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a journal of socialist thought

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From the Editors

BEFORE TURNING TO THE CURRENT ISSUE, we want to say a word about the new role that *New Politics* is playing on the left. *New Politics* has always been a source of analysis of national and world politics from the point of view of “socialism from below.” More recently, however, we’ve also become—as a print journal and as an online website—a locus for debate on the democratic left. Last issue we began and this issue we continue our series on “The Left We Need,” with articles by all together a dozen different left organizations. We recently featured on our website (newpol.org) a half-dozen articles on the Chicago election and several articles on the Sanders campaign.

New Politics also endorsed, some of its editorial board members attended and participated in, and we reported on the important Conference on the Future of Left/Independent Politics, collaborating with a dozen different political organizations involved in independent campaigns as well as in holding political office and using that office to advocate for progressive policies while also building social movements. We are proud to be taking on this new role and hope to expand it as we engage in discussion and debate with others on the left with the goal of building a larger radical left in the United States, one which is an expression of fights for social justice.

We turn in this issue to the latest explosive development of a social movement in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement. Several Black and white authors, in articles as well as movie and book reviews, look at this new development and at accounts of earlier Black movements. Donna Murch, Raven Rakia, Kali

Akuno, Francis Shor, Femi Agbabiaka, Gabriel Kilpatrick, Alan Stowers, Martin Oppenheimer, Linda Braune, Reginald Wilson, and Jamie Munro provide us with a variety of perspectives on the Black movements and particularly Black Lives Matter.

We also continue the series of articles on the “Left We Need” that began in the last issue, with articles by members of the Young Democratic Socialists and the Puerto Rican Party of the Working People (PPT).

Europe is also back on the agenda. Barry Finger looks at the Syriza party of Greece and its struggle with the Troika, while Jean Batou analyzes the struggle over Ukraine and Stéfanie Prezioso paints a picture of Europe and the growing far right.

Yousef Khalil examines neoliberalism and the failures of the Arab Spring, while Riad Azar shows the authoritarian consequences of neoliberal austerity. While there is much written about China, the left produces little analysis of Taiwan, a subject taken up in this issue by Poe Yu-ze Wan.

Additional book reviews include Johanna Brenner on the new edition of the socialist-feminist classic, *Beyond the Fragments*, Stephen R. Shalom on Murray Bookchin, Nathan Robinson on Rudolph Rocker’s 1937 *Nationalism and Culture*, and Michael Löwy on the Frankfurt School and the Jews. Finally, Kent Worchester, our reviewer of comics and graphic art, writes in his “Words and Pictures” column about Wonder Woman.

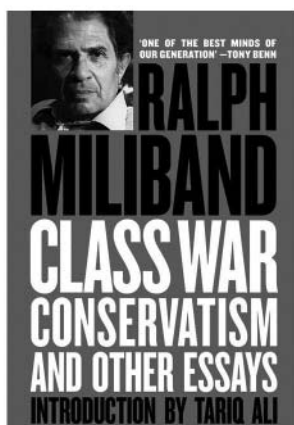
DAN LA BOTZ
STEPHEN R. SHALOM
JULIA WRIGLEY



The Next Revolution
Popular Assemblies and
the Promise of Direct Democracy
by Murray Bookchin

Edited by Debbie Bookchin and Blair Taylor
Preface by Ursula K. Le Guin

"Murray Bookchin is one of the most original and important radical thinkers and writers of the modern era." —Chris Hedges, author of *Wages of Rebellion*



Class War Conservatism:
And Other Essays
by Ralph Miliband

Introduction by Tariq Ali

"His whole effort is to render the language of socialism in terms of the needs of the here and now."
—Raphael Samuel



The Extreme Centre
A Warning
by Tariq Ali

"Ali remains an outlier and intellectual bomb-thrower; an urbane, Oxford-educated polemicist." —*Observer*

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A SPECIAL SECTION

The Fire This Time

Racism, Capitalism, and the Continuing Struggle for Justice

HISTORICALLY, THE AMERICAN JUSTICE system has refused to hold accountable police officers responsible for murder. This reality, and the fact of abuse and brutality as the modus operandi of policing in poor and working-class areas, was the catalyst of many of the “race rebellions” of the twentieth century. This century has been no different.

The killings have not stopped. The murders of Walter Scott in South Carolina and Freddie Gray in Baltimore are just the two latest atrocities to grab national attention, sparking protests and demonstrations for justice across the country. Admittedly, these are only the publicized cases; data on the number of people killed by police is not recorded.

In the last two years, courts and juries have basically approved the murders by police (or vigilantes) of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner. In response to this, and to the continual killing of Black people and other people of color, we present a symposium seeking to examine the relations between the colonial situation inflicted on people of color by militarized law enforcement, structural racism, and the creation of the carceral state, and to explore the rise of a possible new Black Liberation Movement.

We begin with Donna Murch, who places Ferguson in a historical context and traces the development of a movement against state violence. Then, in an interview with Amber Lee

Frost and Saulo Colón, journalist Raven Rakia discusses how this movement can be an agent not only for channeling dissent but also for combating the structures that underpin racism in our neoliberal society.

Kali Akuno, in an interview with Riad Azar and Saulo Colón, discusses the relevance of Black Nationalist theory and organizations in the fight for human rights and self-determination. Francis Shor discusses the similarities and differences between the current movement and its historical precedents in the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

These are followed by reflection pieces from two activists, what James Baldwin would have called “dispatches from occupied territories.” Femi Agbabiaka, who was in Ferguson, relates his experience to the growth of the prison-industrial complex and the profit motive under racialized capitalism. Gabriel Kilpatrick, who protested in New York City, uses his experiences to explore relations between today’s demonstrations and what happened fifty years earlier in Watts. We conclude our symposium with a piece by Alan Stowers, who, writing on the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, reminds us why Malcolm’s voice is so important today in order to diagnose and demand systemic change.

Four book reviews in this issue also relate to our theme. Martin Oppenheimer reviews a

study of how murders in the civil rights era were addressed; Linda Braune discusses Greg Grandin's examination of the slave trade; Reginald Wilson looks at the career of pioneering Black politician Shirley Chisholm; and Jamie Munro considers the lessons of the film "Selma."

We present these articles not only to de-

scribe and explain the current crisis and its roots, but also to explore the prospects for movements that can bring about the changes necessary for socialist democracy.

RIAD AZAR, SAULO COLÓN, AMBER
LEE FROST, AND STEPHEN R. SHALOM

CRUSADERS FOR JUSTICE



"We didn't land on Plymouth Rock,
Plymouth Rock landed on us."

"Both parties, (Democrat and Republican)
are controlled by the same people who have
abused our rights, and who have deceived us
with false promises every time an election
rolls around."

"I believe that there will ultimately be a
clash between the oppressed and those that
do the oppressing. I believe that there will
be a clash between those who want free-
dom, justice and equality for everyone and
those who want to continue the systems of
exploitation."

"Usually when people are sad, they don't do
anything. They just cry over their condition.
But when they get angry they bring about
change."

"Early in life I had learned that if you want
something, you had better make some
noise."

—Malcolm X

Fighter for African-American liberation

Historicizing Ferguson

Police Violence, Domestic Warfare, and the Genesis of a National Movement Against State-Sanctioned Violence

DONNA MURCH

EACH GENERATION HAS A MOMENT when its members share an instance of collective experience that is forever etched into their memory. For the Civil Rights and Black Power generation, it was unquestionably the open-casket funeral of Emmett Till. The disfigured remains of this fourteen-year-old boy became a mirror in which black youth witnessed their most vulnerable selves. The sight was so excruciating that it helped catalyze direct action protest from rural Alabama to the streets of Oakland for nearly a decade and a half.

Today, for a broad swath of people ranging in age from those born in the waning years of the Black Power movement through the interstice between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this moment was embodied in Ferguson.

The precise calculus of generation is elusive. As Jeff Chang has argued, “Generations are fictions.” And yet, we all have a personal and public sense of time that places us within a cohort of history. Whether we use the branding terms “the Hip Hop Generation” or “Generation X,” or the not-for-profit ring of “Millennial Youth,” particularly for those of us who came of age under presidents Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama, the events in this small municipality

outside northern St. Louis were profoundly meaningful.

It might even be said that the events of August stretching up until this present moment have helped distinguish the post-civil-rights generations from iconic baby boomers, because the months of mass protest announced what many of us feel is the most pressing domestic political crisis of our time: the emergence of a massive edifice of policing, surveillance, prisons, and punishment that is unprecedented in both U.S. and global history.

Built on recent centuries’ long substructure of white supremacy, but nurtured in an era of neoliberal retreat and technological advance, this massive state-building project, known alternately as mass incarceration, the new Jim Crow, the prison-industrial complex, or more simply, according to former *New York Times* journalist Chris Hedges, “the world’s most advanced police state,” has become a defining feature of our times. It is impossible to understand the enormity of the reaction to Michael Brown’s murder without recognizing the daunting shadow cast by state repression in the fifty-year aftermath of the modern Civil Rights movement.

Police left Michael Brown’s body in the street for nearly five hours, immersed in his own blood. Like the body of Emmett Till, the devastating sight of this murdered youth was intolerable. Word and image spread first to the residents of Canfield Green where he lay and then, through the digital magic of cyber networks, to the rest of the St. Louis metro area, the nation, and the world. Twitter, Instagram,

DONNA MURCH is associate professor of history at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and author of the award-winning monograph, *Living for the City: Migration, Education and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland*. She is currently completing a new book entitled *Crack in Los Angeles: Policing the Crisis and the War on Drugs*.

Facebook, and Vine carried this story beyond the city's periphery, ultimately forcing mainstream media to reckon with its gravity. As we will see, however, the media blitz focused not on the destruction of a person, but rather of property. The pattern continued in Baltimore, which is another economically devastated city located in the overlapping borderlands between the North and South that failed to attract sustained press coverage until fevered reports of "looting" became the focal point of the television news cycle.

Even more important to the impact and longevity of Ferguson as site of protest and mobilization was the ingenuity and commitment of the protestors who refused to leave—even when confronted with tanks, military hardware, and clouds of tear gas. Instead they started publicly counting the days of sustained resistance and in so doing announced to St. Louis County and the rest of the world that they would not stop until they had attained justice for Mike Brown and the many other men, women, and children shot down by police. The protest has been going on for some 300 days, and still, it continues.

What made Ferguson into such a watershed moment was not simply the terror-inspiring image of police impunity, but that a large cohort of African-American youth decided to fight back and confront state authorities. Along the way, they developed allies and "co-conspirators," in the words of Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza, from different ethnic and racial communities, more-affluent cities across the country, and international solidarity groups. This was nowhere more true than with Palestinians who tweeted from the West Bank in early August with instructions about how to mitigate the effects of tear gas. International exchange continued and deepened in the months that followed, as the twin threads of Boycott, Divestment, and (BDS) Sanctions against Israel and the burgeoning African-American-led movement against state-sanctioned violence inside the United States intertwined.

During Ferguson October, activists launched a sustained organizing effort that spanned a four-day weekend meant to draw support from across the country in a Black-Power-style remix of Freedom Summer. After attending a Hip Hop gathering including performances by local and nationally known artists such as Tef Poe, T-Dubb, and Dead Prez, I wrote the following words that captured for me the sheer force and beauty of the genesis of a new protest era unlike anything I had experienced firsthand:

I have no words to express what is happening in Ferguson. In the name of Michael Brown, a beautiful black storm against state violence is brewing so dense it has created a gravity of its own, drawing in people from all over the U.S., from centers of wealth and privilege to this city whose most prosperous years were a century ago. It looks explicitly not only to St. Louis City and County police and other municipal law enforcement, but also to the imperial wars in the Middle East as sites of murder and trauma. The call repeated over and over is Stokely Carmichael's: "Organize, Organize, Organize." And this growing youth movement has all the ancestral sweetness of kinship. In the words of a local Hip Hop artist/activist, "Our grandparents would be proud of us."

Local police were not the only focus. Corporate chains Walmart and Quiktrip became flash points of conflict, even more so than the small businesses that the local news identified in the sensationalized coverage of looting in early August. Protestors frequently gathered outside the Department of Justice in St. Louis, while flash mobs appeared regularly throughout the metro area. Consistently, activists sponsored three or four simultaneous direct actions at different locations every day. These varied from flash mobs at Walmart, to protestors whistling "FTP" in Morse code outside the police station.

Organized actions abounded that would have warmed the heart of Saul Alinsky, like the beautiful baritone voice, replete with a full operatic chorus, that pre-empted the St. Louis

Symphony's performance of Brahms' *Requiem*. Demonstrators adapted the lyrics from the United Mine Workers' anthem, "Which Side Are You On," from the deadly labor strikes in Harlan County, West Virginia's, coal mines.

Which side are you on friends?

Which side are you on?
Justice for Mike Brown friends.
Justice for us all.

Afterwards, a multiracial group arranged strategically throughout the theater shouted "Black Lives Matter" over and over, a cappella.

Black lives
matter!

All lives
matter.



Maybe to you. Clearly not
to the cops or the judges
or the 1%.



Have *you* been
shot at recently?
Spent time in
prison? Tried to
get out of poverty?

Uh, no...



A whole
lot of deep
change has to
happen before
all lives matter.

Gotta run.
*Game of
Thrones* is
coming on.



As they sang, protestors threw long, black-and-white cloth banners over the balcony, scrolled with signs and drawings including “Requiem for Mike Brown 1996 to 2014,” “Racism Lives Here” with an arrow pointing straight down to the skyline’s Gateway Arch, and “Come Join the Movement” adorned with a bright yellow shining sun.

While local residents formed the core of this wave of protest, constant outside attention and migration of people to support this movement of organized resistance played a crucial role. Black Lives Matter sponsored its own “freedom rides” bringing nearly six hundred people of African descent from 18 cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Chicago, Austin, Atlanta, Winston-Salem, and Tucson.

In addition to Black Lives Matter, the faith-based not-for-profit group PICO, headquartered in Washington DC, provided support staff and resources from the earliest days of the protest. PICO organizers, in fact, helped stage a Moral Monday protest by local clergy in which they offered the sacrament of “repentance” to Ferguson police officers. To powerful effect, the clergy and other demonstrators called out the names of people who had been killed by the police, and rhythmically shouted after each victim, “Repent.” “Mike Brown – Repent,” “Vonderritt Myers Jr. – Repent,” “Raneisha McBride – Repent.” And so on for hours.

Protestors and ordinary people created and maintained memorials in the place where Michael Brown’s body lay, set up camp in front of the Ferguson police headquarters on South Florissant, and marched regularly along what a local minister called “The Jericho Road” stretching from Canfield Drive to the edge of Dellwood, a neighboring majority-black municipality. Demonstrators staffed pickets in front of the Ferguson police station for 21 hours a day, sharing rides and food as they crafted their own movement culture. Direct action protests like these later spread to the Shaw district of South St. Louis, following the murder of eighteen-

year-old Vonderritt Myers, who was shot six times in the legs and once in the face after a policeman employed by a private security firm mistook Myers’ sandwich for a gun.

As this mosaic of struggle indicates, over the past year Ferguson and the greater St. Louis metro area has become a laboratory and genesis point for a new generation of activists against state-sanctioned violence. It has also helped inspire a new wave of twenty-first century iterations of Black Power both for local youth and for those across North America. These efforts, and the national and international press and social media coverage they generated, marked a turning point, a before and after, in which perception changed. Solidarity protests in New York, Los Angeles, and smaller cities throughout the country immediately followed, and in the process, a national collective memory was forged.

