeans’ current and historic imperialism to the life experiences of disabled Africans. The source of ableism is too often implied or stated to be the African states and societies themselves.

A further reading of this chapter will compare the position of the magistrate as attempting a new and improved colonial dominance over the “barbarians” to today’s neo-colonial masters wielding NGOs, policy demands and human rights frameworks in order to “enlighten” the African continent with regards to disability or other issues.

From Africa Back to Detroit

Lastly I highlight chapter 15, “So that the Stew Reaches Everybody,” which analyzes strategies that women leaders take in Ghana’s disability movements. This chapter speaks most directly to the methods and challenges of disability community organizing.

Interestingly, the author observes that “women leaders focused more on internal matters than on advocacy for structural or social change (as do men leaders).” It would be valuable to revisit. We see this so often in Detroit: Organizations that focus on policy change can very easily become detached from the work of improving the lives of the poorest and most marginalized.

I enjoyed the glimpses of postcolonial interrogation in the book, where the situation of disabled Africans — their organizations, societies, and states — were placed in historic and economic context and not reduced to a single issue of disability oppression.

I enjoyed the depictions of how disabled Africans think with regards to survival, caregiving, organizing and leadership. I even enjoyed the contradictions between the optimism and recognition provided by human rights frameworks, declarations of inclusion, and the challenges faced on the ground by

Africans with disabilities.

Can anything good come from bringing disability studies to Africans?

Next steps would be include engaging with African/Black Studies, an academic discipline that is critical of the hegemony of the academy; and at its best, studies and teaches to advance the liberation of Black students and communities.

It would be amazing also to see what will come from African engagement with disability justice — our movement’s anti-capitalist practices of inclusion and rebellion forged from the blood, sweat, tears and thoughts of disabled, sick, Mad, cripp folks fighting racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and other forms of hegemony within the North American settler states.

We still live in a world in which there is an idealized body, mind, family and society and that fictional standard is “white” “well-off” and “healthy.” Disability studies in Africa has the potential to organize and advocate for increasing material resources, care, and support for disabled Africans. In addition to providing clear analyses on exclusion of disabled folk within African nations, it can point towards global contexts of exploitation and structural domination. African disability studies can show a way towards attaining the dignity of collective care without putting Western principles, policies, and organizations on pedestals.

I encourage readers to take in multiple texts within this book. (Given its price, get your library to get it!) Listen to the multiplicities of voices and perspectives; prepare yourself to challenge mainstream notions of “the handicapped” as well as popular notions in the West about inclusion and disability discourse.

You’ll learn about African cultural contexts and find perspectives here that you can use to support disabled people wherever you live. ■

VICTORY IN COLOMBIA

THE ELECTION OF Gustavo Petro and Francia Marquez for president and vice-president in Colombia is a stunning political breakthrough in a country marked by brutal decades of civil war and paramilitary murders of thousands of labor, land reform and Indigenous rights activists.

Facing rightwing resistance from landowners and both domestic and multinational capital, the new government in Bogota faces huge obstacles to keeping its promises to the popular base that mobilized so magnificently for the vote.

The Bolivian coup regime that overthrew president Evo Morales has also been toppled by popular street and electoral action. It’s early to pronounce a new Latin American “Pink Tide,” but the social movements with all their complexities have shown their staying power. ■

REVIEW

Mass Misery, Mass Addiction By Dave Hazzan

Killing Season:

A Paramedic's Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Opioid Epidemic

By Peter Canning

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021, 314 pages, \$27.95.

Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism

By Anne Case and Angus Deaton

Princeton University Press, 2020, 312 pages, Illus: 26 b/w illus. 2 maps, \$27.95.

DRUG ADDICTION FOLLOWS misery, and where you have mass misery, you will often have mass addiction.

China at the turn of the last century was a devastated country, carved up by western powers and ruthless warlords, with tens of millions dead, homeless, and hungry from war and rebellion. Millions took to the opium pipe as a source of solace.

Following years of brutal combat and American bombing, including the atomic attacks at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was not so much defeated in World War II as obliterated. A million and a half survivors took to the stocks of amphetamine (speed) the Imperial forces had used to keep their personnel awake to fight.

After the Islamic revolution and Saddam Hussein's murderous attack on Iran, millions of Iranians became hooked on the heroin flowing out of next-door Afghanistan, another country in agony from poverty, extremism, and foreign invasion.

The list goes on — where there is misery, there is drug addiction.

Among Canada's First Nations, alcoholism is like pestilence. In Australia's Northern Territory, the gasoline has an additive that makes it impossible to huff. And when America's inner cities emptied of jobs and housing, alcohol, heroin, and later cocaine use among Black Americans skyrocketed. Now, white working-class America is hooked. Two books, Peter Canning's *Killing Season* and Anne Case and Angus Deaton's

Deaths of Despair, trace a current of pain through white America, physical and emotional pain that drives millions into the arms of opioids like Oxycodone, fentanyl, and heroin.

But unlike China, Japan or Iran, America's pain is self-inflicted, a result not of foreign invasion but down-home class war.

Descent Into Madness

Like any good paramedic, Peter Canning wastes no time. The first sentence in *Killing Season* reads, "My name is Peter Canning. I am a full-time paramedic in Hartford, Connecticut, an area hard hit by the opioid epidemic and, in particular, by the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which in the summer of 2017 was in 90 percent of the city's heroin supply." (1)

In a fast-paced, present tense, reportorial style, Canning tells the excruciating story of Hartford's descent into opiated madness.

Every day since the mid-'90s, he has picked up overdosed citizens of the city, revived them (or tried to), and if able, recorded their stories. In the beginning, he had little pity for the people he pulled off the streets and injected full of Narcan, viewing them as self-destructive wastrels, schoolyard "hoods" who

"end up begging for change on the street and are found overdosed or dead in their beat-up cars or in the same shooting gallery as this deceased man with drug paraphernalia by their side. I take care of them professionally, but I don't care for them emotionally, certainly not in the same manner I care for an old woman suffering from congestive heart failure, a disabled man with diabetes, or a young woman in a car crash on the highway." (12)

But the more Canning learns about addiction, and the more he speaks to fentanyl's victims, the more he is convinced that these people are sick, and not in any pejorative way. Drugs have rewired their brains, and "to expect them to act rationally is akin to expecting someone with chronic obstructive lung disease to run a marathon or someone with congestive heart failure to climb Mount Everest." (42)

Canning talks to his patients, both out in the streets and while whisking them to

the local ER. He also does the research. He learns that 90 percent of heroin addicts begin with prescribed pain pills. Then the pills — codeine, Percocet, Oxycontin, and other opium preparations — are cut off.

Some people, probably most, grit their teeth through withdrawal and then continue with their lives. Many, however, find they

cannot handle the withdrawal or the pain that has not subsided. They replace their doctors with street dealers, and discover in time that heroin costs less than black market pain pills.

To maximize heroin's effectiveness, they learn to shoot it. It isn't long before they end up in the back of Canning's ambulance, their bag of "Skull & Bones" or "BlackJack" heroin contaminated with fentanyl "hotspots" — bits of poorly-mixed fentanyl — which they could not have known were there.

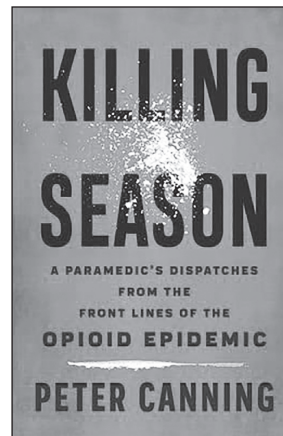
Canning has dozens of these stories. The cheerleader who broke her back when her colleague didn't catch her; the construction worker who hurt himself lifting; the mother who had two caesareans.

All began as patients taking pain pills, and ended up addicted to heroin. Heroin addiction then expels them from their normal lives, and they end up trapped by the "three Ds of stigma: difference, danger, and discrimination." (48)

Then there are those who learn that opium cures a different pain altogether, the psychological pain that comes from living in a hyper-capitalist, hyper-competitive world. "The pills fill a hole they didn't know they had," Canning writes (70). "Heroin makes people feel good; it offers relief, although temporary, from pain, stigma, shame, despair, and an uncertain or scary future." (74)

Addicts often hate themselves and people often hate them, Canning writes. Paramedics, doctors, nurses, and especially police officers treat them like scum, leaving them with the typical warning, "You don't quit, you'll deserve your fate." (14)

Some do clean up, but as Canning makes clear, no one ever overcomes addiction completely. Opium's grip is just too powerful. "Heroin grabs you by the ankles when you try to get away from it," one homeless man testifies, "and it pulls you back in. It makes you suffer when you try to leave it, and it



Dave Hazzan is a PhD (ABD) student at York University in Toronto, studying the history of drug use. His dissertation, Speeding Toward Babylon: Subcultural Drug Use in Canada, 1960-1980, will be completed by April 2023. His articles on Murmansk, Russia, on an embezzling church in South Korea, and on the resignation of South Korea's president among other topics have appeared in VICE, Outpost, FP and MacLean's among other publications.

never loves you again like it once did.” (44)

Canning’s book is replete with users who go to rehab, spend months or years without using, and then fall back into opioids after something — usually more pain — pushes them back into it. This is usually where friends, relatives, and family give up on the person, leaving them to spiral back into addiction and hopelessness.

“Victory,” Canning writes, “is measured not in complete cure but in time still alive on earth.” (66)

Deaths of Despair

Case and Deaton also write about pain, but they look at an entire demographic, white Americans without college degrees.

Their argument is that opioid overdoses — along with suicide and alcohol-related liver disease — are cutting down swaths of under-educated

middle-aged American whites like a sickle through wheat, resulting in, for the first time since industrialization, a reduction in life expectancy among some Americans.

They call these “deaths of despair,” and they are symptomatic of American class war, though the authors don’t call it that.

Case and Deaton are academics at Princeton University, a world away from Canning’s streets of Hartford. They work mostly from statistics, teaching us lessons like:

“After correction for inflation, the median wages of American men have been stagnant for half a century; for white men without a four-year degree, median earnings lost 13 percent of their purchasing power between 1979 and 2017. Over the same period, national income per head grew by 85 percent.” (7)

Inequality rises; the wealthy steal from the poor in a “Sheriff of Nottingham” economy; poor whites reply by voting for carnival barkers like Donald Trump, who promise they can turn things around when they have no intention of doing so. Little of this is news to those who have been following the march of neoliberalism through America.

Canning and Dean make a persuasive case that the four-year Bachelor’s degree is what makes the difference. Those with the degrees continue to live longer, generally happier lives, though they may struggle. (Canning and Dean make little mention of the \$1.5 trillion student debt bomb, except to say they don’t want it canceled.)

For those with only a high school education — an education that is mostly geared towards preparation for college — there isn’t the work there used to be. Those jobs that cannot be sent abroad — services like cleaning, food preparation, and driving —

have become devalued and outsourced to contractors, so these workers “are no longer invited to the holiday party.”

Once, the CEO and janitor could brag of being part of some “great enterprise” — now only the CEO can, as janitorial services are contracted out. Their jobs stink or are non-existent, paychecks dwindle, health and housing costs soar, families disintegrate, and the result — just as in Canning’s Hartford — is increase in *pain*.

This is common throughout the country, but especially in places like the West, Appalachia, the South, Maine, and northern Michigan, where education is lower, unemployment higher, and people poorer. (72, 86)

This pain, both physical and psychological, is treated with the opioids devastating America, as well as with alcohol, leading to large rises in liver cirrhosis deaths among the middle aged — and for those for whom opiates and alcohol are not quick enough, there is suicide.

Taken together, these “deaths of despair” killed 158,000 Americans in 2017 alone, “the equivalent of three full 737 MAXs falling out of the sky every day, with no survivors.” (94; italics in original.) Compare that with 40,100 traffic fatalities that year, and 19,510 homicides. (97)

Although these conditions mostly affect Americans without college degrees, Case and Deaton predict that those with college degrees could be next, just as today’s devastation of white working-class America was preceded by the devastation of Black working-class America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Big Pharma and Corporate Healthcare

So, who’s to blame? Some villains are obvious. Both Canning and Case and Deaton call out Purdue Pharmaceuticals, who developed, marketed, and lied about the painkiller Oxycontin, claiming that fewer than one percent of its users became addicted. In fact, it was closer to eight to 12 per cent, and the \$600 million fine the U.S. Justice Department hit them with barely dented their \$30 to \$50 billion in profits.

Case and Deaton fault the U.S. healthcare system above all. They describe it as “rent-seeking” of the worst kind, a system that funnels billions from working people into the hands of private equity firms and investors.

“If a fairy godmother were somehow to reduce the share of healthcare in American GDP,” Case and Deaton write, “not to the average of rich countries but, less ambitiously, only to the second highest, Switzerland, 5.6 percent of GDP would be available for other things, freeing up more than a *trillion*

dollars.” (194; italics in original)

They deplore the power of Washington lobbyists, and the health care industry’s ability to force a for profit racket on sick Americans.

They’re not wrong. As a Canadian, I regularly view U.S. healthcare debates as a dialogue of lunatics. Canadians know their system isn’t perfect. But we often look south of the border and say, good God, at least it isn’t *that*.

But Case and Deaton seem content to stop at health care reform. Capitalism, they insist, is not to blame, and is likely to form part of the solution. On the very first page of their preface, a few paragraphs before listing the number of the national Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), they announce, “We believe in capitalism, and we continue to believe that globalization and technical change can be managed to the general benefit.” (ix)

The solutions that Case and Deaton *don’t* want overwhelm what they do want. They advocate against a universal basic income, student loan forgiveness and free college, or measures to reduce inequality and improve the social safety net. Capitalism, they insist, is only a problem in health care provision, as when they write:

“In the markets for tuna fish, for automobiles, for houses, and for airplane trips, consumers can soon learn which products suit them and which do not, and competition among providers will remove those products that are defective or that suit no one. But try to find out who is the best orthopedic surgeon.” (208)

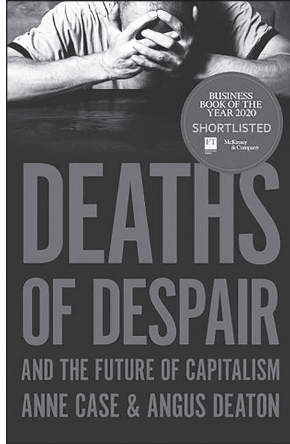
This is an absurd statement. Their examples of “good” capitalism causes dead dolphins, gas guzzling global warmers, foreclosure, and the agony of long-haul Coach.

Meanwhile, Google reveals the best orthopedic hospital in America is the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. It is *because* you can choose and pay for the best doctors that American health care is so popular among the wealthy.

Canning’s policy prescriptions are more street-focused. He has little to say about capitalism, and nothing about the healthcare system he is a part of. But he excoriates the War on Drugs, viewing it as a wasteful and stupid enterprise that prevents America from using the one method that works to save users’ lives, at least in the short term — harm reduction.

Needle exchanges, free naloxone, supervised injection sites, fentanyl test strips, gas chromatography machines that can tell you what is inside your drugs — these do not solve the opioid crisis, but they keep people alive. “The people who use drugs are members of our community; [Canning says], ‘and they need to be welcomed back home rather than’ dispersed.” (263)

continued on page 38



REVIEW

Hubert Harrison: A Giant Rescued from Oblivion

By John Woodford

Hubert Harrison: The Struggle for Equality, 1918-1927

By Jeffrey B. Perry
Columbia University Press, 2021,
768 pages plus notes and index.

*One hundred years hence, what change
will be made,
In politics, morals, religion and trade....
Oppression and war will be heard of
no more
Nor the blood of a slave leave his print
on our shore.
Conventions will then be a useless expense,
For we'll all go free suffrage, a hundred
years hence.
Instead of speech-making to satisfy wrong,
All will join the glad chorus to sing
Freedom's song;
And if the Millennium is not a pretense
We'll all be good brothers, a hundred
years hence.*

— from “One Hundred Years Hence,” an early “protest song” with lyrics by the women’s rights and abolitionist activist Frances Dana Barker Gage, and popularized by the Hutchinson Family Singers, circa 1850.

IT’S NOW ALMOST 100 years from the life of Hubert Harrison (1883-1927), one of the leading figures behind the emergence of the New Negro movement that propelled the advancement of Black Americans in all areas of life in the pre- and post-World War I era.

When I reviewed the first volume of Jeffrey B. Perry’s monumental double-barreled biography of Harrison in 2011 (see “Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918,” at <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/biography-of-hubert-harrison-one-of-america-s-greatest-minds/>), I said it was the best biography I’d ever read. But this massive second volume is even better.

And why shouldn’t it be? Harrison had grown older and wiser, and the challenges he faced throughout most of the 1920s became increasingly more similar to those that we Black Americans and our compatriots face

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today.

Harrison’s generation succeeded that of Frederick Douglass, whose main objective had been to rid the United States of slavery. The new battle for justice and equality required a multipronged attack on the continued racist practices preserved and refashioned by the Reconstruction era: Jim Crow segregation, lynching, denial of voting rights, inadequate educational and health facilities, limited access to jobs and lower pay levels for those Blacks who had jobs.

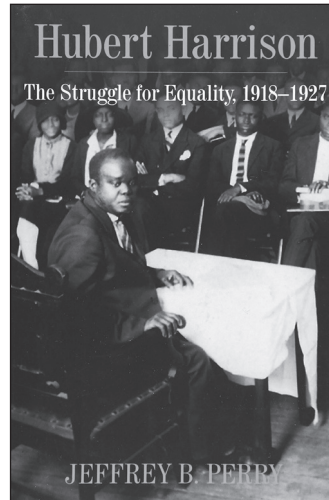
Born in St. Croix to impoverished parents when the Virgin Islands was still a Danish colony, Harrison benefited from the superiority of the colonial schools over their U.S. counterparts. He migrated to New York City’s Harlem district in 1900 when he was 17 years old.

In Volume 1 of the biography, Perry, an independent scholar, covered the rise of the largely self-educated Harrison to prominence in what was called the “New Negro” movement: “Harrison played unique, signal roles in the largest class radical movement (socialism) and the largest race radical movement (the ‘New Negro’/Garvey movement) of his era.”

Harrison’s writings, street corner oratory and extensive lectures were so wide-ranging in subject matter, so impressive in their artistry and logic, that someone described him in promotional material as having earned a doctorate in Denmark.

That led to his generally being referred to as “Dr.” Harrison. He never claimed the title but took no great pains to set matters straight, much to the irritation of some intellectual rivals like scholars W.E.B. DuBois and E. Franklin Frazier.

As Volume 2 opens, Harrison, now 35 and a widely acclaimed writer, freelance educator, soapbox orator, editor and activist, was still living in a fifth-floor walk-up apartment with his wife, Irene Louise (Lin) Harrison and four daughters (a son was to come).



Harrison had been fired by the Post Office Department in 1911 and was never to gain a stable job or regular income for the rest of his life. Lin, a fellow West Indian who found herself increasingly in the role of the long-suffering, unloved wife, may well have taken out-earned her husband by taking odd jobs as a seamstress.