This is not to say that what happened in Ferguson was something entirely new; it certainly was not. Anti-police brutality protest has a long history, and a small segment of its most recent past could be traced as far back as the late 1970s and 1980s, to the police murders of Eula Love, Eleanor Bumpers, Michael Stewart, and many, many others. But I think to understand the social dynamics of Ferguson and the many months of protest that have followed in an era of both cybernetic networks and of the “Arab Spring,” we need to look to more recent struggles. The campaigns seeking justice for Oscar Grant, Sean Bell, Troy Davis, Sakia Gunn, and Trayvon Martin strike me as Ferguson’s direct lineal antecedents. In fact, the events in St. Louis represented the culmination both of long-standing forces of repression and criminalization, as well as of resistance.

Watts Rebellion, Historical Amnesia, and the Rise of SWAT

In a speech at the National Press Club in 1986—during Ronald Reagan’s second presidential term, on the eve of the Iran Contra hearings—James Baldwin reflected on the importance of

history and of America's discomfort in reckoning with the full burden of its meaning.

One of the things that has always afflicted the American reality and the American vision is this aversion to history. History is not something you read about in a book, history is not even the past, it's the present, because everybody operates, whether or not we know it, out of assumptions which are produced only, and only by, our history.

Locating the exact origins of the current epidemic of police violence is not an easy task. Its causes are many and cumulative, ranging over a broad swath of time. As Robin Kelley and others have pointed out, the link between race and criminalization in the United States is at least as old as the Atlantic slave trade itself. Slave patrols from the antebellum era, convict leasing and the organized system of terror in the post-bellum and segregated South, as well as the turn toward Jim-Crow justice in the years after the arrest of the Scottsboro boys are all part of the long history of race and criminalization.

Equally important to this history is private as well as state violence, as seen in the brutal act of racial vigilantism that killed Emmett Till with impunity. But to understand the nature of Ferguson protest, it is essential to look at the major developments of the last half century that are often elided or ignored in popular media.

Paramount to this history is the state response to the popular mobilizations of the postwar era and the criminalization of exactly the kinds of youth who participated in the popular upheavals of the 1960s urban rebellions and Black Power movement. It is in this moment of reaction that the seeds of contemporary police militarization are sown, as well as the divisions within the African-American community, which ultimately have made it difficult to organize in a unified way until very recently.

There are many examples to illustrate this point. I am a social historian, so I like to illustrate large concepts through documenting the history of particular places. Let me highlight

one from California, a state that has helped lead the expansion of America's incarceration rate. The history of the Golden State generally, and Los Angeles specifically, is essential to understanding how America has become a "prison nation" in the years of *reconquista* (reconquest) following mass protest and civil unrest.

California is home to Oakland's Black

Since the passage of landmark civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s, we have witnessed an unprecedented intensification of the carceral state.

Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Watts rebellion, and the law enforcement commando unit SWAT. These historical developments are not coincidental, but directly related. California has the largest prison population in the United States, which in turn has the largest prison population in the world. Strikingly, 70 percent of the state's prisoners come from Southern California. To make matters worse, the city of Los Angeles alone has the ominous distinction of housing the largest number of urban prisoners on the planet. Significantly, in the year 2000 California incarcerated African Americans at a rate nearly four and a half times their representation in the general population, and Latinos at a rate three times as high.

To paraphrase Cornel West, race really does matter to this history. High incarceration rates of populations of color are not a recent development. California is part of "Aztlán," or "occupied land," seized by United States after its war with Mexico in 1848. During the lead up to the Civil War and Reconstruction, the state caged significant numbers of Native Americans who were then leased out to public and private

employers. It also had one of the highest rates of lynching, not exclusively as a form of racial control, but as a system of frontier justice for punishing transgression and social crime. By the turn of the twentieth century, California already had the highest rate of incarceration in the country.

To put it bluntly, California has been putting large numbers of people in prison for a long time (especially those who are black, brown, and indigenous). But in the late twentieth century,

The events in Ferguson and other parts of the country cannot be understood without considering state repression against the mass political upheaval of the 1960s.

this tendency vastly accelerated. And the state began to export some of its most brutal methods, including SWAT, gang injunctions, and gang enhancements, to the rest of the country.

To give us all some hope in the midst of a truly daunting history of occupied territory and racial punishment, I would like to start my tale of modern Los Angeles by talking about how African Americans and Latinos fought back against these oppressive structures, past and present.

The Watts rebellion, or the Watts riot as it is more popularly known, was the largest civil disturbance in U.S. history up until that point and was occasioned—no surprise—by an incident of police brutality. In August of 1965, five days after the signing of the Voting Rights Act, the community of Watts in Los Angeles, California, erupted in violent protest over the police beating and jailing of a twenty-one-year-old African-American youth and the abuse of his mother. Watts surprised the rest

of the country as it broke out in a moment of victory: the culmination of the southern Civil Rights movement's push for civil and electoral inclusion. For the first time in history, African Americans of both genders had been granted full voting rights, with the federal government guaranteeing systematic mechanisms of enforcement. In essence, the final legal plank in the southern system of Jim Crow had been demolished.

Nevertheless, within several days after the passage of this historic legislation and the dispatch of federal voting rights marshals into the South, a cataclysmic urban rebellion erupted in an impoverished and largely ignored black migrant community on the West Coast. The Watts rebellion signaled that, despite the dismantling of regional, legally enforced segregation, African Americans throughout northern and western cities faced profound forms of racial discrimination untouched by the decade-long mobilization in the American South. Paramount among these was the constant abuse of police power: arbitrary arrest, shootings of unarmed people, harassment, beatings and murders of children, and, in New York, the first generation of stop-and-frisk laws.

Watts was in many ways emblematic of the problems of the black urban poor then and now. Located in the outer reaches of South Central Los Angeles, it was a direct portal for recent migrants from the American South. The forces of housing segregation and red-lining contributed to overcrowding, with a quarter of a million people hemmed into an area of less than three square miles. In fact, Martin Luther King argued that Watts faced the worst overcrowding in the nation. Contained within strictly drawn boundaries, law enforcement over-policed and underserved this impoverished area in South LA. Not surprisingly, while African Americans made up 98 percent of residents, the police department was nearly all white and drawn from distant white enclaves.

Perhaps more than any other neighbor-

hood of its time, Watts embodied what two eminent social scientists have called “American Apartheid.” Like the other urban rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s, the residents of Watts registered their anger at police, and “the racial state” more broadly, by taking to the streets. The rebellion lasted six days, from August 11 to August 17, 1965. It left 34 people dead and property losses totaling over \$40 million. Ultimately, officials called in the National Guard to quell the disturbance, and it along with other branches of law enforcement caused the overwhelming majority of deaths and injuries.

Looked at from hindsight, the Watts riot’s long-term causes, like those of the scores of other urban rebellions that swept through American cities in the 1960s to which Ferguson has been compared, hinged on two central issues: the political economy of race and the long-standing history of systemic police abuse and criminalization of Africans Americans. The urban rebellions and their political expression “Black Power” responded to what Bayard Rustin called the more “complex problems of housing, education, and jobs” in northern and western cities.

Few places embodied the devastating effects of the overlapping systems of northern (and western) racial discrimination more than Watts. Watts was an urban portal for the poorest and most recent migrants from the South, and Eldridge Cleaver remembered his hometown as “a place of shame.” As newcomers settled at the social margins of the United States’ second-largest city, they faced intense racial and class segregation, miserable schools, and large-scale joblessness. A hostile and overwhelmingly white police force engaged in routine traffic stops of motorists of color, beatings, and harassment. Given the collective black suffering in South LA, the chance to actually fight back directly against these conditions thrilled many residents.

Watts became emblematic of a new era of militancy that looked to armed self-defense, direct confrontation with the state, and economic

redistribution as political imperatives. Indeed, many have argued that it initiated the new era of Black Power politics. Particularly for the young, the poor, and the economically marginal, Watts was a deeply meaningful rebellion that called attention to the everyday effects of racism and white supremacy. It made visible the problems of the urban north and its forgotten populations that had largely been untouched by the gains of the southern Civil Rights movement. And while many journalists and popular histories have denounced these so-called “riots” as tragic and destructive failures that destroyed liberalism, it is important to recognize how profoundly they influenced U.S. social welfare policy.

During the Black Power era, postwar redistributive programs responded directly to the hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets in protest. It is doubtful that without this massive wave of civil unrest sharp increases in federal funding for higher education targeted to students of color, community action programs, small-business loans for “minority contractors,” and, more broadly, the expansion of social welfare infrastructure to impoverished populations of color would have been implemented. And while this remains an “inconvenient truth” to many, the specter of large-scale property destruction was indeed integral to protest tactics that won major concessions. Over the course of a single decade, from 1960 to 1970, state spending on housing and other urban policy issues expanded from \$600 million to over \$3 billion. Indeed, the federal government created a whole new agency to deal with the so-called “urban crisis”: the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

For many Americans, this account challenges some of the most cherished understandings of the heroes and villains of the 1960s. So much of our current national memory focuses on the triumphant efforts of an interracial, nonviolent movement that overturned the inequities of Jim Crow. But if you really want to understand the problems facing today’s African-American

communities, it is the history of regions outside the South that are most instructive. It is the urban North and West that directly anticipate the problems that we see today. Although our national post-racial narrative focuses almost entirely on the elimination of legal segregation, it is actually these lesser-known histories that best explain the problems of structural racism, police violence, and mass incarceration facing successive generations in the years after the Voting Rights Act's passage.

As many young people look back on the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, they see only defeats. (I hear this all the time in classes and when I give public talks.) However, from the point of view of law enforcement and the state more broadly, this period represented an era of unprecedented delegitimization. It is hard to overestimate the anger and fear that militant black community mobilization inspired among authorities. City and state governments understood Watts, and the urban rebellions more generally, as apocalyptic destruction that should be punished. Like the iron fist and the velvet glove, the war on crime and the war on poverty were historically intertwined.

Indeed, in 1966, a year after Watts, an ambitious former actor who had recently switched from the Democratic to the Republican Party, was elected Governor of California on a law-and-order platform opposing "Beatniks, taxes, riots, and crime." Significantly, Ronald Reagan won by capturing a majority of white, unionized households despite his opposition to organized labor. This same man would later vastly expand America's devastating war on drugs in the 1980s. A decade before, however, Governor Reagan's hardline stance prompted his counterpart in New York, the historically liberal Nelson Rockefeller—who had equally grand national ambitions—to reverse his earlier public-health approach to drug use and to launch the most draconian anti-drug laws in the country in 1973.

So as the country arched to the right, the lesson that law enforcement drew from Watts

was not that it needed to consider how its systematic mistreatment of African Americans had caused such large-scale destruction. No. Nor that greater community input was needed either. Instead, authorities responded to what they defined as an irrational wave of disorder by creating new and more repressive forms of policing that were modeled explicitly on American military campaigns abroad.

During and after Watts, the LAPD arrested over 4,000 people and conducted large-scale house-to-house searches. In addition, law enforcement worked to acquire military-grade hardware and elite tactical units as part of its "counterinsurgency" campaigns against urban protests and Black and Brown Power organizations. In 1967, the department founded SWAT with a compact force of former military veterans. Subsequently, the LAPD deployed SWAT for the first time against the Southern California Black Panther Party's office at 41st Street and Central Avenue. The commando force used a tank on loan from the National Guard and won Department of Justice authorization for a grenade launcher.

SWAT marked a new era in law enforcement, not only for the city of Los Angeles, but for the rest of the country. It established a template for militarized policing across the country that laterally expanded in the overlapping domestic wars against drugs, gangs, and crime in subsequent years. In a move that influenced other police departments, the LAPD used federal monies from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to develop additional militarized units. Southern California law enforcement created a series of commando forces with ominous, martial sounding names, including TRASH, later renamed CRASH under community protest; Operation Safe Streets (OSS); and the district attorney's own "Hardcore Drug Unit." As this list of martial alphabet agencies demonstrates, starting with the invention of SWAT, Los Angeles helped lead the national militarization of

policing. And it is here that we see the carceral thread linking the shocking scenes we saw in Ferguson to Watts and SWAT.

I have recounted this pre-history in such painstaking detail because it is almost entirely left out of the mainstream coverage of the events in St. Louis. At most, we hear a discussion of how the 1033 Program of the National Defense Authorization Act funded the adoption of surplus military hardware by police departments. But there is rarely a sustained discussion of the war on drugs, much less the bombastic response of law enforcement to the highly politicized urban uprisings of the 1960s that are Ferguson's direct lineal antecedents.

The events in Ferguson and other parts of the country cannot be understood without considering state repression against the mass political upheaval of the 1960s. Large-scale arrests and authoritarian response by police during Watts paved the way for this new repressive era marked by federal and local cooperation in law enforcement and the widespread use of military hardware for crowd control. The political backlash against Watts, subsequent urban rebellions, and the Black Power movement more broadly are crucial to understanding the rise not only of bipartisan support for law and order, but of the contemporary carceral state.

Understanding the choice of the term "carceral state" requires some context. Its roots lie in a parallel movement in the university that has anticipated mass protest in the streets over police killings and subsequently flourished as protests have grown. Michel Foucault first popularized the term with the publication of *Discipline and Punish* in the mid-1970s. More recently, American academics have embraced the term carceral, from the Latin "carceralis" or "carcer," of or belonging to prison, in order to identify a wide range of punitive state actions. These include aggressive policing; race and criminalization; moral panics and targeted punishment campaigns against illicit or informal economies; modes of incarceration across

vectors of age, race, sex, gender conformity, and legal status; courts, prosecution, and parole; jails, prisons, asylums, and other forms of social immobilization; the school-to-prison pipeline; border patrol and immigrant detention; public and private surveillance; as well as restrictive and means-tested social service policies. This broad and capacious view of punishment has been chosen in order to analyze not only mass incarceration, but a more seismic shift from a redistributive to a punitive state in which carcerality, like the militarization of policing, saturates even the social welfare functions of governance in the late twentieth century.

Los Angeles is so significant to this process because in many ways, as Mike Davis argued in *City of Quartz*, it is the paradigmatic carceral city. And this is nowhere more clear than in the periods spanning Reagan's governorship and presidency. Just as the post-Watts militarization of police laid the foundation for the contemporary carceral state, under Reagan's intensified wars on crime, drugs, and gangs in the 1980s, the martial imperative of southern California law enforcement grew stronger. According to the Los Angeles ACLU, "the political rhetoric about a 'war' on drugs and a 'war' on crime ... helped turn the police into soldiers—not civil servants or guardians of the community order—making them sometimes more aggressive and forceful than they have a right to be in pursuit of criminals and suspects."

Domestic Wars on Drugs and Gangs

Now, I would like to turn to the legacy and effects of the drug war to better understand the origins of the burgeoning movement inside the United States against state-sanctioned violence. In 1971, President Nixon coined the phrase the "war on drugs," but in reality, it was neither a single coherent entity nor a war itself, but rather a succession of executive-sponsored domestic and transnational punitive campaigns that vastly expanded in the Reagan and Bush eras, but have also been ratcheted up under

Democrats Bill Clinton and, arguably, our first black president, Barack Obama. At the federal, state, and local levels, this carceral turn in government resulted in the criminalization of large segments of the U.S. population for illicit drug consumption, possession, and distribution. Indeed, in California like the rest of the nation, the war on drugs became the primary engine driving mass incarceration.