Nevertheless, Black and white radicals and activists of all sorts recognized Harrison as a comrade in arms in “a United States shaped by capitalism, imperialism and white supremacy,” Perry writes.

“He had been a leader in the struggle against those forces, but he had found that the Left and labor movements in the United States put the ‘white’ race first, before class. In that context, he deemed it a priority to work at developing an enlightened race consciousness, racial solidarity and radical internationalism among ‘Negro’ people — especially the ‘common people’ in struggles for ‘political equality,’ against white supremacy, and for radical social change.”

Garvey and Beyond

Harrison took on a co-editorship position on a short-lived publication, the *New Negro*, which was published by the Liberty League, then accepted the job of leading the *Negro World* in early 1920.

The *Negro World* was the mouthpiece of Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Once reshaped by Harrison, the *Negro World* “was a real key to the phenomenal organizational growth of the UNIA in 1920.”

Perry notes that the *Negro World* was a superbly edited newspaper with mass appeal. Harrison was not only a “consummate race-conscious journalist,” but also, as an undercover agent from the Bureau of Investigation (it was not yet known as the FBI) reported to his higher-ups, a man “who knew every principle of Socialism.”

Before 1922 was out, however, Harrison quit working for the Garvey organization, which by then was embroiled in law suits and exposés from both external and internal sources.

Garvey was convicted of fraud. He barely

managed to escape convictions for murders and assaults committed by his followers against men they considered turncoats for publicizing some of the unsavory qualities of the charismatic Jamaican immigrant.

Harrison described Garvey as a “paranoiac,” and elaborated further:

“Garvey is a worshiper of Garvey. On the ‘Yarmouth’* he had two life-sized oil-paintings of himself. . . . He quarreled with every person he ever worked with unless they were willing boot-lickers and glorifiers of himself. His insane egotism and jealousy were boundless.”

So why had Harrison allied with Garvey in the first place? For the same reason a progressive Iranian couple my family met on a train from Chicago to Los Angeles in December 1979 ran out at every stop to see if their associates back home had succeeded in installing the Ayatollah Khomeini in place of the tyrannical Shah.

Khomeini appealed to the masses whose support was critical if the revolution were to triumph, the Iranians said. Once Khomeini had triumphed they could return home from exile and help establish a more democratic, modern and rational government.

Like my Iranian fellow travelers, Harrison knew that movements need masses of people if they are to succeed, and he felt Garvey developed “propaganda more shrewdly adopted to the cruder psychology of the less intelligent masses, the sensationalism, self-glorification and African liberation — although he knew next to nothing of Africa.”

Harrison thought he might as well try to use Garvey’s popularity because he saw no alternatives that suited him. Hundreds of thousands of Black Americans and more Blacks from Canada, the West Indies and beyond joined or contributed to the Garvey movement.

Even though Garvey was a reactionary, a hater of Jews, a willing collaborator with the Ku Klux Klan and a Red-baiter, Harrison felt most of his followers, numbering an estimated 750,000 worldwide, were not similarly tainted and could be redirected to loftier goals.

Furthermore, Harrison agreed with that part of the original program of the UNIA that was “based on the belief that Negroes should finance the foundations of their future and not go begging to the white race either for help, leadership or program.”

The short-lived Liberty League that Harrison had helped found had laid out a similar program, Harrison added, from which “Garvey appropriated every feature that was worthwhile in his movement.”

By 1924, Harrison had left the UNIA and even joined in efforts to convict Garvey of crimes and thereby end his influence. He launched the International Colored Unity

League, declaring in the May issue of its publication, the *Chronicle*, Perry records, that “‘the Negro problem in America’ was ‘not insoluble,’ for ‘no human social problem ever was,’ and while it was primarily of the white man’s making,’ the ‘colored man must do most of the work because he was the one mainly concerned with it.’”

ICUL and “New Negro”

Although it was Harrison who started a publication named *The New Negro* in 1919, and turned it into one of the country’s best sources of reporting and commentary on national and international politics as well as on literary and other forms of culture, the credit for conceiving the rising generation of more militant Blacks as the “New Negro” has gone to Alain Locke.

It happened this way: In spring 1924, a White-run New York-based magazine, *Survey Graphic*, organized a planning meeting that would be led by the critic and scholar Alain Locke and culminate in a special “Harlem Issue” in March 1925. The project would serve as a “coming out party” for “the entire younger school of Negro writers.”

Perry pored through the notes for the project and found that Locke’s outline for the issue included a section “Black and White: Studies in Rough Contact and Reactions,” which was to include articles by four scholars: Melville J. Herskovitz, Walter White, Kelly Miller and Hubert Harrison.

The planning committee learned that Harrison would write a piece titled “The White Man’s War,” which, Perry discovered, had been described as an analysis of the “effect of [World War I] upon the Negro, and the analysis of the disillusionment of the treatment inconsistent with the principles of democracy and self-determination, reaction among the generation that took part in it toward the church, the state, and capitalism. The points of radical indictment and the forces of agitation and protest — the attitude of radical organizations toward the Negro and of the Negro to radical social programs.”

For reasons never disclosed, Locke agreed with the *Survey Graphic* editor’s suggestion that Harrison’s article should be eliminated for space reasons, even though it fit in the proposed space.

Furthermore, when Locke published what is now accepted as the seminal *New Negro* anthology in 1926, a book that expanded the *Survey Graphic* issue and is generally described now as having launched the Harlem Renaissance, he again omitted Harrison’s article even though it was available to him.

Harrison’s commentary on WWI had been rejected by Black and White self-styled radicals before. He published a version in his

New Negro in October 1919 and in the *Negro World* in February 1920.

A version also appears in his book *When Africa Awakes* (1920), where he argued that the “underlying explanation which it offers of the root cause of the war has not yet received treatment (even among socialist radicals) and partly because recent events in China, India, Africa and the United States have proved the accuracy of the forecasts.”

Race and Imperialism

His thesis, which Perry quotes, was that: “[T]he war in Europe is the result of the white governments of Europe to exploit for their own benefit the lands and labor of the darker races, and, as the war continues, it must decrease the white man’s stock of ability to do this successfully against the wishes of the inhabitants of those lands.”

His prediction that the conflict would also result in not only the end of colonial rule but also in the flowering of “industrial democracy to the twelve hundred million black and brown and yellow people of the world” has turned out, however, to be either overly optimistic or premature.

Although he had started out in his activist career aligned with Blacks and whites who were in the Socialist Party or in groups that would soon (in 1919) form the Communist Party USA, Harrison felt that the whites in those organizations were unreliable allies and that the Blacks who joined them could not act on “Race First” principles.

This hardening of his Black nationalist impulses was tactical and may have been temporary, we’ll never know for sure, but he clearly had a dialectical, rather than dogmatic, sensibility. Yet by 1927, the year of his untimely death at 44, his disappointment with American radicals was leading him into some contradictory positions.

In the April 1927 issue of *Voice of the Negro*, the publication of his ICUL, Harrison wrote in “Rockefeller and the Reds” that the Red “comes blowing about the necessity for teaming up with our ‘white brothers of the working class’ against the ‘boorjwahzee’ or the hated capitalist in the great ‘class war.’”

But “everyone above the level of a moron knows,” he continued, “that we Negroes have never taken one single step away from the white workers: it is they on the contrary who turn their backs upon us, who have refused and do refuse to let us live with them, eat with them, work with them or even organize with them. . . .

“[So] if our ‘red’ friend were sincere he would preach his great sermons on solidarity not to us but to them. The splendid doctrine that ‘the lion shall lie down with the lamb’ is not denied by the lamb; but the fellow to whom it should be preached is the lion — not the lamb.”

Harrison, however, pursued his argument all the way into the lion’s den, advocating a

* The *Yarmouth* was one of four run-down ships for which Garvey sold bonds to followers in a scam that promised them relocation to a fantasied Garvey-ruled nation state in Africa — JW.



UNIA parade through Harlem in 1920.

tactics of accommodationism, opportunism and racial chauvinism:

“[A]s between Rockefeller and the ‘red’ — personal or symbolic — we prefer Rockefeller, and on the simple materialistic, Marxian and common-sensible ground that in THE PAST we have got more, IN THE PRESENT, we are getting more, and IN THE FUTURE, we are likely to get more, from that side than from the other.”

Contradictions

Although Harrison declared in his “Program and Principles of the International Colored Unity League” that “the New Negro has come forward, neither to whine, to wheedle, nor to make petitions or vain demands; but to take his future in his own hands and mold his own destiny by mobilizing his manhood and his money,” the ICUL program included a call for a Black American homeland.

His language prefigured the rhetoric of later Black separatist organizations such as the Nation of Islam and the Republic of New Africa:

“America is ours and we are hers. This is the founding principle of all our racial strivings. ... It is on that principle that we urge as a final solution of the graver aspects of the American race-problem the setting up of a state, or states, in the Union as a homeland for the American Negro, where we can work out the ultimate economic and racial salvation as a part of the American people.”

Harrison failed to address the irony and contradiction between his endorsement of a separate Black state for the USA and his condemnation of similar “programs” in South Africa, where the white settler government had established the “reserves” for Blacks that later came to be known as Bantustans.

In his article “The Wider World: A Bird’s Eye View (*Voice of the Negro*, May 1927), Harrison denounced South Africa’s Union Native Council Bill, which removed, with the approval of chiefs and their hangers-on, Black

South Africans from areas whites wanted, set up Blacks-only settlements and established “a plaything parliament FOR NEGROES, which, it is supposed will satisfy the aspirations of the educated natives and colored people.”

How, I wonder, could he have assumed that the formation of a “Black State” in the USA would yield significantly better results?