As in the earlier era of protest and urban rebellion, Los Angeles proved integral to this national development. Arguably, it became the most important theater of the Reagan/Bush war on drugs. Federally funded, punitive campaigns against drugs and gangs helped erect a new martial infrastructure in the city. Significantly, the state applied the brunt of militarization unequally by focusing on historic African-American and Latino neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles. Indeed, by 1992, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department gang database listed nearly half of African Americans between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four in Los Angeles County as gang members.

Los Angeles' high profile war on drugs reflected the policies of President Reagan's national punishment campaign, including saturation policing, eradication of youth gangs, civil forfeiture, federalization of drug charges, and strict enforcement of mandatory minimum sentencing. At the street level, the use of massive police sweeps with spectacular displays of overwhelming force embodied the city's militarized vision of law enforcement, as did Chief Daryl Gates' repeated calls to arms. When the LAPD police chief testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington DC, he argued, "The casual drug user ought to be taken out and shot."

Behind his bombastic rhetoric lay a larger truth. In an era of drastic reduction of social services and deindustrialization, mass incarceration fueled by anti-drug and gang campaigns became de facto urban social policy for the residents of impoverished communities of color.

The prescription for widespread joblessness and the illicit economies that accompanied urban divestment was simply to remove large numbers of people from the streets through prison warehousing.

The United States' multiple war(s) on drugs worked in symbiosis with related punitive campaigns against gangs, crime, and in the later years, terrorism. In Los Angeles, for example, much of the carceral infrastructure for the city's war on drugs relied on geographically targeted gang sweeps together with anti-gang legislation and prosecution tools. By conflating drug crimes with street-gang membership, law enforcement set up a comprehensive net for the criminalization of nonwhite youth.

Defining the war on drugs as a war on gangs justified the criminalization of everyday life in black and brown Los Angeles and other cities across the country. Modes of dress, movement, color of shoelaces, hand gestures, and mere association became defined as prosecutable offenses. Racially targeted policing combined with the denial of legal representation made it virtually impossible for youth to remove their names from gang databases. Anti-gang injunctions also relied on the poverty of their targets, who could rarely afford to hire lawyers.

While anti-gang injunctions and databases provided mechanisms for surveillance, control, and the assumption of large numbers of minority youth into "the system" for minor offenses, ultimately gang enhancement legislation contributed even more to mass incarceration. In 1988, the California legislature passed the Street Terrorism and Prevention Act (STEP), which mandated that persons convicted of crimes who have been designated as gang members face additional charges and sentencing. In the initial 1988 law, prosecutors could "enhance" gang members' sentences with from one to five years of additional time in state prison per offense. Subsequently, California's Proposition 21 amended the STEP Act in 2000 by increasing gang enhancements from 16 months to five

years for nonviolent offenses and to 10, 15, 20, and 25 years to life for violent offenses. The dense layering of STEP, including added prison time for gun charges and for crimes committed within one thousand yards of a school, meant that it was not uncommon for very young offenders to receive multiple consecutive life sentences.

This repressive legal regime worked in tandem with the LAPD's spectacular shows of force, mass arrests, and saturation policing. On April 9, 1988, the police set up an impromptu holding facility in the Los Angeles Coliseum and proceeded to arrest over 1,400 people, including more African-American youth than in any other single incident since the Watts rebellions in 1965. Over the course of the next six months, law enforcement jailed over 18,000 people. The scale and size of arrests in Los Angeles' street-level drug war paralleled the repression following the Watts rebellion.

Unfortunately, while LA represents a particularly brutal historical theater of the drug war, America's "second city" telescoped the future of the nation as a whole. Today, scholars have estimated that 51 percent of people in federal prison are there for drug crimes.

What Is to Be Done?

Punishment is not unique to America's past half century. Indeed, it is constitutive of a settler society born of land expropriation, native genocide, and African slavery. However, since the passage of landmark Civil Rights legislation in the mid-1960s, we have witnessed an unprecedented intensification of the carceral state. Significantly, after decades of ever more punitive campaigns, its most concrete expression—the police killings of unarmed people who are overwhelmingly of African descent—has catalyzed mass protest.

It is a truism of left social history that repression breeds resistance. But the real question is not if, but when? And what conditions make this possible? The decades-long accumulation of police powers, and at a more foundational level,

the elevation of punishment as the solution to all social problems, is indeed daunting. I think that is why Ferguson has been so meaningful to us all. To watch young people literally face-down tanks and protest 21 hours a day in the quest for justice for one of their peers has shown us all that fight back is possible.

Nested within the Ferguson movement are a number of important issues. Fighting the militarization of police is crucial, but equally important is confronting the problem of "policing for profit" as described in the recent Department of Justice report, which found everything wrong about the Ferguson PD, *except* the actual shooting of Michael Brown by Darren Wilson.

However, the Department of Justice did provide a systematic account of how Ferguson and St. Louis County more broadly finance themselves, to borrow Toni Morrison's phrase, "on the backs of blacks." This larger problem, that many have dubbed "racial capitalism," is key to understanding not only Ferguson protests, but the war(s) on drugs, gangs, and crime that predate it. Civil forfeiture has created an incentive structure for local police departments all over the country. Once a person is accused of a drug crime, their property can be legally seized. I want to stress here *accused*, not convicted. That includes everything from the content of their wallets, to a watch on their wrist, to a car, house, or mobile phone. In the late 1980s, at the height of the war(s) on drugs and gangs, the LAPD was earning between \$10 million and \$20 million a year in civil forfeiture.

We are dealing with a system in which racism pays. To push back against this, we need the kind of scrutiny that has been focused on St. Louis County to be applied to policing practices across the country. And we need to think about the deadly mixture of profit and racism that has incentivized mass arrests and even killings in the years since the urban rebellions.

The second point is that we need to recognize that each generation confronts the overarching structure of power in its own way. One

of the most remarkable elements in Ferguson has been watching a whole cohort of new activists emerge in little more than six months. Strikingly, a significant number of people I met had felony convictions and spoke openly about their effects. So, we see how Ferguson protest has tapped the population most directly injured by the domestic warfare against drugs, gangs, and crime. Given how the shaming process around incarceration has helped inhibit organizing, this is a significant and hopeful development. Similarly, women with a range of backgrounds have served at the forefront of this movement, as have self-identified queer and transgender people. Black Lives Matter, whose hashtag was founded in 2012 and later expanded to local organizing committees throughout the country, has foregrounded not only the need to stop arbitrary arrest, murder, and detention by law enforcement, but to think about the central role of gender identity and sexuality in how we value life itself.

Too often, the killings of black girls and women, Latino/as, and transgender people of color, who are the single most vulnerable group to police and vigilante murder, have not received the attention and solidarity efforts they deserve. Black Lives Matter has incorporated some of the language and iconography of the Black Power movement, but has expanded its parameters to reckon fully with the tensions and contradictions inside our communities around the intimate and intra-racial questions of sexuality and gender. I think this is very important, and if we only search for charismatic male leadership as our model of social activism, then much of what is new and vibrant is not only lost, but rendered invisible.

Finally, I want to stress that we as scholars and researchers have a role to play in this growing movement against state-sanctioned violence. One of the most important lessons I learned from my research on the Black Panther

Party is that the Panthers “started with a study group.” Throughout their history, intellectual production and research was key to how they conceptualized and developed new forms of social action from delegitimizing the police to using breakfast programs and liberation schools for political education. Both Black Studies and the Panthers are steeped in this tradition of intellectual engagement as political praxis, and we can learn a lot by drawing on their rich tradition in our present moment.

One of our biggest problems is that we don’t know enough about even the most basic and important facts of what law enforcement has done throughout the country. How many people have the police murdered over the past ten years? I have heard estimates as high as 10,000, but no one really knows because the federal government does not compile this data in any systematic way. So, much of the history of police and state-sanctioned violence in the United States remains undocumented. We need to work with local activist groups and develop tools for recovering this history in rural areas, small municipalities, suburbs, and larger cities. Equally important is looking for historical precedent to understand both the current tools of repression and of resistance. To quote Malcolm X, “Of all our studies, history is the best qualified to reward our research.”

This piece was delivered as a plenary address for the conference “The Criminalization of Race in History and Global Societies: Social Activism and Equal Justice” at Monmouth University on April 17, 2015. The historical sections integrate material I have published elsewhere. For bibliography and fuller elaboration, please see *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); “The Many Meanings of Watts: Black Power, Wattstax, and the Carceral State,” *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*, January 2012; and “Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth Century War on Drugs,” *Journal of American History*, Summer 2015.

Black Protests Matter

An Interview with Raven Rakia

AMBER LEE FROST AND SAULO COLÓN

RAVEN RAKIA IS A JOURNALIST based in New York City. Her work is usually focused on cities, police, and prisons, and she has been published in the *Nation* magazine, VICE, Gothamist, Truth-Out, Medium.com's MATTER, and *The New Inquiry*. You can follow her work at @aintacrow. She was interviewed by email by Amber Lee Frost and Saulo Colón. Frost is a writer and musician in Brooklyn, on the National Political Committee of Democratic Socialists of America, and a contributor to *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Legacy* (2013). Colón is on the editorial board of *New Politics*.

New Politics: Working as a freelance journalist, you've covered several protests from Bushwick in Brooklyn to Ferguson in recent years. The perception of black protests is often that of spontaneous eruptions, but considering their role as responses to police terror, they're also an effective way for people to agitate against injustice. As formal labor union and electoral channels for political expression erode, do you think protests like these can lead to a new way of doing politics?

Raven Rakia: Yes, definitely. I think Ferguson showed that [a combination of] disruptive protests, riots, and property destruction is actually incredibly effective when trying to change how your community or government operates. But I often think there's a push for outrage ("why aren't people angry?!") but not a push for political education and strategic conversations on what we want to see and how we can see it. There are freedom schools and militancy trainings popping up in places that haven't seen something like that in a long time. They have mostly been under the media radar—which of

course isn't a bad thing. Surveillance education and privacy trainings in black communities would be super-useful right now (or five years ago).

I think the protests we've been seeing lately have an anti-colonial and anti-institutional streak to them, which means they're digging deeper than what electoral politics and unions can. Unions have an interesting history in the black community, but the economic organizing that is playing out right now is incredibly exciting—especially when it intersects with prisons and police. People and groups working in prisons (like the Free Alabama Movement, the Free Mississippi Movement, [those working in] the Texas immigrant prisons, and the IWW in Missouri's prisons) are organizing and pushing for work strikes and doing an inside-outside strategy. I think a lot of people forget this, but oftentimes hunger strikes in prisons are coupled with work strikes as well. The Free Alabama and Free Mississippi movements were founded by people inside prisons in those states and are barely a year old. Five years from now we'll be seeing some very interesting things.

NP: You have said that "broken windows" is a theory and strategy based on racial fears and white supremacy. You have also written about the military origins of stop-and-frisk as targeting insurgents, first used in 1960s riots in black communities. Others have also written about how police and prisons are not about crime but about control. What is it that you think is being feared and being controlled?

RR: From the beginning, there has been a need to control the black population, first in order to keep them as the slave class—and afterwards

as the black underclass. In order to keep any underclass from threatening the elite's wealth or burning the whole thing down, there needs to be some abusive and strict system of control in place. Right now, part of that system of control is policing and prisons.

*NP: You make an argument about people as property, using the idea of an "invisible cage" from Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow* (2010). For example you say that parole turns people into state property. We know capitalism was*

To keep any underclass from threatening the elite there needs to be some abusive and strict system of control in place. That system is policing and prisons.

built on the backs and commodification of human labor. Are we regressing to earlier forms of surplus labor control?

RR: I'm not sure if we're regressing as much as we haven't really progressed away from them that much. I didn't live during different periods of social control so I can't really say if they felt any different, but it seems to be that white supremacy and our capitalist system regurgitate themselves in different ways as soon as one way becomes "unacceptable."

NP: Can you explain what you mean by "school to prison pipeline" and "debtors prison," and their role in fueling protests?

RR: There are many different factors of the school to prison pipeline, but in general it's the process of mass school suspensions for often minor infractions as well as the practice of calling in law enforcement for minor details. It's also the reality that schools are operating more and

more like prisons. And this is in both public schools and charter schools. A lot of people try to critique charter schools for their discipline practices, as they should because they're often horrible. But public schools around the country, especially those with large black populations, have awful discipline practices. For example, they have policies to always call law enforcement for school conflicts, that's if they don't have law enforcement employed at their school on a daily basis dealing with conflict—which many do. Many schools, public and charter alike, have been built and operate now like prisons, which is not an accident: They're another institution for social control.

Debtors' prisons are jails and prisons that more explicitly criminalize poverty. All prisons and jails are criminalizing poverty in this country, but debtors' prisons criminalize people outright who can't pay for bills or fines by a specific time. In St. Louis, protesters often described their punitive school system and their municipal court system when they talked about why they were out protesting. They saw them as part of a system that feeds off their community.

NP: Can you also discuss the connection you make between gentrification and policing?

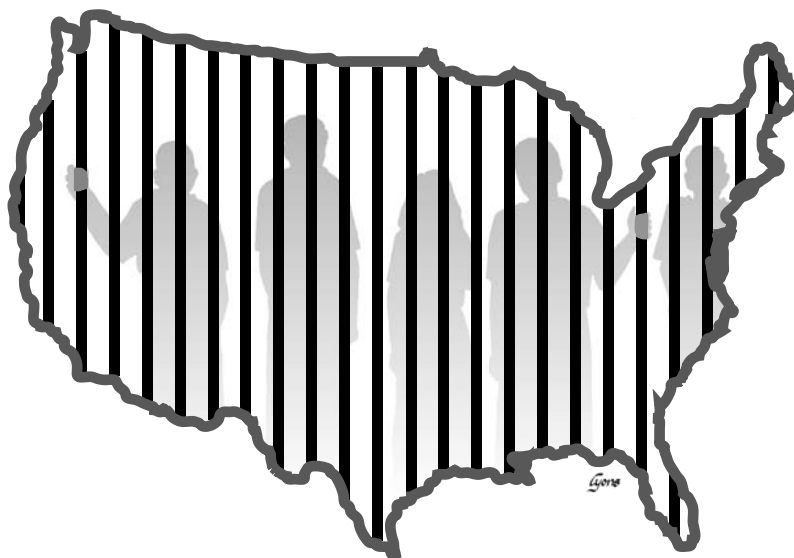
RR: New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton is always bragging about property rates and how his broken-windows policing brings up property rates in those neighborhoods. And he's right—because broken-windows policing harasses people until they no longer want to live there or don't want to come outside, and then rich, white people feel more comfortable there, and so property rates go up. So some New York neighborhoods—such as Bushwick, Williamsburg, and Fort Greene—with the highest rent increases in the past ten years are also the places with the highest stop-and-frisk numbers and the highest arrest numbers for petty crimes. It's a two-step approach: One, kick people out economically via rent increases, and two, kick people out through physical and mental abuse

via evictions, police, and imprisonment.

NP: After writing about the tension in recent protests between protesters and “peacekeepers” (usually religious and/or community leaders colluding with the police), what do you think this means for current and future black leadership? Is this a parallel to the political divide between a more limited civil rights view and the more liberatory views of Malcolm X and Black Power movements?