But let no one think Harrison was “anti-American,” and his defense of his “Americanization” may have played a role in the spite he received from certain quarters of the Black radical petty-bourgeoisie.

The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the nation’s top Black newspaper, challenged him to debate in print another West Indian immigrant and fellow journalist, Arnold Malliet, over the topic of why Malliet said U.S. race prejudice prevented him from being “Americanized” and why Harrison took the opposing position.

In his final installment in a series of arguments, on August 13, 1927, Malliet concluded that neither he nor any “colored foreigner” could become Americanized so long as “very damaging falsehoods” and “dangerous ideas which have degraded his race in the eyes of humanity” prevailed in the country.

Harrison responded on October 22: *“I have watched American race prejudice fluctuate in its incidence; seen lynchings decrease, and inter-racial committees increase even in the South, have observed the multiplication of social contacts between black and white. ... I am more in love with America than with any other place on earth. I have found here the full measure of manhood not in a nice, fat place prepared for me, but in the opportunity to battle for any place.*

“... [W]e are participants in the greatest democratic experiment the world has ever seen. It is not the American of today that fascinates me but the American which is evolving out of it. The ‘cracker’ may yelp as much as he pleases, but his descendants and mine will make the future America; they will either live together in peace and prosperity or their conflicts will crack

both democracy and America wide open in the presence of the enemies of both. Personally, I bet on democracy — and that’s why I prefer to be here. ... [L]ike the white people of England, four-fifths of whom were slaves (serfs) down to the 18th century, I and these darker millions must take our places in the rising ranks of color and carry on as we have been doing, striving for, and achieving by our struggles, an increasing measure of the world’s respect and consideration.”

Death and Legacy

Readers of this review should know that there is much more in this volume — especially in Harrison’s commentaries on literature, theater, sexual mores, poetry, international politics — than I can do justice to here. The book also brings on stage many fascinating and brilliant Black Americans and white allies who would otherwise still be consigned to oblivion.

See, for example, James W.H. Eason — who was assassinated by Garvey’s henchmen — Edgar Grey and Hodge Kirnon among many others Perry has rescued from the historical dustbin fashioned by our nation’s increasing reliance on an anti-democratic electronic archive governed by marketing impulses, fads and political biases.

That it took an independent scholar inspired by progressive politics and humanistic principles, to honor Hubert Harrison, rather than a well-heeled tenured academic, is something worth reflecting about.

Hubert Harrison entered Bellevue Hospital’s surgery unit with either chronic appendicitis, peritonitis or some other or additional ailment on December 13, after a week of torment at home. He never left the hospital, dying of a widespread infection on December 17. Fifteen days later, the U.S. government released Marcus Garvey from prison and deported him as an undesirable alien.

Harrison’s widow Lin and their five children received many condolences, and many newspapers published extensive obituaries in Harrison’s honor.

The worker, writer and activist Hodge Kirnon complained in a letter to the *New York News* on February 17, 1928, however, that publications run by W.E.B. DuBois, A. Philip Randolph and the Urban League had neglected to note Harrison’s death. DuBois’s *Crisis* lamented the passing of the boxer “Tiger” Flowers, Kirnon observed, but failed “to record the services of a man who was a lecturer for the Board of Education and of whom [NAACP field director] William Pickens says ‘can speak more easily, effectively and interestingly on a greater variety of subjects than any other man I have met, even in the great Universities.’”

Why the rejection, scorn and shunning by the Black superstars of the era? Edgar M.

Grey, a friend who served as general secretary of Garvey's UNIA before leaving it and joining Harrison and others in supporting the effort to convict and oust Garvey, wrote an article for the December 31 *New York News*, titled "Why Great Negroes Die Young," to suggest, Perry says, "a deeper cause" of Harrison's untimely death:



Hubert Harrison

Calling him "the mightiest brain of the race" and describing him as a man constantly "fighting for his right to recognition," Grey claimed that Harrison was "permitted by the Negroes to talk, talk all night, burning up his energies."

He added that in 15 years of street talking Harrison received nothing, and the honors he did receive "were given him by those who had nothing to give. ..."

The "big Negro newspapers and business houses, schools and other organizations who had positions allowed themselves to be so hateful that they would not hire him."

According to Grey, he "died for his convictions, but he died at 44, starved, underpaid, abused, hated by jealous men who feared the force of his mind and the immensity of his information."

Indeed, earlier in 1927, in deft and convincing arguments, Harrison had trashed the prevailing views of both the Harlem Renaissance and the "New Negro" that prominent Black and white culture mavens were promoting. In the March 12 *Pittsburgh Courier*, Harrison declared that

"[T]he matter of a Negro literary renaissance is like that of the snakes of Ireland — there isn't any. Those who think that there is are

usually people who are blissfully ignorant of the stream of literary and artistic products which have flowed uninterruptedly from Negro writers from 1850 to the present."

He named DuBois as among the blissfully ignorant!

Caustic Critic

As for the "New Negro," in the May 28, 1927, *Pittsburgh Courier*, he declared: "Cabaret School of Negro Writers Does Not Represent One-Tenth of the Race."

Stating that until a decade earlier a "cabaret" was a French term equivalent to a "dive," a place where "no respectable young woman" would be found "even with an escort," Harrison noted that the most high-toned "advancement organizations" were holding benefits and other entertainments in such places.

Similarly, the writers now ballyhooed as New Negroes were being rewarded for presenting the lower depths of Black communities as representatives of the ethnic group as a whole, Harrison charged.

Equating capitalist modes of cultural appropriation, marketing and profiteering with the white race, a concept that I see as a damaging flaw in his analysis, Harrison nevertheless accurately delineated the emergence of New-Negro hype, a process now repeated, in an even fouler example of historical "rhyming," in the financial success of the most debased forms of Rap/Hip-Hop.

Perry quotes Harrison's observation that "when whites, seeking local (and other) color, first 'discovered' the Negro, they came to Harlem" with "certain 'fixations' about the Negro in their minds, the most basic of which was the characteristic American one

that he existed to furnish entertainment to others."

Then "whatever about him was quaint, queer, odd, bizarre and different was seized upon as essential . . . the 'real' Negro, the thing for which white editors, publishers and readers had been waiting for all these years."

Not only whites, however, were enjoying the New Negro boom, so Harrison was stomping on a lot of toes with such criticisms. But he was even-handed in his caustic commentary.

In his Americanization article he noted that "baser elements" in the country were handicapped by "ignorance, stupidity and cowardice," while "our own inferiority complex and the snobbishness of some of our own people" hurt the Black cause. But, he summed up, "these handicaps also exist in Jamaica and elsewhere" and he doubted "that remaining a West Indian would remove them anywhere from my path."

The length and detail that compose Perry's masterly biography are fully warranted, given the breadth and complexity of the subject matter embraced by Harrison's great mind. Following the book slowly and patiently, looking up and reading about the multitude of new or unfamiliar events and persons, will give any interested reader insight into how bountifully the obscured past can, upon revelation, provide lessons for the present and future.

History-as-revelation was what inspired Jeffrey Perry to produce this biography. In the last paragraph of this colossal project, he writes that his hope at the outset was that Hubert Harrison's "extraordinary life of activism and his brilliant writing and thinking will increasingly be made available — and be of use — to current and future generations."

Mass Misery, Mass Addiction — continued from page 33

Toward Answers

There is no single "solution" to drug use. People have used drugs since the dawn of time, and since then, some people have been prone to using them too much — even in a paradisaical, socialist Eden, there will be a few obnoxious stoners.

But mass addiction, what we are seeing now in the United States, is a sign of a society that does not work, or at least does not work for most people. When the rich steal from working people, cause working people to become addicted to its products, and then jails them for using similar products once legitimate supplies have been cut off — that's not rent-seeking, it's class war.

The best policy option is to create a legal supply of heroin (or a reasonable substitute — not methadone) to provide addicts, along

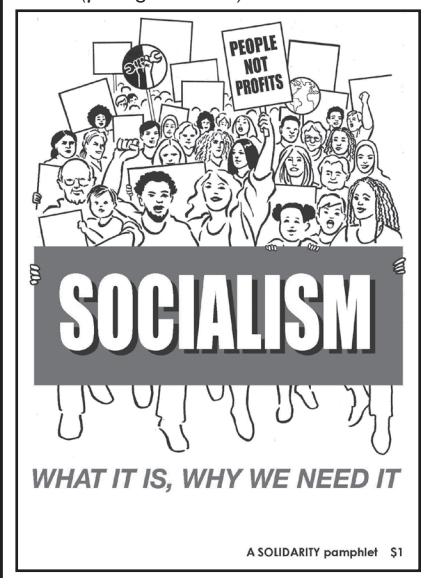
with support should they wish to drop their habits.

The current policy just unveiled in Canada, allowing users to carry 2.5 grams of drugs without fear of prosecution, is the kind of window-dressing that progressive governments like to display to show they're dealing with the problem.

Canning would likely be the first to note that limiting drug possession 2.5 grams does nothing to keep it free of fentanyl, and it is drug users themselves who have pointed this out in Canada. It sounds like the sort of half-measure that Case and Deaton would approve.

While reform in Washington remains extremely difficult, community organizers and activists remain the best hope for the millions of Americans in pain. ■

A new 24-page pamphlet on Socialism — order from SOLIDARITY (<https://solidarity-us.org/literature/>) for \$1.50; five copies for \$3.50 (postage included).



REVIEW

Black Women Exist — Positively

Three Mothers Who Shaped a Nation

 By Malik Miah

The Three Mothers:

How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation

By Anna Malika Tubbs

Flatiron Books, 2021, 256 pages, \$13.95 paperback.