RR: I actually think most of the peacekeepers were to the right of the civil rights ideology. They didn’t want people protesting at all. They wanted everyone to go home—some even said what everyone needs to do is find a good church and start praying. They’re the equivalent of the people back in the day who thought protesting Jim Crow wasn’t worth it, and everyone should just get on with their lives. Now, within the protesters there were people who held a civil rights view and people who held more of a Black Power ideology. Especially in New York, we see people like the Justice League at least trying to market themselves as a new civil rights movement—whether or not they live up to [Martin Luther King] and [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]’s organizing—and then there are more grassroots groups in New York taking from Malcolm X, Ella Baker, the [Black Panther Party], and Claudia Jones.

NP: Could you evaluate the role of organizations like Peoples Justice and Copwatch in developing a movement against police and prisons and discuss how they see the control of certain populations as central to capitalism? What about newer organiza-



tions like Black Youth Project and Dream Defenders (after Trayvon Martin) and Hands Up United, Lost Voices, and Freedom Fighters?

RR: People’s Justice uses the strategy of Copwatch. They’ve trained teams in every borough in how to “copwatch” with the main goals being building a community of resistance and care as well as recording cop interactions to 1) make the cops change how they interact with people and 2) help support people with their court cases. And it works—oftentimes cops can’t get away with lying on police reports because there’s video evidence, and cases get thrown out because of it. Copwatch is a great strategy and it can be incredibly effective when there’s community engagement and organizing happening on the hyperlocal level. A neighborhood where people know their neighbors, where people look out for each other, and where people are often hanging outside and building bonds with each other is a neighborhood where copwatch will be the most effective.

These newer national groups like Black Youth Project and Dream Defenders tend to focus on more issues than just police violence and often have campaigns around labor justice

and gun violence. I'm still waiting to see more of their campaigns and how they develop over the years. I personally believe more-local organizations are more effective.

I'm still waiting to hear more about the political ideology and strategy behind Hands Up United, Lost Voices, and Freedom Fight-

Some New York neighborhoods with the highest rent increases in the past ten years are also the places with the highest stop-and-frisk numbers.

ers—and they might be still working through it themselves. But most of these groups have been formed from people living the realities of the black working class in St. Louis, people who found themselves and each other in Ferguson in August and are starting to organize.

NP: The role of black women activists has historically been central, but is often overlooked. Yet recently black women—often openly queer black women—have played a more publicly recognized leadership role. Why do you think this is?

RR: The black women who were overlooked were often the most radical and were pushing for a complete overhaul of structure, governance, and society. Many, like Ella Baker, Assata Shakur, and Claudia Jones, were challenging hierarchy and power—not only in mainstream white society but also within black and left movements. I believe this, along with misogyny, is the reason why they are and were overlooked—their proposals not only threatened to take power away from the elite, but also from

men within the movement.

Now, we'll see where things go. Black woman who were mothers of police victims have often been pushed to the center but usually in disingenuous and damn-near manipulative ways. This time around seems to be different, women seem to be getting more attention—and definitely so if they're doing the activities that are often in the limelight. I still think movements diminish and even mock labor that is seen as more "femme" or "women"-type labor that occurs behind the scenes, like education or care work within movements, when really that labor is imperative for movements to continue.

My main concern is that there's often a pressure to compromise to the mainstream when you're in the limelight, which can water things down—but there are black women getting attention now who are doing, and have been doing, great things, such as Opal Tometi of Black Lives Matter and Black Alliance for Just Immigration. Another concern of mine is whether or not pushing women into the limelight and praising their work will actually lead to a change in power dynamics within movements. My gut tells me it won't, but we'll see what happens, and acknowledging some of their work is definitely a step in the right direction.

NP: Would you like to give us a preview of projects you're working on now?

RR: I'm working on a long-form reported piece about the intersections of environmental racism and prisons that will be out in June. And I've started doing research for projects on public housing, criminalizing truancy, trans people's experience in prison, and Facebook surveillance of "gang activity," among others. I've also been following the reform measures happening at Rikers Island jail in the Bronx and will be writing about that soon.

Revolutionary Black Nationalism for the Twenty-first Century

An Interview With Kali Akuno

RIAD AZAR AND SAULO COLÓN

KALI AKUNO SERVED AS THE COORDINATOR of special projects and external funding for Jackson Mississippi's late Mayor Chokwe Lumumba. He is co-founder and director of Cooperation Jackson as well as an organizer with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. He was interviewed by email by Riad Azar and Saulo Colón, both members of the *New Politics* editorial board.

New Politics: Kali, part of your work and that of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) has been strategically and organizationally focused on the South. Can you explain the thinking behind this and also how it connects to your understanding of the specificity of the South (especially due to its changing demographics because of the recent migrations of Latino workers) in terms of capitalist power and racism?

Kali Akuno: First and foremost, it is critical to understand that the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is a revolutionary nationalist organization that is part of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. Revolutionary nationalism is a left-wing variant of nationalism, practiced by colonized and oppressed peoples, that seeks to liberate them from the yoke of their colonizers and oppressors and replace the capitalist-imperialist social order imposed upon them with a socialist social system. The New Afrikan Independence Movement is a multi-tendency movement struggling to liberate the southeastern portion of the so-called mainland territories now colonized by the United States government. The New Afrikan Independence

Movement recognizes that territories it is claiming for its national territory rightfully belong to the indigenous nations of Turtle Island, and makes no claims that supersede their just claims. However, our aim is to unite with indigenous peoples and with other oppressed peoples throughout the United States empire and break the back of white supremacy and the settler-colonial project through a unified anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist struggle. So, it is critical to understand MXGM, and its parent organization, the New Afrikan People's Organization, and their commitment to the South in this context.

It is also critical to understand the economic and political role of the South within the colonial-imperial framework of the United States government. Since the defeat of the Confederacy, the South has largely operated as an internal colony from which cheap natural resources and labor could be readily drawn. This strategic site of super-exploitation provided critical capital accumulation and other developmental competitive advantages to the U.S. settler-colonial project in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that played a critical role in the ascendancy of U.S. imperialism on a global scale later in the twentieth century. And given the structural acknowledgement of colonialism and slavery within the U.S. political framework—specifically the creation of the electoral college, the unrepresentative Senate, and the limited number of congressional districts—the South has always played a disproportionate

role in determining the overall politics of the empire. The South typically plays a decisive role in deciding the presidency and the makeup of the Congress, bending both toward right-wing

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settler-colonialism. This historic reality is what gives rise to the phrase, “as the South goes, so goes the nation.”

The changing demographics of the South, from our point of view, are a welcome phenomenon, in that they offer an opportunity to radically transform the South and the United States overall. In some respects, part of the rapid growth in the Latino population can be viewed as a re-indigenization of the Southeast and U.S.-held portions of North America. Overall this growth potentially weakens the base of white supremacy in the South. We say “potentially” because there is no guarantee that large numbers of Latinos won’t seek to be assimilated and incorporated into the white population, following patterns pursued by southern European immigrant communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There have to be a lot of mutual and intentional unity-building efforts between Blacks and Latinos in order for the transformative potential of this historical development to be realized. Revolutionaries of all nationalities, races, and ethnicities in the South have a decisive role to play in calling for and forging this unity.

NP: A founder and leading member of MXGM, Chokwe Lumumba (who unfortunately and unexpectedly passed away in 2014) was elected Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi. Part of his political work

and the organizing behind his campaign was the Peoples Assemblies. Can you explain what they are, where the idea came from, and how they are functioning now?

KA: I would refer people to three works that tackle this question more deeply, these include the “Jackson-Kush Plan” (see navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2012/05/the-jackson-kush-plan-and-struggle-for.html), the “People’s Assembly Overview” (see navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2014/11/peoples-assemblies-overview-jackson.html), and “Casting Shadows” (see www.rosalux-nyc.org/en/casting-shadows).

But, in brief, the People’s Assembly is a form of democratic social organization that allows people to exercise their agency, exert their power, and practice democracy in its broadest terms, entailing making direct decisions about the economic, social, and cultural operations of our community, and not just the contractual or electoral and legislative aspects of the social order. The germinating source of the Assembly comes, in the final analysis, from our people’s desire to exercise self-determination.

The People’s Assembly draws from many sources and traditions, going back to the Negro Conventions of the nineteenth century, which were very influential in Mississippi in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the mass meetings of the 1950s and 1960s that fueled the civil rights movement in the state. They also draw heavily on international experiences that include everything from the Paris Commune to the People’s Assemblies in Guinea-Bissau in the 1960s and 1970s, to the Zapatista Assemblies of the 1990s on.

The People’s Assembly is starting to regroup and expand its horizons since the electoral defeat of the deceased mayor’s son, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, in April 2014. It is still debating and assimilating the critical lessons from the last three years and is consciously working to incorporate these into its work to be a more effective instrument of dual power

in Jackson going forward. The primary thing the Assembly is working on now is defeating the effort being led by white reactionary forces in the metropolitan region to seize control of Jackson's water system, either by regionalizing its control board or privatizing it.

NP: The People's Assembly seems to intentionally encourage, and build upon, an anti-racist consciousness that can arise through participatory practices and the building of solidarity between diverse communities. Can you explain the political strategy of people's assemblies and your evaluation of them as mechanisms of popular democracy? Also, how would you compare them to the General Assembly that was part of Occupy?

KA: This is an excellent, but complex question. First, it should be known that national/racial diversity is rather limited in Jackson. Jackson is 80 percent Black, and more than 90 percent of the participants in our Assembly are Black. The greatest expression of diversity in the Assembly is class diversity. The overwhelming number of participants is drawn from the various sectors of the working class. But, there are a fair number of participants that hail from the Black petit bourgeoisie, namely small business owners and professionals (lawyers, doctors, and so on).

By weight of its membership, the Assembly has a working-class character, but it does strategically try to represent a broad multi-class people's front. The reason is that its power is ultimately constrained by the forces of white supremacy that control the economy of Jackson and the statewide political apparatus. White supremacy is still very visceral and apparent in this state, and that creates the imperative for multi-class political forces amongst the Black community in Mississippi.

There are more differences than similarities between the General Assembly of Occupy and the People's Assembly of Jackson. Occupy, at its best, was a classic example of a mass assembly. These types of assemblies are normally short-lived phenomena that emerge during times of

acute crisis. Occupy was a product of the acute crisis of 2008, prompted by the bursting of the housing bubble that shook Wall Street and international financial markets. The Jackson Assembly, on the other hand, was intentionally built to last and to address the long-term systemic crisis of white supremacy, colonial subjugation, and capitalist exploitation that confronts Black people in the city of Jackson. As such, it is more of a representational assembly at this point in time, and its leadership, the People's Task Force, is clear that the participation of the masses can and will fluctuate over time. But, the commitment to direct democracy, I believe, is ultimately shared by both.

NP: The assemblies also foster alternative economic models outside the logic of capital, specifically Cooperation Jackson where you currently work. Could you discuss how this model of cooperative economics has been practiced in Black communities and how they connect to your vision of Black Liberation and economic emancipation?

KA: To gain a deeper knowledge of how cooperative economics has been employed in Black communities, I would encourage everyone to read Jessica Gordon Nembhard's book, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Action*. It's a must read.

Cooperation Jackson is a vehicle to advance and execute the vision of economic democracy and transformation contained within the Jackson-Kush Plan. Cooperation Jackson is an emerging vehicle for sustainable community development, economic democracy, and community ownership. Cooperation Jackson is working to develop a cooperative network in Jackson that will consist of four interconnected and interdependent institutions: an emerging federation of local worker cooperatives, a developing-cooperative incubator, a cooperative education and training center (called the Chokwe Lumumba Center for Economic Democracy and Development), and a cooperative financial

institution. To learn more about Cooperation Jackson visit www.CooperationJackson.org.

Now, it is critical to note that while cooperatives have a long history within the Black community, particularly in Mississippi, there are two things that make Cooperation Jackson's experiment unique. First, it is largely an opera-

The disaster after Hurricane Katrina exposed that the U.S. government was politically willing to discard Black people en masse.

tion to start a network of predominantly worker cooperatives, and, second, it is in an urban setting. Working in urban environments has been limited in the South, and worker cooperatives have been very limited in the South. So, we are treading on some new ground and there will be a great deal of experimentation over the course of the coming years and decades in our work.

The drive to build cooperatives is first and foremost driven by the need to break the back of the white-controlled paternalistic capitalism that exists in Mississippi. On a deeper level, however, it is an effort to create economic democracy in our city and the state and to facilitate a just transition from the agricultural, extractive economy that dominates our local economy (and that of the world). Our people are clear that they no longer want to be the "speaking tools" of capitalist exploitation and are seeking creative ways to end this psychotic system.

NP: Could you talk about the role of MXGM and other similar organizations in supporting and helping to build the movement that has developed since Ferguson? Please also discuss the impact of the report Operation Ghetto Storm that your organization released in 2012 and 2013.

KA: There is a spontaneous side and a historic

buildup side to the current reawakening of the Black Liberation Movement that has emerged in the wake of the Ferguson rebellion.

MXGM without question has played a central role in the historic buildup over the past twenty years, but particularly the past ten years. I think we have to look at the current reawakening as a response to the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina. The disaster in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina exposed that the U.S. government was politically willing to discard Black people en masse, particularly those sectors of the Black working class that have largely become surplus and superfluous to the cycle of capitalist production in the United States. Black radical consciousness, I argue, has been gradually transforming and advancing in the wake of this catastrophe in qualitative ways. If we look back critically, we see a pattern of Black mass resistance that emerged in 2006 - 2007 and that started with the movement to defend the Jena 6. This pattern of mass outrage and mobilization continued and advanced after the extrajudicial killing of Oscar Grant in 2009 and has remained consistent in various ways since (Trayvon Martin, Kimani Gray, on down).

Operation Ghetto Storm (better known as the *Every 28 Hours Report*), I believe, laid a solid foundation for the reawakening that we are experiencing now. It revealed the extent to which Black people are considered disposable by the state and started a dialogue regarding what we can and must do about it. Unfortunately, most of the analyses, demands, and program that were contained in that work and its supporting works, including "Let Your Motto Be Resistance" (see mxgm.org/let-your-motto-be-resistance-a-handbook-on-organizing-new-afrikan-and-oppressed-communities-for-self-defense/) and "We Charge Genocide Again" (see mxgm.org/we-charge-genocide-again-new-curriculum-on-every-28-hours-report/), have not yet been fully digested by the movement. But this is part and parcel of the ideological and political struggle that takes place within any mass move-

ment. Going forward, it is critical that MXGM and organizations like it struggle with the masses to get them to understand that the U.S. settler-colonial project is beyond reform and that the capitalist-imperialist world system must be transformed and overcome and replaced by a new social system that respects the limits of the Earth's productive capacities if our species is going to survive.

NP: The most well-known expression coming out of this movement has been "Black Lives Matter," which shares an acronym with the Black Liberation Movement. How would you describe this movement in terms of civil and human rights versus revolutionary Black Nationalism? What does Black Nationalism mean in the context of neoliberal capitalism and the fact that the United States will be majority minority at some point?

KA: Black Lives Matter must be understood as a multi-tendency formation and budding movement. In my opinion it should be contrasted with the Black Liberation Movement, but must be seen as an expression of this long movement. Black Lives Matter, as both organization and movement, is still growing and still defining itself. It has developed some demands, but these are still very much in flux and advancing (or contracting, depending on chapter and context, as I understand it) with each passing day, and each emerging location of struggle—as can be seen from its recent responses to the Baltimore rebellion. Its most distinguishing feature and contribution to date, I think, has been an elevation and highlighting of women's and queer struggles within the Black community. In this regard it is simultaneously an internal challenge to the community itself as well as an external challenge to the society at large, both of which are needed.

Now, Black Lives Matter as an organization has radical leadership, who I know are all committed anti-capitalists and anti-imperialists. However, moving the organization and the movement in this direction is going to be a

struggle and it is going to take some time. The overall weakness of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist movements in the United States means that the broad base that the organization is drawing from has little experience with these radical ideologies and social systems. We've confronted this limitation within MXGM for over 25 years, so we know the challenges. But, this is a new moment where folks are learning more in a few days than most typically learn in decades. So, one shouldn't discount where this movement might land in terms of its politics and ideology. It's too premature to do that.

That said, the movement is contending with the dominant accommodationist tendency that exists within Black politics. The organization and the movement have had to contend with efforts to distort and water down the meaning of the slogan and with its appropriation to advance narrow demands by many of the established civil rights groups. How the organization and the

It should be made clear that it is the revolutionary nationalist tradition that has carried the banner of human rights within the Black Liberation movement.

movement deals with this struggle will be telling, because the pull of the accommodationist forces and the capitalist and Democratic Party forces that back them is very, very strong. All I can say is that for my part, I'm going to continue engaging and encouraging this organization, and the many organizations that developed since the Ferguson rebellion, to adopt revolutionary ideology and politics and not become appendages of the Democratic Party.

Now, on the second part of your question, I think it should be made clear that it

is the revolutionary nationalist tradition that has carried the banner of human rights within the long Black Liberation Movement. The civil rights and accommodationist tendencies fundamentally jettisoned the struggle for human rights in the early 1950s, when they succumbed to anti-Communist “red-scare” politics and made a Faustian bargain with the United States government for the limited degree of civil and political rights the settler-ruling class was prepared to offer. This narrowed the struggles for self-determination and economic, social, and cultural rights, and we are living with and trying to overcome the horrible outcomes of this bargain now.

Now, the question regarding the relationship between Black Nationalism and neoliberalism is complex, one that would take several volumes to satisfactorily address. But, let me say this, that as with all nationalist movements, there are left, right, and center tendencies. Some of the more right-leaning nationalist tendencies have accommodated themselves to the logic and imperatives of neoliberalism quite comfortably. In fact, it supports certain long-standing but narrow calls for Black capitalism, in the form of promoting types of Black ownership and businesses that only foster and create capitalist formations. It also expresses itself socially, for example, in calls for things, like private schools and even charter schools, that don’t seek to serve an anti-colonial or anti-imperialist agenda, but merely a variant ethnic or racial self-interest.

The revolutionary nationalist tradition understands neoliberalism to be another form of capitalist accumulation and imperialist domination and vehemently opposes it. But, the ascendancy of neoliberalism has seriously undermined the revolutionary nationalist movement in a number of ways, and the movement still has not adequately addressed its weaknesses in the face of this ideological, political, and social onslaught. And if we don’t get a grip on this, the changing demographics will count for nothing transformative, as the system will adeptly pit

one people against another people, one working class sector against another, and each individual against all. So, we have some major, major work to do on this front.

NP: Could you discuss the impact of past World and U.S. Social forums on the development of current movement work, as well as give an update on the upcoming social forum in the summer of 2015 and its people’s movement assembly?

KA: To be honest, at first the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement was not too excited by the World Social Forum (WSF). We thought it was too liberal and possibly a distraction from the growing anti-globalization movement that was emerging on the scene when the WSF first got started in 2000. Initially we were much more invested in more explicitly anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist international movements and convergences like the International League of People’s Struggles, which emerged slightly before it.

Overall, our assessment of the WSF being very liberal hasn’t changed, but our stance on engagement has. The shift for us was Hurricane Katrina and the recognition that our people and our movement had entered into a new historic phase relative to the systems of white supremacy, U.S. colonial subjugation, and imperialism: a phase of disposal. To try and counter this we figured that we needed to galvanize the broadest possible level of support for our people and our movement, and the WSF was one of many venues to do that.

Now, overall, I think the WSF played a tremendous role in facilitating linkages between social movements throughout the world in the 2000s, particularly in the absence of radical international forces such as the Communist International and the demise of the movements linking the radical national liberation and socialist movements that existed in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, with formations like the non-aligned movement, the tri-continental movement, the movement for a new international economic

order, and so on. This contribution cannot be discounted or diminished.

But, there are many questions as to whether the convergence model employed by the WSF

The U.S. settler-colonial project is beyond reform and the capitalist-imperialist world system must be transformed and replaced.

and its regional and national expressions, like the U.S. Social Forum, can lead to the necessary movement coherence that is needed to eliminate capitalism and the ever-growing threat of climate change and ecocide. The 2015 U.S. Social Forum is an effort to change the model to facilitate concentrated dialogue about movement coherence. But, the organizing process for this forum has confronted many challenges, some due to perceived sectarianism (real or imagined), more drawn from concerns about what premature notions of coherence might mean (or damage), and some drawn from the fear of funders about what a genuine left force in the United States might foster. Time will tell.

In Jackson, Cooperation Jackson is engaging the 2015 U.S. Social Forum by hosting a Southern-oriented People's Movement Assembly focused on a just transition. This Assembly is part of the Climate Justice Alliance's Our Power Campaign's "Summer of Our Power" (see www.ourpowercampaign.org). The People's Movement Assembly is going to be held on Friday, June 26 through Sunday, June 28, 2015, at the Chokwe Lumumba Center for Economic Democracy and Development, located at 939 W. Capitol Street, Jackson, Mississippi 39203.

NP: Could you introduce Grassroots Global Justice Alliance? What's does GGJ do and why?

KA: MXGM is a proud member of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and has been a member since 2006. GGJ is celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year (2015).

GGJ was initially born to facilitate the participation of U.S.-based grassroots organizations with the WSF. Its aim was to further the development of grassroots internationalism between forces in the United States and those in the global South. It has remained true to this mission, but has steadily enhanced the mission—and its vision—since 2005. There are now nearly 70 organizations in the alliance, and it is now key to the grassroots struggle against climate change in the U.S. and recently facilitated the start of the first U.S.-based chapter of the World March of Women. So, GGJ is on the move. For more information about GGJ visit ggjalliance.org.

NP: What's your view of the politics of solidarity in the United States in light of these assemblies and forums, as well as the increase in direct action protests by diverse allies responding to their understanding of their role in, and critiques by, Black-led movements?

KA: In short, the growth of these activities is good, and the politics of solidarity is advancing by leaps and bounds. But by no means has it grown deep or broad enough for it to be transformative yet. We still have a long way to go to build the strength needed to transform the United States, meaning the end of its colonial domination of North America and its imperialist grip on the rest of the world and ending the capitalist system and the threat of climate change. We can't settle for easy victories where we know there is far more work to be done.

“Black Lives Matter”

Constructing a New Civil Rights and Black Freedom Movement

FRANCIS SHOR

RAISING THE SLOGAN OF “Black Lives Matter,” protests have erupted across the United States. Behind this slogan is a proliferation of new organizations and networks composed of engaged millennial activists of color. On one level, it might appear that what is being constructed is an effort to address the lack of civil rights protections for African Americans. Yet, in the articulations of goals and objectives, it also seems that this is another wave in a long struggle for black freedom. In identifying the politics and potential of these formations, one can detect elements of both a civil rights and a black freedom movement.

Many of these formations have utilized social media to mobilize large numbers of young people, primarily in protest against police killings of blacks. While social media facilitate quick, intense, and extensive protests, such tools contribute to the often transitory nature of these events, as with the Occupy demonstrations.¹ Nonetheless, these organizations and networks are committed to eradicating racial injustices around a wide variety of issues. As Darsheel Kaur, a community organizer with the Ohio Student Association, contends:

It’s more than just police brutality. It’s about systems in place that continue to devalue the lives of black and brown people in different aspects, including the prison industrial complex, economic and food systems, the housing

market, voting rights. The energy that came together as this movement is a collective energy that has been building up through frustration about these many issues.²

On the other hand, the most visible protests that galvanized the civil rights agenda of the movement can be traced to a number of incidents of police and vigilante murder of young African Americans. Some view the killing of 19-year-old Oscar Grant in Oakland, California, by a transit cop on January 1, 2009, as a signal event. As Grant lay pinned on the ground, the white officer deliberately shot him in the back. Caught on cellphones and quickly going viral, the killing inspired angry and militant demonstrations that also became a national story. While the transit officer was indicted and found guilty of involuntary manslaughter, his lawyer convinced the jury, which included no African Americans, that the cop had mistakenly pulled out his gun instead of a Taser. He was released after serving only 20 months. (The story of Oscar Grant was later made into a brilliant and gripping film, *Fruitvale Station*.)

More of a catalyst to this national network was the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, who was eventually acquitted of manslaughter charges. As noted by Dante Barry, a digital organizer with the Center for Media Justice and director of Million Hoodies Movement for Justice,

Our organization, Million Hoodies, was founded in large part due to the failure of the media to adequately report on the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012. It took a full month before it became national news. Local media didn’t want to report it, and context around the details

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concerning Trayvon's death weren't highlighted. Million Hoodies used social media to mobilize, amplify, and empower folks to take action.³

Another organization established in the immediate aftermath of the acquittal of George Zimmerman was #BlackLivesMatter. According to Alicia Garza, a Bay Area queer activist of color and special projects director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance,

#BlackLivesMatter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black, and buy Black, keeping straight [cisgender] Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans, and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. #BlackLivesMatter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum.⁴

Indeed, Garza's vision of the transformative role that her organization and others play is profoundly revolutionary. "When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free," she says.⁵

Garza, along with the other young organizers of color, recognizes that the movement they are trying to build is one that can learn from the past social movements while adopting new strategies that conform to current-day insights, especially those that emphasize intersectionality, or the interpenetration of race, gender, and class. As noted by Darsheel Kaur, "Intersectional organizing means creating spaces where we can bring all of our identities into the space."⁶ Within that intersectional space, the emphasis is on participatory democracy and group-centered leadership along the lines of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) from the 1960s.

Certainly, one of the formative influences on

these new millennial generation organizations and their group-centered leadership was Ella Baker, a key mentor to SNCC. A former organizer for the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Baker helped establish SNCC in 1960 in the aftermath of the waves of sit-ins that mobilized mostly African-American students in the South. Having worked for SCLC with its male-dominated, hierarchical structure, Baker wanted to break "with the largely middle-class male-centered leadership of existing civil rights organizations, in order to strip away the class-based and gender-based notion of who should and could give leadership to the movement and black community."⁷

Just as SNCC often came into conflict with the older generation of civil rights leaders and organizations, so some of the millennials of the new movement have confronted elements of the civil rights establishment. During Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network's march in Washington DC on December 13, 2014, to protest police killings of black youth, several organizers from Ferguson, angry at the exclusion of young people like themselves from speaking, charged the stage. When they tried to speak, the microphones were turned off even as others in the crowd held signs saying, "We, the youth, did not elect Al Sharpton our Spokesperson." Other Ferguson organizers who didn't attend the march also took umbrage at Sharpton's generational and class exclusiveness. "It was people like me who came out to march in Ferguson," asserted Tory Russell, organizer of the St. Louis-area group *Hands Up United*. "I didn't see no suits, I didn't see no NAACP or National Action Network. It was people like me—poor black people—out there."⁸

Moreover, just as President Kennedy tried to cool down and co-opt the young activists of SNCC during the Freedom Rides of 1961 by meeting with a few of them, so President Obama gathered a group of post-Ferguson activists at the White House in December 2014. According to Ashley Yates of *Millennial Activists*

United, Obama seemed genuinely concerned about the issues raised at the meeting. On the other hand, Yates noted, other administration officials “seemed like they were trying to quell the streets,” even as they touted some reformist measures like funding body cameras for police departments. Yet, Yates recognizes the efficacy of her group’s own protests, from die-ins to targeted civil disobedience, as well as the historical connections with the past civil rights movement. She concluded, “The day we met with the president was December 1—it was the 59th anniversary of Rosa Parks not getting up from her seat. We definitely realize that we’re standing on the shoulders of the people who came before us.”⁹

But will the die-ins and other protest activities of this new movement have the efficacy of the older movement? Do the new movement centers of the virtual world from #BlackLivesMatter to the Million Hoodies Movement have the same staying power as those Southern movement centers from the long civil rights movement, such as the Highland Folk School in Tennessee or Tougaloo College in Mississippi? If the new movement, as Dante Barry argues, “is about transforming power structures,” what are the strategic levers that they will use to implement that transformation?¹⁰

‘Resistance Matters’

Perhaps it is enough that these young activists of color have cast a brilliant light on the racial inequities of the criminal justice system. Hence, from Charles Blow’s perspective, “In the same way that Occupy Wall Street forever elevated that concept of income inequality, the Black Lives Matter protestors have elevated the idea of inequity in policing as it relates to minority communities.”¹¹ On the other hand, the goals of this new movement, like those of Occupy, which seem so inchoate, are so far-reaching and multifaceted that a single issue, like racist police brutality, is too narrow a focus, albeit a compelling and immediate one. Indeed, it may be that

a more sweeping focus on what critics like Michelle Alexander, Heather Thompson, and Marie Gottschalk, among others, call the “carceral state” is essential to the advocacy of transformative politics. As a system of punitive power that incarcerates millions of people of color and the poor, marginalizing them, their families, and communities, the carceral state results in what Gottschalk refers to as “civil death.”¹² Hence, the absolute need for restorative justice for people of color, especially those in the African-American community who have been disproportionately punished by the carceral state.

While police brutality has not been limited to the African-American community, it remains a visible thread of deeply woven structures underlying racial injustice. As made very clear in the Department of Justice (DOJ) report on Ferguson policing and the court system, African Americans in that community were singled-out for a wide variety of punitive policies, from police and police-dog attacks to endless and expensive court citations. The DOJ report cites instance after instance of the violation of First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights of the black citizens of Ferguson, reflective of clear patterns of racial bias.

While the DOJ report supports arguments for a civil rights agenda, it also underscores the fact that without massive demonstrations following the murder of Michael Brown and the failure to indict Darren Wilson, such a report may not have even been issued, especially in light of many other examples of lethal police action against African Americans and Latinos. Given the report’s focus on the denial of constitutional protections for the African American citizens of Ferguson, it is instructive that the DOJ has never bothered to investigate or condemn violations of rights, especially the Fourth Amendment right against unwarranted searches, of the millions of blacks and Latinos subjected to “stop-and-frisk” policies in New York City. Although struck down in court and abandoned by Mayor DeBlasio, the erratic role of the federal government and the Obama administration in dealing with racial

justice issues highlights the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement.