THIS BRILLIANT AND insightful book discusses Black motherhood in a way rarely discussed in political and academic circles. The author, Anna Malika Tubbs, places the struggles of Black women in an historical context as she explains their influence on three prominent African-American men of the 20th century — Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin.

In her concluding section, the author explains why she had to write this invaluable book:

"I am tired of us not being recognized; I am tired of being erased. In this book, I have tried my best to change this for three women in history whose spotlight is long overdue, because the erasure of them is an erasure of all of us. ...

"The crucial contributions Alberta (King), Louise (Little) and Berdis (Baldwin) made to their families have been ignored for decades and were largely unappreciated while they were alive." (202)

The three mothers were important to prominent Black figures who were seen by many whites as "not true Americans" (or even worse). Tubbs tells their stories to show how Black women, like all Black people, suffered from racial-based national oppression.

She frames their history by discussing the policies of U.S. presidents after the Civil War, including those seen as liberal such as Theodore Roosevelt and conservative as Woodrow Wilson.

All presidents, white men, accepted as "scientifically" proven that Black people were less than whites. They not only rejected challenging racist policies — North or South — toward African Americans but considered it a betrayal of the Founding Fathers to consider doing so.

President Franklin Roosevelt, a hero of liberals, refused to integrate the military or face off with southern Dixiecrats. Black people were told to stay in our place. It took until 2022 to achieve the NAACP's first

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national campaign, to make lynching a federal crime!

White supremacists and other opponents of full equality for African Americans were particularly determined to deny the humanity of Black women by all means.

Three Women Erased

In the face of racism, sexism and white violence, these mothers survived. They are honored by Tubbs as the extraordinary women they were in their own right. She writes:

"Three women I speak of are Alberta King, Berdis Baldwin, and Louise Little — women who have been almost entirely ignored throughout history. While this disregard of Black women's contributions is widespread and so extensive that it is unquantifiable, the women I honor here have been ignored differently: ignored even though it should have been easy throughout history to see them, to at least wonder about them, and to think about them; ignored in ways that are blatantly obvious when the fame of their sons is considered.

"While the sons have been credited with the success of Black resistance, the progression of Black thought and the survival of the Black community, the three mothers who birthed and reared them have been erased. This book fights that erasure." (4)

Tubbs has studied racial, and gender issues her entire career. She holds a Masters in Multidisciplinary Gender Studies and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Cambridge, England, and a bachelor's in Medical Anthropology from Stanford University. As stated on her website, "Her academic focus is on addressing gender and race issues in the U.S., especially the pervasive erasure of Black women."

Tubbs adds a personal observation: while writing about motherhood she was herself pregnant. Researching and authoring the book became personal, she said, as a Black woman.

The story of each woman is woven across the book's eight sections, connected by the author's assertion that they con-

sciously raised independent, intellectual and influential Black men. When these three famous men died — two by assassinations in the 1960s and one by stomach cancer in 1987 — the media only mentioned their fathers. There was no discussion of the influence of their still living mothers — the women were erased.

While focusing on these intelligent women who were central to making their children who they became, Tubbs also points out the same dynamic operates for mothers of famous daughters. *Is it because Black women are invisible?*

A further motivation for Tubbs was the

place of women in Black peoples' resistance to oppression and racism. Without knowledge of these three women's stories, "the world was missing an enormous piece of our understanding of Black resistance in the United States." (9)

Louise Little

Tubbs begins her story of Louise Helen Norton Langdon Little not with her birth in the Caribbean

island of Grenada, but with the struggles of native inhabitants, Caribs, including slaves and former slaves, over two hundred years ago against the French colonizers and later British occupiers. The author points out that Black people always resisted colonial rule and white domination. Louise's grandparents were part of that resistance.

Louise was born in 1894 or possibly later. She was biracial; it is believed that a white man raped her mother. Tubbs remarks, "The effects of slavery ... the constant control of Black women's bodies through sexual violence, was universal, far after emancipation."

Tubbs is clear about the widespread use of rape of African and Black women by white male colonizers and slaveholders. Rape is both a weapon of violence, and subjugation and dehumanization of women.

In 1917, after her grandmother died, Louise migrated to Montreal, Canada where she met Earl Little at a Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) meeting. The UNIA was founded by Black nationalist and



Louise Helen Norton Langdon Little.

Pan Africanist leader Marcus Garvey, a fellow West Indian. Louise and Earl married and worked as field organizers, promoting Garvey's call for Black independence. Sometimes referred to as "Back to Africa" movement, Garveyism was a call for Black self-reliance and freedom from white domination.

The Littles had seven children together. Louise served as branch secretary, wrote for the *Negro World* newspaper, and spoke at least three languages: English, French and Patois (local Caribbean dialect).

Louise and Earl lived in several northern states (Malcolm was born in Omaha, Nebraska) finally settling in Lansing, Michigan. While Black people were not legally segregated as in the South, racism in Michigan was vicious.

Earl died mysteriously in a streetcar "accident" in 1931. Louise believed it was carried out by the Black Legion, a white terrorist group. In his autobiography, written with Alex Haley, Malcolm asserts that members of the Klan killed his father.

Louise's support of Garveyism, teaching self-reliance, and the importance of education and advocacy for Black self-determination undoubtedly had a considerable influence on Malcolm.

Tubbs' powerful story of Louise's family origins, including the resistance of distant relatives in Africa to colonization, slavery and racism, has never been previously told in an integrated way.

Alberta Christine Williams King

Alberta Williams King (1904-74), the mother of Martin Luther King Jr., was born in Atlanta. Her family had resources. Her father, the Rev. Adam Daniel Williams, was one of the founders of the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP and the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Alberta was the most educated of the three mothers, attending Spelman Seminary, the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, and Morris Brown College. She married Baptist preacher Martin King, and they had three children together, including her famous son.

Tubbs emphasizes the importance of religion and the church to Alberta's family and the Black community, where: "(T)hey created their own nation within a nation, where they affirmed their humanity and fostered political power." (25)

Alberta, however, was not allowed to make the most of her education. This was the era of Jim Crow segregation where African Americans — men and women —



Alberta Williams King.

"The three women's lives defied the false claims ... that households run by Black mothers were inadequate compared with white families."

could be beaten up, jailed and even lynched for disrespecting a white person.

"At the time, there was also a law that kept married women from teaching," writes Tubbs. This 'marriage bar' lacked any logic; it was simply in place to restrict educated women from most fields that they were qualified to pursue. It was not fully terminated until 1964 with the passing of the Civil Rights Act.

Alberta focused on tutoring her husband, establishing women's coalitions, and directing the children's choir. She did so with the self-awareness and discipline her mother and other strong Black women did before her. She brought this discipline and courage to her own children. Alberta, of course, supported her son's civil rights campaign of non-violent civil disobedience to win full equality under the law.

Emma Berdis Jones Baldwin

Emma Berdis Jones Baldwin (1901-99) was born on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Deal Island. Maryland

was a former slave state even though as a border state many slaves ran away and joined the Union army during the Civil War. Tubbs notes many famous African American births in Maryland: Frederick Douglass, Francis E.W. Harper, and Thurgood Marshall.

Berdis left Maryland for Philadelphia, and later, New York, during the Great Migration of African Americans

from the South to the North beginning in the 1910s. In 1924 she had a baby while single, named James Arthur Jones. James never knew his biological father.

Berdis married David Baldwin, a preacher in the Pentecostal tradition and the two had eight more children together. They lived in Harlem during its rise as the Black cultural mecca known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Of the three women, Berdis "had the least in terms of money and education," Tubbs points out. Her husband was paranoid and abusive and working as a laborer; he had trouble supporting his family. When she

was pregnant with their ninth child, Berdis committed him to a mental institution; he died shortly thereafter, in 1943.

Berdis was disciplined and firm, pushing her children to stand on their own. James, the eldest, was a brilliant student. He took care of most of his younger siblings while growing up. While he lived abroad, she kept up an active correspondence with him.

Enduring Loss

All three women knew the consequences of the women's suffragist movement too, when white suffragists rejected Black women's inclusion to the 19th Amendment in 1920. The movement leaders made clear to racists in the South that their aim was to win the vote for white women, which would offset the few Black men who were able to vote.

The three women's lives defied the false claims popularized by white sociologist (and



Emma Berdis Jones Baldwin.

late New York Democrat-Senator) Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 claim that households run by Black mothers were inadequate compared with white families.

Each mother endured tremendous personal loss. The Little mar-

riage was tumultuous. After Earl Little died in 1931 Louise was forced to go on welfare, later certified insane and committed to the Kalamazoo State Hospital for more than 25 years. She was released only in 1963, two years before the assassination of Malcolm X.

Louise died in 1991 in Lilley Township, Michigan — 36 years after her son's assassination — in the care of family members.

Alberta lost not one but two sons: After Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968, her other son, A.D. King, died in a mysterious drowning the following year. She too was murdered, as she sat at the organ in Ebenezer Baptist Church.

All three women were born within a few years of one another and all married preachers. They led very different lives, but all outlived their famous sons.

In today's world of Trumpism run wild where once again Black truth is being erased from Texas to Florida and many other states — with the actual banning of books about Black contributions — this book by Anna Malika Tubbs deserves to be in wide circulation. ■

REVIEW

The High Price of Delusion By Guy Miller

The Brainwashing of My Dad:
How the Rise of the Right Wing Media
Changed a Father and Divided Our
Nation — and How We Can Fight
Back

By Jen Senko

Sourcebooks, 2021, 299 pages, \$16.99 paperback.

IN NOVEMBER 2020, 74 million American voters pulled the lever for Donald Trump. Fifty-three percent of these 74 million believe the 2020 election was stolen. That means roughly a staggering 40 million Americans have crossed the bridge into fantasy land and burned it behind them.