As Robin Kelley has argued regarding these movements led by African-American organizers in Ferguson and around the country:

They remind us not only that Black lives matter—that should be self-evident—but that resistance matters. It matters because we are still grappling with the consequences of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and patriarchy. ... The young people of Ferguson continue to struggle with ferocity, not just to get justice for Mike Brown or to end police misconduct, but to dismantle racism once and for all.¹³

Understanding of the necessity of such a black-led movement now, Alicia Garza connects this movement to the black freedom and liberation movements of the past. “It is appropriate and necessary to have strategy and action centered around Blackness,” Garza contends,

without other non-Black communities of color, or White folks for that matter, needing to find a place and a way to center themselves within it. It is appropriate and necessary for us to acknowledge the critical role that Black lives and struggles for Black liberation have played in inspiring and anchoring, through practice and theory, social movements for the liberation of all people. The women’s movement, the Chicano liberation movement, queer movements, and many more have adopted strategies, tactics, and theory of the Black liberation movement. And if we are committed to a world where all lives matter, we are called to support the very movement that inspired and activated so many more. That means supporting and acknowledging Black lives.¹⁴

Ideological and Structural Impediments

Foregrounding the significance of black lives in this historical moment still faces obvious difficulties and resistance. Among those resisting the slogan of “Black Lives Matter” are those whites who counter that “All Lives Matter,” assuming that African Americans, in a supposedly post-racial America, are no longer in need of specifically targeted policies that confront the

persistence of racial injustices. As pointed out by Judith Butler, those who assert “All Lives Matter”

misunderstand the problem, but not because their message is untrue. It is true that all lives matter, but it is equally true that not all lives are understood to matter, which is precisely why it is important to name the lives that have not mattered and are struggling to matter in a way they deserve.¹⁵

Another major impediment, not just ideological but structural, that these young activists confront is the role of neoliberalism in the economic and political policies of the state. Whereas the 1960s civil rights movement achieved its political victories in a era of an expanding welfare state and democratic rights, that state and those rights have been massively eroded by neoliberalism and its penchant for privatization and corporate, rather than government, solutions. Added to this are the attacks on the public sector and its unions, which have been sites for the advancement of African Americans and women. Furthermore, as noted by critics of the carceral state, it was not a coincidence that mass imprisonment really emerged with a vengeance in the 1970s as a way to punish those radical challenges by blacks and others to the dominant power structure. Just as neoliberalism was gaining ascendancy in the 1980s, so the carceral state further embedded its insidious punitive policies.

Certainly, seeking fundamental racial justice in this era requires both a new civil rights and black a freedom movement. On the other hand, as Malcolm X argued in the 1960s, demanding civil rights may be too constraining when the larger issue of needing fundamental human, economic, and political rights seems even more necessary now. That necessity reflects a late stage of capitalism in the United States that may be consigning the majority of African Americans to a permanent marginalization, treating them no longer as viable producers or consumers, but rather as surplus humanity. The insistence, then, that “Black Lives Matter” becomes compelling not only as a neces-

sary transformative social movement but also as an essential struggle for survival, a survival that is only meaningful if it is rooted in freedom.

It was that insistence on “Freedom Now” that the civil rights movement of the 1960s drove into the national conscience and agenda, albeit in the midst of myriad contradictions. One of the most profound discussions of the contradictions of achieving freedom is James Baldwin’s masterful essay, *The Fire Next Time*. Written during the civil rights movement with its critical challenge to white supremacy, Baldwin also ruminates on the national myths that sustain not only white supremacy but also an illusory sense of innocence among the white citizenry of the country, an innocence still embraced by large segments of the white community. Baldwin, however, believes, along with Sam Cooke, that a “change is gonna come.” For Baldwin, the change we seek is not a “change ... on the surface but in the depths.” That change, nonetheless, “becomes impossible if one supposes things to be constant that are not.”¹⁶

During the arduous and lengthy struggle for civil rights in that time, the hard work of overcoming racial oppression in the economic, political, and personal spheres required many sacrifices while encountering numerous setbacks. An example of those minor setbacks was the acquittal by an Oxford, Mississippi, federal jury in December 1963 of five defendants responsible for jailhouse beatings of civil rights activists. One of those activists, Lawrence Guyot, denounced the fraudulent verdict. Ella Baker counseled Guyot to “look beyond this foolishness. Don’t let it stop you.”¹⁷

Whether the new civil rights and black freedom movement can “look beyond the foolishness” of the present era with its relentless racial injustices and engage in a campaign of continual resistance is open to question. However, it is a testament to the courage and tenacity on the young activists that they have awakened their fellow citizens to the need to address long-standing grievances around the

criminal justice system with its perpetuation of racial profiling and biases. To carry the struggle forward will require the sort of persistence that Ella Baker and so many others in the older civil rights and black freedom movement embodied.

NOTES

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Reflections on Ferguson and Beyond

FEMI AGBABIAKA

ANYONE WHO HAS PARTICIPATED in direct action can tell you that your first time is going to be scary, but it comes more naturally after that. When I went to Ferguson, Missouri, along with some students from the University of Missouri-Columbia, I imagined that my past experience would help prepare me for any difficulties I might face while protesting there in the days leading up to the grand jury decision regarding Officer Darren Wilson's killing of Michael Brown. I was completely wrong. The brutality and abuse that I witnessed and experienced there was far beyond anything that I had seen in other protests, and had a profoundly radicalizing effect on me.

I've always had a relatively antagonistic view of police. But my view was dramatically confirmed when I saw police show up in full riot gear to what was a peaceful sit-in of forty or so people, and when I saw officers beat protesters who were already handcuffed and use tear gas on demonstrators who were, in the words of a District Court judge, "not engaged in violence or criminal activity."

A reactionary is someone who is opposed to political or social liberalization or reform. Any time oppressed peoples choose to rise up in defiance of the stranglehold that elites have on them and their communities, reactionaries come out in force. This has been true from the

beginning of the labor movement through the civil rights movement, and it will not change until true liberation has been achieved.

The winter made it harder to maintain the mass numbers of protesters that we all had witnessed in the fall, and reactionaries responded with massive campaigns to attempt to sway public opinion. From New York to Oakland, police departments have been cracking down and working hard to maintain their level of brutal force in communities of color. The only solution is to continue fighting back. I don't mean this in an abstract sense, because as I write this, there are working-class people who have died and will die by the hand of those who the capitalist class has led workers to believe should protect them. Silence and inaction on this issue is complicity. If you have ever wondered what you would've done during the civil rights movement, now is your chance. If you deny the brutality of our police departments, go to a protest; they will prove how destructive the police can be.

The final day we protested in St. Louis, the group I was with participated in a sit-in at a local gas station. Naturally, the St. Louis police showed up in riot gear, falsely accused a group of people with their hands in the air of throwing rocks, confined us to a small area, and then finally tear gassed us until we had to leave the premises, all the while being followed by more police banging on their riot shields. The atmosphere as we left under those circumstances was one of fear, but also of newfound awareness. Police response to peaceful protests is a microcosm of the everyday occupation of neighborhoods of color, and the fact that they're cracking

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down as hard as they can means the protests are working. Bit by bit, the contradictions of these intertwined systems of white supremacy and capitalism rear their head, forcing elites to take notice, and, as they do, the people grow stronger.

However, it is not enough to protest. The dismantling of these systems of oppression also requires more of us: first, careful study of their nature; second, careful plans for alternatives; and third, building organizations and movements that through long-term struggle can achieve meaningful victories, some reformist, some not, until finally gaining the state power necessary to enact revolutionary change. One aspect of the current systems of oppression deserving scrutiny is mass incarceration.

The current dialogue concerning mass incarceration centers around two sources of blame, the first being the War on Drugs, and the second being the system of white supremacy. There is no question that the War on Drugs has an atrocious legacy of destroying communities and unjustly imprisoning victims, or that under the system of white supremacy, blacks have taken the brunt of police brutality and mass incarceration. However, as Marie Gottschalk of Penn State University has so eloquently documented in her books *The Prison and the Gallows* and *Caught*, even rolling back the effects of these scourges would do little to fundamentally change the fact that the United States has the largest prison population in the world.

In order to fully grasp the nature of mass incarceration and, one day, to change it, the left must transcend the trap of what Adolph Reed and Merlin Chowkwanyun refer to as interpretive pathologies (“Race, Class, Crisis: The Discourse of Racial Disparity and Its Analytical Discontents,” *Socialist Register* 2012) and begin to study the political economy of police brutality and mass incarceration as seen through the lens of class. Interpretive pathologies are assumptions that many researchers, as well as, more broadly, people on the left, make about the causes of various inequalities. Some examples

that Reed and Chowkwanyun provide are

a schematic juxtaposition of race and class that frequently devolves into unproductive either-or debates; the dilution of class into a cultural and behavioral category or a static (usually quantitative) index of economic attainment that fails to capture power relations; sweeping characterizations of white Americans’ racial animus and collective psyche; ahistorical declarations that posit a long and unbroken arc of American racism and that sidestep careful dissection of how racism and, for that matter, race have evolved and transformed; and a tendency to shoehorn the United States’ racial history into a rhetorically powerful but analytically crude story of “two societies,” monolithic and monochromatic.

As Gottschalk comments in her most recent book, *Caught*:

Too tight a focus on the racial disparities of the carceral state is problematic for other reasons. The focus on numbers—that is, how many African Americans or other minorities are serving time relative to whites—has overshadowed the qualitative dimension of the penal crisis. The racial-disparities lens obscures the brutal and degrading conditions in which many prisoners, regardless of their race or ethnicity, serve their time. ... Some predominantly white states operate some of the most dehumanizing and dangerous prisons in the country. Idaho’s largest prison was widely known as a “gladiator school” due to inmate-on-inmate violence allegedly fostered by guards at this [Corrections Corporation of America]-run facility near Boise. For many years, Maine, the whitest state in the country, operated one of the worst supermax facilities. By contrast, Mississippi, a deep-South state where more than two-thirds of the state prisoners are black and which has a long history of operating some of the country’s most notorious penal facilities, has been a national pioneer in shrinking and regulating the use of supermax cells (120).

The War on Drugs narrative is equally flawed, as outlined by Gottschalk, again in *Caught*, and repeated in an interview with *Jacobin* editor Connor Kilpatrick. “In fact, if we released everyone now serving time in state prisons whose

primary charge is a drug offense, we would reduce the state prison population by only 20 percent,” says Gottschalk. “The overwhelming majority of people in prison are not there because of a drug offense. And even many of the people who are serving time primarily for a drug charge have other kinds of offenses on their records. We have created the mistaken idea that prisons are chock-full of people serving time for petty drug possession.” If the left is serious about the issues of mass incarceration and police brutality, we will all have to reckon with the fact that increasing numbers of those in prison are incarcerated for violent and sexual crimes.

There has been a lot of criticism of those that have responded to the phrase “Black Lives Matter” with their own refrains of “All Lives Matter.” Although I generally agree that those most often using that phrase are disagreeable, it is my duty as a Marxist to proclaim, yes, the lives of blacks—the victims of racial oppression—matter, but so too do all lives matter, especially the lives of those victimized by class oppression, particularly those in the U.S. penal system—whether they be black, white, Hispanic, Asian, or other.

As Marx noted in Volume 1 of *Capital*, capitalism holds for itself a reserve army of labor, “a mass of human material always ready for exploitation.” The rise of private prisons means that not only does capitalism create this reserve army, but it then criminalizes and profits off the incarceration of it. As recounted by David Roddy in his Democratic Socialists of America web piece, “Resisting the Criminalization of Homeless Lives” (www.dsusa.org, March 20, 2015), this criminalization of the reserves is nothing new. Capitalists take away jobs from the proletariat, the proletariat seeks to survive outside of wage labor, and capitalists criminalize them. Wash, rinse, repeat.

When I heard the tragic story of James Robertson (*Detroit Free Press*, Feb. 10, 2015), a Detroit native who walked 21 miles back and forth to work, it wasn’t too large of a jump for

me to imagine a future in which Robertson becomes unable to make the trek, loses his job because “there’s always someone else out there,” and falls into homelessness. Criminalization comes quickly afterward.

An even more odious modern development of our capitalist-fueled carceral system is the growth of private prisons, which have prisoner occupancy goals, and increasingly are serving as detention centers for undocumented immigrants. I am reminded of another Marx quote, this time from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*: “Each tries to establish over the other an alien power, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need. The increase in the quantity of objects is therefore accompanied by an extension of the realm of the alien powers to which man is subjected, and every new product represents a new potentiality of mutual swindling and mutual plundering.”

The solution to destroying our system of mass incarceration is simple: smash capitalism. We must build a world in which human creativity is pushed to its limits, and the solution to crime is more than locking people in cages. Simple calls for anti-racism are not enough; in fact, it is easy for neoliberalism to co-opt them. Any corporation can make an anti-racist statement without actually dismantling any systems of oppression. In fact, even George Soros can be a leading anti-racist! Such a politics is really a non-politics, making claims of intersectionality (a word that has lost much of its meaning), and pushing for liberation based on identity while completely ignoring the systems of oppression that undergird it all. The left should not be fooled: Nothing less than a politics based on dismantling capitalist oppression will come even close to truly attacking the systems of power that keep the carceral state intact. It is time to move beyond nationalism and liberal anti-racism. Our project of human liberation requires the full and united power of the working class to destroy capitalism. Only this will truly free us from the chains of mass incarceration and police brutality.

Ferguson: Fifty Years and Counting

GABRIEL KILPATRICK

“SOMEONE THREW A ROCK, and like monkeys in a zoo, they all started throwing rocks.” This remark was not made in the wake of the Michael Brown grand jury verdict. It was the account of Chief William Parker, spoken decades before and 1,500 miles away, on the unrest of the 1965 Watts Riots. However, for those who have been attuned to the news in the past months, Parker’s remark is eerily similar to that of a Ferguson police officer, who labeled the protesters as “f--king animals,” an appalling racial epithet.

Ten years prior to the Watts Riots, brave Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat. Yet blacks still dwelled in misery as the most indigent sector of American society, frequently humiliated in their encounters with police. The California state government had recently passed Proposition 14, an initiative supported by California real estate interests that gutted the groundbreaking housing provisions of the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963. The situation reached a breaking point for thousands of black youth. They responded in the only immediate manner available to them—rebellion.

The violence in the streets of Los Angeles provoked a severe backlash in the halls of Washington DC and in the offices of America’s media conglomerates. President Johnson de-

nounced the riot as an attack on the country. Even moderate civil rights leaders like NAACP General Secretary Roy Wilkins called on police to “put down [the riot] with all necessary force.” Those in power—white politicians representing the ruling class—could not comprehend why young Negroes would start burning cars and attacking cops.

For milquetoast liberal whites concerned with what we now call “respectability politics,” these actions were appalling. White audiences with a paternalistic attitude towards blacks, watching TV, were shocked at the transformation occurring before their eyes. They were used to the “good Negro” who marched peacefully and sat indignantly, withholding anger and maintaining a moral righteousness in the face of brutality. According to one view, these nonviolent methods were the manner by which blacks would be incorporated into the system; it was their ladder into the elite structures of American society, which abounded with wealth and opportunity. But the era of purely pacifist protest was drawing to a close.

After witnessing the brutality displayed against the “polite” civil rights activists in the South, after experiencing the dynamic, institutional racism in their ghettos, and after being forcibly compelled to serve a white-dominated country in wars against other oppressed peoples across the globe, the youth of the 1960s no longer found appropriate the “respectable” approach pioneered by Booker T. Washington and later partially adopted by other moderate civil rights leaders. The litigation, boycotts, and marches did not satiate their desire for liberation. They

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instead looked to leaders like Malcolm X, Kwame Touré (originally Stokely Carmichael), and H. Rap Brown, who were bold in their statements and often fearless in their actions. They did not seek the approval of the political establishment, nor did they consult the upper echelon of black America. They acted. The creed of the Watts generation was summarized by Malcolm X in 1964: "Nobody can give you freedom. Nobody can give you equality or justice or anything. If you're a man, you take it."