Analyzing how this happened is essential in understanding contemporary America. *The Brainwashing of My Dad* makes a valuable contribution toward that goal.

Brainwashing, Jen Senko's documentary film, was released in 2016.¹ Her book of the same name was published in October 2021. These two dates serve as bookends around the sea change that was the Trump presidency.

Trump's 2016 election caused many pundits to use the same trope, "the cork is now out of the bottle." If you think of that bottle as a bottle of cheap, knock-off champagne, then think of its contents as being spritzed all over the U.S. capitol building on January 6, 2021.

Jen Senko tells the story of how the bottle's foil was removed and its cork loosened, on both the personal scale of her father Frank Senko, and on the larger scale of tens of millions of voters. A big chunk of the story is told through the growth of right wing media.

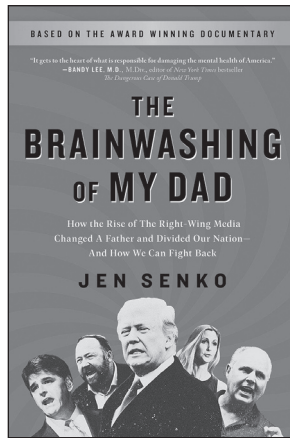
Their 1960s and Ours

In a celebrated November 1964 essay "The Paranoid style of American Politics," Richard Hofstadter put a name to a familiar theme in U.S. politics. Paranoia soon became an apt metaphor for how American politics played out in the 20th century.

But paranoia is one thing while derangement and delusion are another. They were a bridge too far, even for the New Right of the early 1960s.

In early 1961, Robert Welch and the three-year-old John Birch Society labeled President Dwight Eisenhower "a card-carry-

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



William F. Buckley, Jr. wasted no time in excommunicating Welch and his Society. What happened between then and now?

While Senko begins her account of the rise of right-wing media in the years of the Great Depression, I'll skip ahead to the 1960s. The late 1960s were a heady time for the American left.

The title of Max Elbaum's book on the Maoist New Communist Movement of the period, *Revolution in the Air*, captures the zeitgeist of those years. The U.S. Socialist Workers Party declared in 1971: "...we have a deeper, broader radicalization (than the 1930s) and there will be no reversal of this radicalization before the working masses of this country have had a chance to take power."

On December 31, 1969 I made a new year's toast, "to the 1970s, the decade of the American revolution." Sadly, history has not been kind to our unbridled optimism.

While we on the left were looking through a telescope with a rose-colored lens, the cadre of the right were using a microscope with clear glass. They saw an economy with a falling rate of profit, a student movement occupying Ivy League campuses, unions unafraid to strike, a civil rights struggle that morphed into the Black Power Movement and the first rumblings of militant feminism.

To launch their counterattack they saw the urgent need for a revamped media.

Three Mileposts in the Counterattack

First came Reed Irvine. Irvine was a Federal Reserve economist. When he looked through his microscope he focused on the 1968 Democratic Party Convention and what was to him a "liberal bias" in the

ing Communist" — not a sympathizer, but an actual capital C Communist.

Alarm bells went off in the "respectable" conservative world. Its Republican Party leader Barry Goldwater and its intellectual gatekeeper

media's coverage of that police riot on the streets of Chicago.

Just months after the teargas cleared, Irvine founded Accuracy in Media (AIM). He was to remain at its head for the next 35 years.

Continuing to the present day, AIM has championed every rightwing cause it comes across. Although the specific cause may change, the focus on ending the "liberal bias" of the "mainstream media" has remained a constant.

Basketball fans will recognize AIM's tactic. It's known as "gaming the ref," or claiming biased officiating. It starts at tipoff and never lets up. One-time conservative columnist David Brock puts it this way in *Brainwashing*:

"Basically, the idea of this group (AIM) was to counter their feeling that the media were opposed to Nixon's policies in Vietnam. That's how it began, but you could see how the campaign to discredit the media in the eyes of conservatives would lay the groundwork for a vast alternative media that would come later. It opened up space for conservatives to get a foothold in the media."²

Second came the infamous 1971 Lewis Powell Memorandum, which added its voice to AIM's mantra of the charge of "liberal bias." The memo's call was that "complaints to the media and the Federal Communications Commission should be made promptly and strongly when programs are unfair and inaccurate" (i.e. not conservative enough).

Powell put special emphasis on targeting "television, which now plays such a predominant role in shaping the thinking, attitudes, and emotions of our people."³

Jen Senko points to a third source of the right's media capture project. A memo called "A Plan for Putting the GOP on the TV News" was discovered, buried in the bowels of the Nixon Library, by a Gawker researcher named John Cook.

The plan may have been written by media guru Roger Ailes. At any rate his handwritten notes are all over it. *Brainwashing* observes,

"The memo sets out a detailed plan for getting television stations to promote GOP friendly news. It outlined a way to avoid 'the censorship, the priorities and the prejudices of network news selectors and disseminators' and deliver 'pro (Nixon) administration stories to its viewers.'"

One glaring passage in the memo leaps out, "People are lazy. With television you just sit-watch-listen. The thinking is done for

you.” More than a quarter century before its triumph, a vision of Fox News was taking shape.

Deregulation Clears the Path

Democratic President Bill Clinton signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and 60-plus years of reining in the power of private media vanished with the stroke of a pen. Reed Irvine’s mission was accomplished — the referees were finally gamed.

Thom Hartman puts it this way: “As a result, unprofitable news became very profitable infotainment, and radio and TV stations no longer had to ‘pay’ for their monopoly use of our public airways with ‘programs in the public interest.’”⁴

Gone were limits on ownership. Before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, 40 stations were the maximum number allowed for any one owner. After a few short years of shopping as if at a fire sale, Clear Channel alone mushroomed to over 1200 stations in its portfolio.

Much of rural America became saturated by rightist media. For example, Minot, a town of 48,000 in North Dakota, now has six stations, all owned by Clear Channel. (Clear Channel has rebranded itself iHeart).

As the smoke cleared, AM radio found itself on new terrain. “A 2007 study of 257 news/talk stations by the progressive Center for American Progress found 91% of the programming was conservative, an imbalance they concluded was not market driven, but a result of multiple structural problems in the U.S. regulatory system.”⁵

“Thanks to Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, Clear Channel, and the phalanx of right-wing broadcasters who appeared in the 1990s, and 2000s, conservative radio and television had become a mainstay of American life, not only reaching an audience of millions, but driving the shape and focus of the rest of the news media and reworking the definition of objectivity in the process.”⁶

Jen’s Father is Programmed

Frank Senko, the dad in *The Brainwashing of My Dad*, fits many but not all of the demographics of the Fox News junkie. At the time of his “conversion” Frank checked the boxes: older (the average viewer being in their 60s), angry, white and male.

But Jen describes a much different father in her childhood years. Her description of a younger Frank paints him as non-judgmental and happy-go-lucky. Although a Kennedy Democrat, he was not a particularly passionate one — perhaps semi-political at most.

One story stands out in Jen’s memory of her dad. On a childhood visit to New York, her family disembarked at the Port Authority in Manhattan. Just outside its doors, Frank was confronted by a homeless African-American man. After a brief conversation with the man, Frank gave him

“There is more than one reason why 40 million American voters believe the 2020 election was stolen and have crossed the bridge into an alternate universe.”

a generous contribution and called him “sir.” Decades later, Jen looked back on that day with affection and pride.

Jen’s dad came from a poor family of immigrants from Poland and Ukraine. He recalled walking barefoot to school in rural Allegheny County, Pennsylvania during the Depression years of his childhood.

A military stint during World War II led to school on the GI Bill and eventually to a master’s degree in engineering. Most of Frank’s working career was in a government job at Ft. Monmouth, N.J.

Frank spent the Fort Monmouth years commuting by carpool, which meant good-natured bantering and office gossip with the other passengers. There was no need for the car radio — except perhaps for traffic updates.

All that changed when Frank continued to work after his semi-retirement. He began working three or four days a week at a part-time job that required a long commute. Preferring the stimulus that talk radio provided over music, he now had a new drive-time companion.

Steve Rendall, a co-founder and former senior analyst for the media watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), points out in an interview recorded in *Brainwashing*, “Most people don’t think about this, but talk radio is something unlike a lot of other media, that is, it’s almost always done alone. And they’re listening to this one other person, and there’s sort of a personal thing there, and a connection.”

In his book *Talk Radio’s America*, Brian Rosenwald makes a similar point when he quotes historian Gil Troy:

“Talk radio creates an illusion of community and fosters a surprisingly strong sense of identity at a time when anonymous shopping malls replaced intimate main streets. Americans, especially older ones, yearned for connection and community and talk radio provided it.”⁷

Frank Senko’s entry drug to the world of rightwing media was a loud mouth host named Bob Grant. Wikipedia gives us a flavor of Grant’s racism. Grant dubbed his format “Combat Talk.” An example of its style: Grant describes Haitian refugees as “swine” and “sub-human infiltrators,” who multiply “like maggots on a hot day.”

This period marks Frank’s transition from *mensh* to monster. The transition was complete a year or so later when Rush Limbaugh came on the scene in 1988. Soon Limbaugh became what Frank called “My hero,” adding “I always agree with Rush.”

Deeper Into the Woods

Now completely retired, Frank established a new routine that revolved around his obsession with conservative media. Three hours every weekday were carved out for what Jen designated “Limbaugh Lunches.”

The kitchen was commandeered and the volume on the radio turned up. When the bombastic sound of Rush’s voice bled into the living room, Frank’s wife Ellen put her foot down. The solution? A heavy wooden door was installed to keep Rush in the kitchen.

There was little down time in Frank’s “re-education.” When Limbaugh went to commercials, the radio was muted and the sound of Fox News was turned louder. At night, Frank plugged in earbuds and listened to talk radio in bed. Once again, Ellen complained. The solution? Separate bedrooms.

At this point, Frank was lost as a casualty to the world of conservative media: talk radio, Fox News, and a steady diet of emails filled most of his waking hours.

As his daughter recounts, “In the years that followed, he fell down a rabbit hole, which completely took over his life and hammered home the realities of how the media we consume impacts the way we think and how we see the world.”

Gone was the “happy-go-lucky” “live and let live” dad of Jen’s youth. In his place was a combative, irritable man, driven to convert everyone he came across to his new world view. His daily barrage of right wing emails caused many of his friends and family to block him.⁸

Was Frank Senko brainwashed? Or even more fundamental: Is there such a thing as brainwashing?

Is Brainwashing a Real Thing?

The verb “to brainwash” made its debut in American discourse in the early 1950s.

Edward Hunter, a Cold War journalist and OSS veteran with ongoing ties to the CIA, is generally credited with introducing “brainwashing” into popular culture.

Hunter’s 1951 book, *Brainwashing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men’s Minds*, tied together anti-communism and the Orientalist stereotype of the devious Asian. The image of the cruel Chinese interrogator was cemented in the 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate*, followed by the popular movie of the same name three years later.⁹

Real or not, in 1953, CIA director Allen Dulles approved MK Ultra, a top secret

U.S. program in an attempt to duplicate the Chinese “success” in washing brains. Kat Eschner wrote in an April 17, 2017 *Smithsonian* article:

“It (MK Ultra) ballooned in scope and its ultimate result, among other things, was illegal drug testing on thousands of Americans. But MK Ultra has gone down as a significant example of government abuse of human rights, and for good reason.”

To hide it from the American public, much of the project’s dirty work was franchised out to Canadian hospitals and clinics.

Kathleen Taylor, a research scientist in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy, and Genetics at the University of Oxford, is one of the experts Jen Senko interviews for her book. Professor Taylor is the author of *Brainwashing, the Science of Thought Control*.

In her book, Taylor introduces the concept of “brainwashing by stealth.” Unlike the physical, coercive force of popular imagination, brainwashing by stealth more resembles what happened to Frank Senko and his immersion in the subculture of Fox News and Rush Limbaugh.

“Since brainwashing is all about belief change,” Jen Senko writes, “I asked Dr. Taylor

to describe the factors in creating it.” In her answer Taylor cites five criteria. Frank’s case meets them all:

1) Isolation, cutting the subject off from other sources of information.

2) Control, which involves the brain-washer having control of new information (Rush often would tell his listeners, “Don’t think about this until I get back to you on Monday.”)

3) Uncertainty, where the subjects’ old beliefs are attacked, leaving them confused and unsure.

4) Repetition, talking points are repeated *ad nauseam*.

5) Strong emotion, a staple on Fox News.

Taylor further explains brainwashing by stealth. “(The subject) is not so much forced to believe something, but all the information coming at them is pushing a line. There is no alternative in terms of information. So, if you control the information that goes into the brain, to a great degree you control what the brain is going to think and believe. That makes it difficult for the person to think of anything else because the horizons are narrowed and everything is constricted down to what information is available to them.”

There is more than one reason why 40 million American voters believe the 2020 election was stolen and have crossed the bridge into an alternate universe. There are deep-going material reasons beyond the deceptive power of media involved in this mass delusion, but we underestimate the role of media in this process at our own peril.

Notes

1. The 2016 video is 86 minutes long and is available on YouTube.
2. Throughout *Brainwashing* Jen Senko quotes from interviews she conducted with Noam Chomsky, David Brock, Rick Perlstein, Kathleen Taylor and others.
3. *A Confidential Memorandum: The Attack on the Free Enterprise System*, Lewis Powell, August 23, 1971.
4. *The Hidden History of the American Oligarchy*, Thom Hartman, 26.
5. *Messengers of the Right*, Nicole Hemmer, 267.
6. *Ibid.*, 269.
7. Talk Radio’s America, Brian Rosenwald, 16.
8. Thanks to a hospital stay in his 80s, followed by a long convalescence, Ellen Senko took charge of Frank’s media access. She eliminated FOX News and talk radio from Frank’s routine. Over time much of the old Frank reemerged. In the *Brainwashing* video Frank now described himself as an “independent” and having no problem with same-sex marriage. Frank Senko died at the age of 93 in 2016, at peace with his family and friends.
9. The concept of “brainwashing” was used to explain why American POWs made public statements denouncing U.S. imperialism.

The Murder of Shireen Abu-Akleh by David Finkel

NORMS OF “OBJECTIVITY” and diplomacy sometimes block media outlets and governments from saying what they full well know. Such is the case of the May 11 murder of the brilliant and beloved Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh at the Jenin refugee camp, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The veteran reporter, fully identified as a member of the press, was shot in the back of the head. That says it was a sniper’s bullet — an Israeli sniper, where contrary to the military’s initial lies there was no firefight or Palestinian militants present. Her colleague Ali al-Samoudi, who was also shot, survived.

While awaiting the official Israeli “investigation” result, we know what it will say: fog-of-war, no definitive conclusion possible, can’t determine who fired, tragic loss of life but it’s all the Palestinians’ fault, blah blah blah. And the U.S. State Department will reliably vouch for the coverup.

But there *are* serious questions for inde-

David Finkel is an ATC editor and a member of the Detroit chapter of Jewish Voices for Peace.



Shireen Abu-Akleh.

Aljazeera/EPA-EFE

pendent Israeli, Palestinian and international journalists to probe.

Did the sniper(s) act on their own, for target practice or the fun of it, or were there enabling signals or explicit orders from Israeli commanders to take out journalists

who weren’t wanted on the scene covering a “sensitive military operation”? Did they know exactly whom they were targeting, or just hitting whatever reporter was there?

Those open questions demand proper investigation, especially given that more than 45 Palestinian journalists have been killed by Israeli forces since 2000.

Don’t count on anything, but because of Shireen Abu Akleh’s international stature and U.S. citizenship, her martyrdom might bring some facts to the light of day.

In fact, an extensive CNN report (<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/24/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-jenin-killing-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>) has already detailed how four journalists, including Abu Akleh, were targeted by gunfire at the scene.

Little or no cooperation was received from Israeli officials, one of whom commented to *The Times of Israel* that the journalists “were armed with cameras, if I may say so.”

That says it all about the occupier’s and oppressor’s attitude toward the Palestinian population, the media, and the facts. With that made clear, let the proper investigation proceed. ■

Oscar Paskal, 1920-2022

By Nancy Brigham

ALTHOUGH OSCAR PASKAL was a socialist for nearly all of his 101 years before he passed away this February, you probably won't find his name in any history of Socialism. But no movement can survive without the courageous foot soldiers and behind-the-scene leaders. Through all those years, that's who Oscar was, a remarkable man who fought for Socialist values.

When Oscar was born back in 1920, it was a different world. Women in the United States were still months away from winning the right to vote, mass production industries like auto and steel were not unionized, and government benefits like social security and labor standards didn't exist. He grew up in a New York immigrant ghetto to a family that had fled anti-Semitism in Romania.

Yet both his parent joined unions — his father was a sheet metal worker and active in the Tinsmith Union, and his mother was a seamstress who belonged to a garment trade union. And they were Socialists.

Oscar's father proudly remembered shaking hands with Eugene Debs — which Oscar recalled to Bernie Sanders decades later, when he shook hands with Sanders.

As Oscar approached his teenage years in the 1930s, he was hit with the mass unemployment and starvation of the Great Depression, with no federal welfare, unemployment benefits or Medicaid to cushion the blow. Conditions were so bad that at one point, Oscar camped out for months in a New York park.

He also followed his dad's lead and joined The Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the youth arm of the Socialist Party. As a teen activist in the 1930s he picketed Nazi Party rallies, including a notorious 1939 one at Madison Square Garden. While attending City College, he picketed a welfare office and was one of 16 arrested.

In an interview, Oscar reported:

"One day on the way to school, I picked up a newspaper — not the popular Daily News, but the more serious New York Times — and on the front page was a photograph of Genora

Nancy Brigham worked 20 years for the UAW, as a writer and organizer for the Local Union Press Association and as the union's first webmaster. She then created web sites for union and community groups, and serves on the Board for her Detroit neighborhood.



Oscar Paskal marching in 2011 Detroit Labor Day Parade. Frank Hammer

Johnson leading the Women's Emergency Brigade at the Flint sit-down strike."

A Socialist Activist

Learning about that historic strike, he was hooked. Later he got a job in a non-union machine shop with a friend, Irving Howe, but they were quickly fired for attempting to organize.

Oscar was determined to get a job in the auto industry and join the fledgling UAW auto workers union. A close Socialist friend, Herman Benson, helped train him and other lefties to work in mass industry — and try to get skilled trades jobs.

But shortly after he arrived in Detroit, the United States entered World War II, and Oscar was drafted into the army. During the war he directed artillery fire at Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge, and helped liberate Polish prisoners from a POW camp.

When Oscar got back, he returned to Detroit and hired into Chrysler — first as a production worker, but eventually in the skilled trades. There he met his future wife, Dolores, who was installing convertible tops on Plymouths. And he remained close to his Socialist buddy Herman Benson, who founded the gutsy Association for Union Democracy and aggressively pressed unions, including the UAW, to stick to their own democratic values.

Union Educator

Oscar's activism and enthusiasm for union education got him hired into the UAW Education Department, and he also served a stint working in Wayne State University's Labor Studies Program. Paskal marched in Dr King's 1963 Walk to Freedom and continued to support civil rights, even as tanks rolled down his Detroit street in 1967.