Black Power activist Kwame Touré hinted at the differences between the agrarian South and industrial North and the consequences of those differences for the civil rights movement

in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1967), when he wrote that racism "is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. The second type is less overt, far more subtle ... [and] originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society." Though the Ku Klux Klan was tolerated, even encouraged, by southern governments, it was not a genuinely legal institution; it was a gang of vigilantes. Therefore its terroristic violence was met with horror by northern liberals. Likewise, the violence meted out by southern police (sometimes Klan members

A Radical View from Fifty Years Ago



DEFEND THE GHETTO UPRISINGS

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themselves) in response to nonviolent protest was effectively in violation of federal legislation stemming all the way back to Reconstruction-era Enforcement Acts and was similarly condemned. But the strategy of nonviolent marches and demonstrations undertaken in Selma and Birmingham was not suitable to the predicament that blacks faced in urban industrial areas. The racism that existed in areas like Watts was institutionalized in a different way. Economic inequality, severe poverty, and economic barriers to public accommodations were systemic problems that did not involve the burning of a cross. The physical brutality of the Klan in the South was replicated “legally” by the batons and guns of urban police officers.

The Watts revolt happened in 1965, but what occurred back then is being echoed by developments today. Over the past few months, protests have flared up across the United States—some peaceful, some violent. Unfortunately, the clichéd saying of “the more things change, the more they stay the same” still applies. The scenes of burning cars and smashed windows in Ferguson, reminiscent of those in Watts 50 years ago, have incensed today’s establishment officials and icons. President Obama stated he had “no sympathy” for those causing “violence”—though of course he has sympathy for corporations and bankers eviscerating working-class communities across the country, black, brown, and white. The black elite’s embrace of respectability politics is as centrally important as ever.

Furthermore, in absorbing the constant flow of images and footage of protests from all over the country, one can easily submit to labeling young blacks out in the streets as simply “rioting.” However, as I personally witnessed and saw in countless hours of footage, a genuine rebellion seemed to be fomenting. Consciousness was raised to an unprecedented level, and people acted—albeit interspersed with occasional acts of property damage—yet the core of the issue is that a multitude of people

were discontent. Millions declared that they would not submit to or acquiesce in today’s society. Our voices and our feet demonstrated that there was the beginning of a legitimate social uproar. Again individuals, particularly poor black youth, resorted to immediate means of expressing frustration. We understood that as Kwame Touré said, “There is a higher law than the law of government. That’s the law of conscience.” People broke the law, justifiably and unjustifiably. However, the critical point is that these actions were primarily in response to the oppression and state violence experienced by so many of today’s youth. Moreover, there exists a similar dichotomy of respectability politics versus revolutionary politics in activists’ and organizers’ responses to the Ferguson uprising. Leftists began organizing campaigns, and groups that I have encountered heightened their attacks against the structural roots of oppression in contemporary society, namely policing approaches such as broken windows, as well as broader systemic problems such as capitalism in and of itself. One can even hope that genuine, independent, left-wing parties can achieve the same success in issues surrounding policing as they did regarding minimum wage (Kshama Sawant). Conversely, the establishment approach lingers on, with figures like Jesse Jackson and groups like the NAACP insisting upon reforms within the Democratic Party. Al Sharpton’s meetings with “our” president achieve little in the way of solving the multitude of problems that black and brown communities face. Our “hope and change” president has achieved little for us, despite his promises.

The United States was ostensibly founded on the ideals of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Our founding fathers, as the dogmatic narrative endlessly tells, revolted when the achievement of those ideals were denied to them. The Boston Tea Party is commemorated as a heroic event in American history. This act destroyed the property of the British East India Company, with estimates of \$1 million

in present-day damage. Our brave “heroes” violated the sanctity of private property because they believed that the Lockean principles of the social contract were violated by the British Empire. What makes this so different from the actions of the toiling masses of black youth in the urban ghettos, whose social contract with the state is violated routinely?

Those Watts fighters revolted against discrimination by the city and state governments and against the charlatans who owned the local grocery stores, which were quick to cheat a poor family of their income. Despite obvious differences in circumstances, the black establishment’s response to the rioters mimicked that of the leading “founding fathers” to the Sons of Liberty’s economically costly tea party. In response to the destruction of tea, George Washington, the iconic figure in the patriot movement, condemned the Boston Tea Party for “hurt[ing] our cause.” Such statements could have easily been issued by the more moderate leaders of the civil rights movement in response to the Watts Riot. The Sons of Liberty were simply a more radical component of the independence movement, just as the Watts protesters were in a movement that included NAACP leaders. This illustrates the blatant hypocrisy of some who are more concerned with private property than police brutality. Watts had a clear context. Those who revolted did not exist in a vacuum, but in a socioeconomic system that deprived them of their basic rights and dignity.

I want to clarify that I do not support initiating violence. I have not committed any violent acts in my participation in the protests. But I believe that if we are to achieve a radical vision of equality and justice we must recognize the roots of the problem, rather than fixating on its side effects. Ferguson was an initial reaction. Indeed, one can say it was a beneficial reaction,

in that it awakened America and demystified the reality of oppression to white audiences who were in the dark. And while I am not in favor of burning down black businesses, I must sincerely ask why the sanctity of private property is deemed more important than the black and brown lives that are constantly being ruined in our cities and suburbs.

There are many similarities between the Watts and Ferguson protests. We must hesitate before quickly condemning the actions of angered, troubled individuals; we must grasp the larger picture. Instead of focusing our efforts on riot control, let us focus on attacking the inequality that produces such “riots.” When confronting the blatant hypocrisy of our supposed representatives and the media, we must remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1967: “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.”

In the wake of the Watts Riots and other scenes of unrest in the 1960s, California Governor Pat Brown created a commission to study the roots of these disturbances. The commission’s findings were finalized in the McCone Report, completed in an effort to understand and reduce the potential for further riots. The report indicated that there was a “devastating spiral of failure” that existed in black America. Does this spiral still exist today? A recent *Dissent* magazine article was titled “50 Years Later: Poverty and the Other America.” It would not be improper for a future article to be titled “50 Years Later: the McCone Report,” in response to the protests that have arisen against the police killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, among too many others.

Malcolm X: A Half Century Later

ALAN STOWERS

I ATTENDED AN EVENT FOR THE 50TH anniversary of Malcolm X's assassination that was held in the same room where the visionary leader was murdered. The commemoration, aptly titled "I LOVE MALCOLM—A Legacy of Love and Liberation," celebrated his lifework and highlighted the struggles to be undertaken for the future liberation of black America and other oppressed peoples.

Several hundred people—of all hues, and fully representing each generation—packed the room, perched on black folding chairs. Dozens more crammed the sides and back of the room to listen to the public intellectual and historian Tariq Ali recall Malcolm X's famous 1964 speech and debate at Oxford University. They listened, too, as poet and political dissident Sonia Sanchez recollected the magnetic charm of Malcolm, and his infusion of love into his philosophy. The collective mood in the room gradually shifted from a buzzing expectancy to resolute conviction. While the event itself was geared toward reflection on Malcolm X's life, many, if not most, of the attendees were searching for answers to this political moment in the struggle for black liberation in the wake of Ferguson and other absurd injustices. As I ruminated on the significance of Malcolm, the inescapable question kept prodding me: What would Malcolm say or do if he lived to see this nascent #BlackLivesMatter movement?

In the 1950s and 1960s, Malcolm X articulated the simmering angst of black America, weighed down by white supremacist imagery

and institutional oppression, into boiling rage demanding urgent attention to the unfathomable contradictions of life for African Americans. Yet, decades later the United States remains a white supremacist country. And so, Malcolm X's political thought and revolutionary symbolism continue to be relevant insofar as black Americans continue to be oppressed.

Half a century after Malcolm X's assassination, this nation has produced no comparable political or intellectual leader. The literal life-and-death circumstances of too many blacks in this country, exemplified in heinous police killings of Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, and Michael Brown, demand an inspection of what constituted this irreverent spokesperson for the plight of black humanity.

Malcolm X was an organic intellectual who took the world by storm and whose words continue to reverberate to dispossessed peoples worldwide. His statement, "Our objective is complete freedom, complete justice, complete equality, *by any means necessary*," endures as a rallying cry for activists. His condemnation of the inhumane conditions suffered daily by black people was novel in that it both critiqued the structures that afflicted the black masses as well as blacks themselves for their complicity in their victimization. Malcolm challenged black people as agents who have been victimized, not mere victims yearning for salvation (his scathing rejection of the Christian Church as too passive and concerned with the afterlife made him both compelling and alarming to many people inside and outside of the black community). Liberals, in their post-modern push for cultural relativism, have been paralyzed to confront the

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psychological effects that centuries of terrorism, exclusion, and devaluation have had on black society and culture. So it has become taboo to discuss these psychological and cultural maladies affecting black America unless one is a neo-conservative who ignores all structural barriers to black fulfillment. But Malcolm was able to speak directly to African Americans and affirm their blackness, if only momentarily, and ignite outrage toward the source of their internal ills: the white supremacist power structure, which they could viscerally understand.

Malcolm also challenged the racist power structure by striking it with techniques that transcended established parameters of debate on race relations. He was incensed at the iniquitous treatment of his people and let that be known on national and local television and radio programs. He refused to acquiesce to complacency, and broke all taboos about how forthright one could be in discussing race relations. In contrast to so many African-American leaders, Malcolm was not a careerist, nor was he remotely interested in attaining more status or power for himself.

For radical and progressive activists today, it is important to consider the role of Malcolm's militant stance in the context of the civil rights movement. The rhetoric of black nationalism pushed civil rights leaders to the left, and also made reformist proposals more palatable to the established power structure. Whenever the boundaries of political debate are expanded to include more radical ideology, there is a shift in what is considered moderate. The sharpness of Malcolm's critique was enhanced in 1964 as he converted to Orthodox Islam after traveling throughout the Middle East and Africa. (It should be noted that Malcolm had little to say on the undemocratic and often patriarchal nature of many of the countries he visited. The broad acceptance and affirmation of him as a full human by Middle Eastern whites may have eclipsed those shortcomings, or perhaps Malcolm was too cynical about the prospects for democracy in America to be moved to criticize

these nations.) This evolution of Malcolm's thought, which included the appreciation of multiracial coalitions and the international scope of racism, completed a rift that grew between him and the Nation of Islam. But it was primarily because of Malcolm X's rhetorical abilities and piercing insights into the plight of black people that the Nation of Islam was able to grow from an obscure sect of several hundred into a national force with tens of thousands of members. This development, and the later creation of Malcolm's own Organization for Afro-American Unity, frightened politicians enough that they preferred to deal with the peaceful and legislatively minded Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., backed by reformist organizations such as the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

So we leftists need to remember Malcolm X today because so many of the "leaders" and organizations purporting to represent the interests of African Americans and other minorities have thoroughly sold out. The veneer of minority representation is easily captured by superficial rhetoric, but the system is impervious to fundamental challenges when black intellectual leaders and politicians become ingrained in the very establishment from which blacks seek relief. Despite his popularity among the common black person of his time, both nationally and internationally, Malcolm remained poor until his death, and exemplified uncompromising indignation toward a corrupt political and media environment.

Many of his proposals, which he never was able to delineate due to his early death, are still relevant to radical political strategy in the present. Namely, the self-defense of African Americans against the wholesale slaughter by occupying police forces has to be a starting point for political organizing in black and brown communities. Self-defense need not mean arming communities of color—the outright murder of too many Black Panthers by the FBI testifies to the state's monopoly on violence—because political resistance and proactive organizing can increase

safety and accountability more so than a futile arms race with militarized police forces. The ceaseless organizing and protesting in Ferguson, culminating in the attorney general's indictment of Ferguson's entire police force for systemic racism and exploitation of the black population, demonstrates the capacity of black communities to advocate on their own behalf and get tangible results in the struggle against police barbarism.

Malcolm also suggested that the political blueprint for transforming our racist society lay at the international level, wherein African and Asian world leaders would be sympathetic to the case of human rights violations perpetrated by the United States government against African Americans. He thought institutions such as the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity could be allies in the struggle for black freedom in the states. While the efficacy of the United Nations to deal with structural barriers in the United States seems questionable, the objective of creating international coalitions based on mutual self-interest against the global minority of Western, white, capitalist countries seems promising.

Another integral idea Malcolm envisaged was independent ownership of black businesses in black communities. He contrasted the devastating transfer of wealth out of the black community with the beneficial circulation of money within the Jewish community. The basic principle is that blacks should patronize black-owned businesses, that those businesses should employ members of the community, and so on. While this may reflect the visions many conservatives would offer to this struggle, it is worth noting that liberal doctrines alone have done very little for the positions of most blacks since the 1960s. Seizing economic power and transcending liberal-conservative dichotomies is the only viable option toward alleviating racial inequality. The other side of black-owned business is black-controlled political organizations; even after his opening to multiracial alliances, Malcolm believed that black political autonomy could not be realized so long as these organizations were funded (or staffed)

by white philanthropists.

A final idea of Malcolm's that remains especially appealing to radical sentiments today is the establishment of a united front to bring to bear the collective power of African Americans against white supremacy in America and abroad. Although he obviously did not live to see such an organization, Malcolm imagined that his new Organization for Afro-American Unity could unite blacks of the middle and working class, liberal and radical, academic and organic, against the constant war of visual devaluation, institutional discrimination, and cultural denigration faced by all blacks. Such an organization, he envisioned, once constituted, could legitimately form coalitions with organizational allies from other races to tackle an establishment that fails to value life, especially black life.

For black Americans and their allies today, #BlackLivesMatter has shown the potency of collective fervor to affect the actual operations of oppressive institutions. The spirit of Malcolm X persists in the defiance of these activists who refuse to accept the absurd predicament of life for most African Americans. We have seen that months of consistent protests brought to bear enough political pressure to expel key Ferguson police and civilian power brokers.

Let me be clear: The spectacle will not replace the substantial. Sensational news stories favoring liberation principles have an expiration date, and with them the expanded political power that is yielded to advocates for racial justice. We can win the war on the message and still remain powerless if we fail to organize the political and economic power that has been activated by the publicized atrocities committed last summer in Ferguson, Staten Island, and across the country. The lesson to take away from Malcolm's life is not simply to be outraged by the deplorable treatment (from state-sanctioned murder to world-leading incarceration rates) of working-class African Americans. The lesson is to channel that rage into a consistent effort to organize, awaken others, and speak candidly about vital issues in our communities.

THE LEFT WE NEED

Special Section, continued from Winter 2015 issue

Young Democratic Socialist Perspectives

NOELLE NIEVES FLYNN, SHELBY MURPHY, SHANNON SORHAINDO,
AND RUSSELL WEISS-IRWIN

Earlier this year, four leaders of Young Democratic Socialists (YDS), the youth section of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), began to collaborate on a response to the New Politics prompt: What is the left we need today? We are Noelle Nieves Flynn of Northampton Community College Democratic Socialists in Easton, Pennsylvania; Shelby Murphy of Lamar University Democratic Socialists in Beaumont, Texas; Shannon Sorhaindo of William Paterson University in Paterson, New Jersey; and Russell Weiss-Irwin of City College of New York in New York City. We discussed how we, all relative newcomers to the socialist left, think about the left as a whole in the United States, especially based on our geographically diverse experiences organizing in predominantly working-class schools.