He weathered several splits in the Socialist movement, at first following Max Shachtman (1940) who broke from the position that the USSR was a workers' state to be supported in war. Later Oscar aligned with Michael Harrington and DSOC — the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. This eventually led to the formation of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). He remained a member until his recent death.

While in the UAW Education Department, Paskal helped convince the UAW to support the democracy movement in the Mineworkers Union, and helped lure the young, left-leaning Mineworkers for Democracy editor Don Stillman to take over the UAW's magazine and publicity department and to bring in other '70s-era leftists.

Since new staffers hired from the anti-Vietnam war generation often faced intense hostility from the union's old guard. Oscar offered a welcome oasis of support and advice, not only in the workplace, but also in stimulating gatherings he and his wife Dolores held at his home.

There the new activists mingled with older Socialists like Education Director Brendan Sexton and author B.J. Widick, and were introduced to Herman Benson.

Although Oscar often seemed mild-mannered, make no mistake that he was also a courageous street fighter. During the bitter Detroit newspaper strike of the 1990s, when he was in his 70s and walked with a cane, Oscar boldly confronted the scabs hired to take strikers' jobs and was arrested for civil disobedience. And when the Detroit police moved on a crowd of strike supporters, he stood his ground without hesitation.

Decades later, 99-year-old Oscar joined a General Motors strike picket line, walker and all. Fittingly, Oscar's name still lives on at the Oscar Paskal Health Center, a non-profit, inner-city facility he helped found. ■

before it's born. But the brutality of that logic intensifies the level of public outrage around the overturn of *Roe*. That in turn may affect how rapidly some states move to protect abortion and other reproductive rights, and whether the federal-level Democratic Party grows enough spine to defend women's rights more than verbally.

On the symbolic level, Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer called a vote on the Reproductive Freedom Act already passed by the House of Representatives, but with no chance of reaching the 60-vote threshold to break the filibuster. Another symbolic, but more significant, show of defiance would be for the Senate Judiciary Committee to convene immediate hearings, charging Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch for lying to Congress in their confirmation hearings. Don't hold your breath...

It would be way too much to hope that Joe Biden would use presidential power to order abortion services to be provided in U.S. military hospitals, let alone announce nominations to expand the Supreme Court in order to restore abortion and voting rights. It's illusory and enervating, rather than energizing, to dream of such miracles.

But there are bitter imminent fights that the federal government won't be able to evade. State governments where abortion is banned post-*Roe* will seek, for example, to criminalize the use of abortion pills that are authorized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with telemedicine counseling that's become widely employed during the COVID crisis.

Since the federal government controls interstate commerce and the post office, it will be compelled to take a stand — or be complicit in the crackdown — on essential medical services. That becomes even more important if and when states try to prosecute pregnant people, or those assisting them, for going to other states for abortion services.

The biggest fights may occur within states — in Michigan for example, one of over a dozen states where snap-back anti-abortion laws will be in effect immediately after the Supreme Court ruling. Michigan's 1931 law is being challenged before the state supreme court by both Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Planned Parenthood, charging that it violates protections in the state constitution.

In fact, a preliminary injunction is currently in place as the Planned Parenthood suit is before the court. In response the legislature sued to overturn the injunction.

On another front, signatures are being collected for a ballot initiative — just over 425,000 are required — to place a reproductive freedom provision into the Michigan constitution. This referendum importantly goes beyond a narrow defense of *Roe* to cover a full range of expanded rights to contraception, pre- and post-natal care and childbirth, as well as miscarriage management. That's especially significant since maternal and infant mortality, particularly in low-income and people of color communities, remain high.

Intriguingly, Michigan's attorney general and seven prosecutors in the most populous counties where most of its reproductive health clinics are located, have pledged not to prosecute abortion cases if the state ban goes into effect. (The 1931 law criminalizes medical staff who assist an abortion. The only exception is to save the life of the pregnant person.)

What will happen if rightwing county prosecutors try to pursue residents going into counties where abortion services continue in defiance of the 1931 law? What if rightwing militants threaten or perpetrate violence against providers and patients?

It's not hard to imagine the multiple levels of confrontation and chaos that can result from a deeply unpopular reversal of a basic right that more than two generations of people in the United States have assumed was an established fact.

It is true that restrictions have limited access to abortion. Most important is the Hyde Amendment that denies federal Medicaid funding for abortion. Whether the Democrats or the Republicans dominated Congress this amendment has been renewed every year since 1976.

How Much Further?

We should know by now that when constraints are removed, rational behavior need not prevail. (In a different context, George W. Bush's 2003 invasion of Iraq and Vladimir Putin's present invasion of Ukraine are examples of irrationality with well-known catastrophic results we've explored in previous editorials and articles.)

It's not probable that even the most troglodyte of state legislatures would attempt to abolish marriage equality. The likelier tactic would be something like resolutions empowering county clerks to deny licenses based on their "personal conscience" against same-sex or interracial or interreligious or whatever other marriages they happen to disapprove.

Outfits like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) are available to advise the levels of bigotry that might pass the SCOTUS test. Ultimately, the Supreme Court might be asked to restore the hideous Clinton-era Defense of Marriage Act that was struck down in 2013, the era before the white-supremacist misogynist monster took full control.

There's no need to outline the sinister possibilities, as the list is endless and the creativity of the reactionary imagination has few limits, nor is it constrained by public opinion. What were once considered norms and rules of law, of process, of politics have been shredded.

For the defense of abortion rights in particular, it's not a question of whether to be "in the streets" or "in the legislature" or "at the ballot box" or "through civil disobedience." We need to be *everywhere*.

It is impossible to overstate how far basic rights can be driven back if the attacks aren't forcefully resisted. The right wing's coup by Court might have begun with its decades' long march to overthrow *Roe*, but it absolutely will not end there. ■

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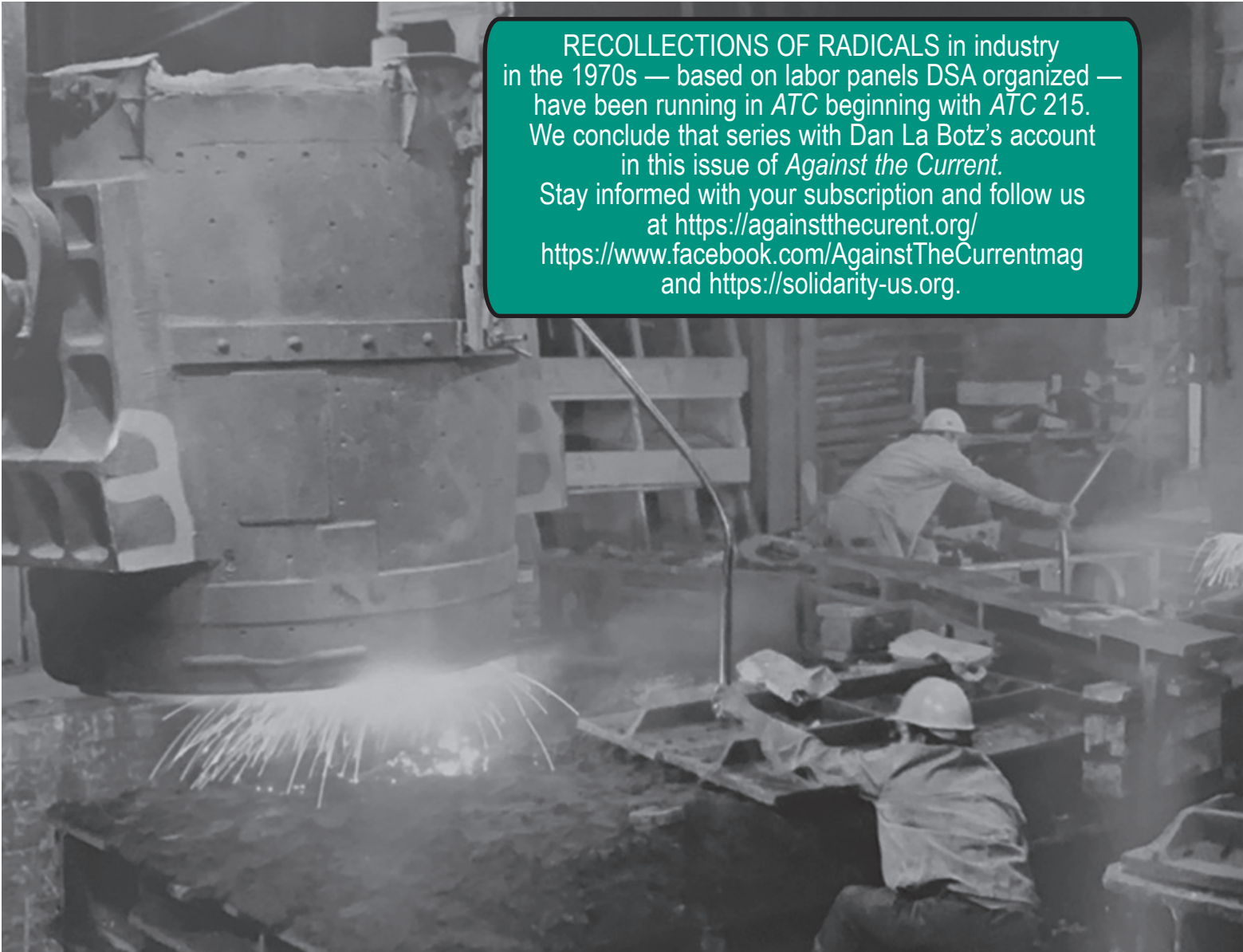
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