Before we began working on the article, we discussed what our chapters are working on. At Northampton Community College, Noelle and her comrades are participating in the \$15 Now struggle, the first time that Noelle can remember that the labor movement has ventured into her part of rural Pennsylvania. At Lamar University and William Paterson University, Shelby and Shannon and their comrades are organizing against tuition increases and pushing for tuition reduction, as well as doing work around the Black Lives Matter

movement. At City College of New York, Russell and his comrades are also participating in the Fight for \$15 and working with cafeteria workers to fight layoffs. In all of our chapters, we pair movement work with collective education, whether through radical movie nights, discussion groups, or readings by socialist authors.

We began with a question:

Russell: When you think of “the left” or “our side” in all the struggles happening around us today, what makes you proud and hopeful? What do you see as missing?

Noelle: What definitely makes me proud is how when something big happens with the potential to unite us (Occupy, Ferguson), we write about it, we rally around it. What’s negative is that we rally more around “social justice” than labor and union-related issues. Unions are a key pillar of socialist politics, but we don’t really do much to encourage youth to continue fighting for unionization.

Something else I’m proud of is our being able to attract youth through social media and using things like texting, Meetups, and Hangouts to keep up with one another. It helps us learn to connect despite our distance from each other. One thing that seriously disappoints me

about the left is the political divisions. Leftists find more to hate about each other than to like. I personally disagreed with some things about

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the Ferguson uprising, and was ignored by a lot of people for a while. With our movement so fragile, I think we need to get over some of our different issues and work together against capitalism and to inspire radical change. *Then* we can argue all day long.

Shelby: What makes me proud to be a part of the left is our ability to overcome oppression by the media. If you're on the left you automatically get a huge negative stigma put upon you. The media has labeled socialist activists as "rabble rousers" and "lawbreakers" and other things along the lines of "socialists are lazy and just want to feed off of the wealthy's profits."

But despite this negativity, we continuously fight and we refuse to back down. We strive to show people how our work is their work; if we fight together, we win together. I have met some of the strongest and most intelligent people while being a part of the movement, and those that wish to label us as "uneducated" and "lazy" are incredibly wrong; it's obviously only a tactic to scare people away from the left. Our work ethic is relentless: in comparison to others in politics, I believe we have them beat, because we work 24/7 to try to make revolution possible. We don't represent a political ideology that requires people to only show up for elections in order to fix society's problems; we are

so much more than that. Real change requires commitment. This is something that other political ideologies don't advocate.

One problem is our inability to come to a consensus on *how* to dismantle capitalist society. We sometimes tend to get caught up in our differences with each other rather than critiquing our enemies.

Russell: Why does the left remain marginal, and what can be done to overcome this problem?

Noelle: One reason people seem not to take the left seriously is because of a lack of education. People don't know that socialism isn't just social equality and "sharing everything," but economic and political equality with thought-out structure and planning. Political economy isn't everyone's cup of tea, but it's important for us to encourage understanding it among chapter members and other socialists. Being educated is something anyone can respect. Being able to answer questions reinforces the fact that we know what we want and what we're talking about.

Russell: I think that's a good point, Noelle, and I also think mutual education helps us have more democratic organizations, because more people have the knowledge and skills to know what's going on.

However, I wouldn't want people for whom, as you say, political economy is not their cup of tea to feel like they're not smart enough to be part of the socialist left.

Noelle: I think that actually leads into a good new question. The people we most often represent are those who often lack the means to achieve formal education or are discouraged from wanting to self-educate. How can we make a socialist movement more attractive to the most disadvantaged members of the working class?

Russell: I'd be interested in all of your takes on that question, but my initial thought is that there are at least two elements to that. The first is removing barriers to participation, that is,

making our movement more accessible to the most disadvantaged members of the working class, and the second is making our goals and efforts inspiring and relevant to those folks.

For instance, on the first front, the accessibility question, how do we make our meetings and groups not feel clique-y in the ways we act or the language we use? How do we accommodate busy work and school schedules, long commutes, need for child care, mobility issues, and so on? How do we make it so that anyone who wants to participate in our organizing can do so?

The next piece, I think, which is also essential, is the question of how we make our organizing something that people want to participate in. What issue is most important to working-class and oppressed people in our schools, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods? Is it wages? Tuition? Health care? Violence from police or rapists? I think we have to pay attention to where people are at and organize around the issues that affect people most, energize people most. I think if we're both accessible and relevant, we will attract all kinds of folks, but especially the most disadvantaged working-class people.

Noelle: I think something YDS and DSA are good at is reaching minority groups. I work with the Disability Caucus, and there are other groups for gender and sexuality, racial minorities, and self-identified women. Encouraging participation in these groups is important. When it comes to minorities, though, we often overlook the opinions of those who struggle on a daily basis. Whether we decide to organize discussion specifically around the working poor or learn to give them a better voice is something we have to figure out. As a member of that demographic, wages are absolutely the biggest barrier. Even a \$15-an-hour increase is barely a living wage when health care costs come into play (as well as ineligibility for SNAP [Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program], MA

[Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance program], and LIHEAP [Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program]). We need to help the working class look ahead. Issues like this are incredibly frustrating, where there are no loopholes. We can show how the wealthy can still qualify for MA by petitioning governors, while the poor making \$15 more than the income limit sit in a pile of medical bills. It's honestly not too difficult to explain, but socialists who do come from a financially secure background do need to imagine life without food for a day or choosing between paying for medication and risking death.

Shannon: The one important barrier that separates the most disadvantaged workers from our movement would definitely be our language. Members of DSA and YDS tend to go into conversations and topics using various terms and ideas that someone outside of the organization would probably find to be a bit complex. There are new members who take the time to figure out these conversations and understand the language on their own, but in general, individuals who don't understand it are

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likely to back out of the movement feeling that they don't know enough.

As an organization, I think that we need to express our ideas more straightforwardly. This should bring disadvantaged members into the movement. We should teach basic ideas to such people and work with them until they feel comfortable and motivated enough to start

researching and learning on their own. In time, this will make them more inspired to engage in openly socialist organizing and activism.

There are many ways that we can accom-

How can we make a socialist movement more attractive to the most disadvantaged members of the working class?

modate to the hectic schedules that everyone has. Surveying members as to their availability would be a good place to start. Meetings can be held in person or over video or conference calls, which will help with the different locations and commuting situations of members. Since social media is so big and just about everyone has a profile on at least one website, we can also find out what websites members use frequently so we can more easily communicate.

There are many ways that anyone can participate in organizing. There is much more to do than only participating in rallies. There is a lot of planning involved. We can see what tasks members are comfortable doing. Some people like to be behind the scenes while others like to be in the forefront. Some may be comfortable doing outreach for events, figuring out the logistics, or leading the protests.

Shelby: I think one way to make our organizing something that people want to participate in is to provide them the resources to learn specifically about why we are working on specific issues. In my chapter I have a lot of students who are interested in certain things but they only have a general idea of the issues involved. They understand that they want to fight against student debt and tuition increases, but they feel as though they don't completely understand the ins and outs of why and how this has become

a problem. It makes them feel as though the enemy has an advantage because they know how to manipulate us, they created the system. So we can only break the system if we know all the facts, how it was built, in order to fight against it. I think we need to make sure that our education is put in the best "layman's terms" and make sure we define the terminology that we use so we fully understand everything.

Russell: I think all of those things make sense! But I think a lot of this stuff is easier to say than do. Sometimes people use jargon or language that other people don't understand just to seem smart and exclude others (I think especially in universities/academia), but plenty of the time, people use that kind of stuff because it's harder not to.

For instance, if you're thinking about the world through a Marxist lens (which I think is a really good way to think about it), you start to see lots of things as dialectical, or conflicts between capital and labor, or hegemonic, or whatever. Once you start to think that way (which we should, I think), you naturally want to use the words that you're thinking when you speak and write. It's often shorter, too!

So, I agree with Shannon that we should make the effort to talk in ways that make us accessible to everyone—in fact, that will probably help us think more clearly as well. I'm just saying it's hard!

But what if we dig a little bit deeper. In many other places, the left is more powerful than in the United States. At other times in our history, the left has been more successful (1910s, 1930s, 1940s, 1960s, 1970s) and less successful (1920s, 1950s, 1990s, 2000s) than it is now. How come? How can we help to make the left less marginal than it is right now in the United States?

Honestly, the fact that the four of us have come into contact with socialist politics and decided to dedicate a lot of our energy to building a socialist organization shows a certain kind

of success for the U.S. left in the 2010s—that young people in different parts of the country are getting drawn into this movement is already good. But what was it that drew us in, and why aren't more people getting drawn in? I think those are some of the questions that we have to ask when we think about what keeps the left marginal and how we can change that.

I think when we compare ourselves to the left in other countries, we have to bring up imperialism. U.S. leftists are organizing at the center of a global empire. For decades, being a communist or a socialist has been a dangerous thing in countries all over the world—in Chile or Spain or Iran or South Africa, it could get you killed by the state. But I think in the U.S. it's been unique—for decades, as far as most people were concerned, to be a socialist or a communist meant you were the enemy of your own country and people, not just of capitalism. And I think

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that is a really powerful perception that we have to overcome today, even for people born after the fall of the Soviet Union.

What do you all think about this question of why the left is more marginal here than in

other places?

Noelle: I think the U.S. is great at undermining revolutionary politics. For example, the New Deal pacified some of the working class's anger and contained it. We need to show working-class people that Band-Aids don't heal deep wounds. Proving to people how corrupt their government can be, and showing how collective action can make radical change, is what we need to be able to do. The radical left has allowed itself to become so organizationally divided that we're seen as a group of raving lunatics, looked down on even by liberals who think working with us to achieve progressive social policies means they're working with "Communists."

We finished our conversation a bit abruptly, but we were able to talk about a lot of the questions that we, as young socialists, see in our broader movement. There are questions of division within the left, the kinds of language we use to talk about our ideas, our ability to educate ourselves and one another, what issues we choose to organize around, and how we represent ourselves as socialists and how we are perceived. There's certainly a lot more to say about the left we really need in the United States, and even more to do. We in Young Democratic Socialists/Democratic Socialists of America are continuing to struggle with these questions and with the day-to-day challenges of organizing. We are excited to join the larger conversation within the left that this forum in New Politics represents.

Solidarity,

Russell, Shannon, Shelby, and Noelle

Puerto Rico's New Party of the Working People Fights Austerity

RAFAEL BERNABE

THE PARTIDO DEL PUEBLO TRABAJADOR—the Party of the Working People (PPT)—is a political project of the Puerto Rican left addressed to working people in the context of the island's deep economic crisis. It would be hard to exaggerate the gravity of Puerto Rico's present social and economic situation, which can only be compared to the impact of the Great Depression in the 1930s. Puerto Rico's economy has not grown since 2006. During that period, total employment has fallen by 20 percent or 250,000 jobs. Since 1996 manufacturing employment in particular has fallen by half (from close to 160,000 to less than 80,000). The labor force participation rate has dipped under 40 percent. Through firings and attrition, since 2007 public employment has fallen by 20 percent or 50,000 jobs. Migration has accelerated to levels unseen since the 1950s. As registered by the 2010 census, the island's population, which now is 3.7 million, has fallen for the first time in several centuries. High unemployment and extremely low participation rates feed a very significant informal sector, including its illegal portion connected to the widespread drug trade.

The fiscal situation is equally dismal. Public debt (including that of the central government and public corporations) stands around \$73

billion and is roughly equal to Puerto Rico's GNP. The government's credit rating has been degraded to junk bond level. Any new credits seem to be available only at truly usurious rates (above 10 percent). Wall Street commentators admit that "It's been clear for a while that Puerto Rico is going to have to default on its debt" (*Bloomberg*, April 9, 2014). The other side of this coin is the fact that two dozen U.S. corporations extract around \$35 billion a year in profits from or through their operations in Puerto Rico. Bear in mind that the total income of the government of Puerto Rico is around \$9 billion. U.S. corporations benefit from the tax-exemption measures that have been the centerpiece of the government's development policy since 1947.

A Century of Dependent Development

Many of the features of the present crisis are hardly new but correspond to some of the fundamental aspects of Puerto Rican society under U.S. rule. Since 1898 when the United States took Puerto Rico from Spain, the movement and shape of Puerto Rico's economy have been largely determined by the priorities and preferences of U.S. capital. U.S. corporations have owned the main sectors of this economy. Such was the case before World War II, when sugar production was Puerto Rico's main industry; during the expansion of light-manufacturing from the late 1940s to the early 1970s; and during the following period, characterized by more capital-intensive manufacturing activities, among which pharmaceuticals is the most important.

As indicated, a further consequence of the

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domination of Puerto Rico's economy by U.S. capital has been, and is, the constant outflow, largely toward the United States, of a significant portion of the income generated in Puerto Rico. Needless to say, capital that is not reinvested in Puerto Rico does not create employment in Puerto Rico. In other words, Puerto Rico's fragmented, foreign-dominated, and largely export-oriented economy has never been able to provide adequate employment for its workforce. Let us mention a dramatic example: Between 1950 and 1964, that is to say, during the period of Puerto Rico's postwar economic expansion, which led many to see it as a model for other underdeveloped countries, the number of jobs in Puerto Rico actually fell. In other words, manufacturing was not able to compensate for the jobs being lost in agriculture. Given this situation, significant migration to the United States has been another feature of Puerto Rican life. This was the case in the 1910s and 1920s, when the first Puerto Rican colonia (community) took shape in New York, as well as in the mass migration in the 1950s and 1960s, and in recent years as a result of the deepening crisis.

Not only does mass unemployment result in significant migration, it also depresses wages, which consequently deepens economic inequality and insures high levels of poverty. This helps explain the persistence of the wide gap in living standards between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland. Contrary to neoliberal dogma, after more than a century of a colonial experiment in free trade, free mobility of capital, and even the free movement of people between Puerto Rico and the United States, Puerto Rico's per capita income is a third of the U.S. figure. It is half of the per capita income of the poorest state in the union. Around 45 percent of the people in Puerto Rico live under the poverty level. The corresponding figure in the United States is 15 percent.

Given this level of poverty, it is not surprising that a considerable number of people participate in one or several federally funded welfare

programs. While widespread welfare eligibility is the result of high unemployment, neoliberal economists like to turn effects into causes and thus present unemployment as the result of welfare provisions that are "too generous" and that, according to them, discourage work. The pervasiveness of this anti-poor-people discourse,

The gravity of Puerto Rico's
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situation can only be compared
to the impact of the Great
Depression.

even in sectors of the working class, cannot be denied and requires an adequate response from the left.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's propertied classes have accommodated to whichever sectors and activities have been assigned or left open to them by U.S. capital. They have been a perfect example of a colonial, dependent bourgeoisie incapable of seeking a path of autonomous, self-sustaining development. Politically they have been split between those who support statehood (making Puerto Rico a state of the United States) and those who favor autonomy (the present or a reformed commonwealth status or some form of association). Most workers support one of the two dominant parties: the pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista (the New Progressive Party or PNP), or the autonomist Partido Popular Democrático (the Popular Democratic Party or PPD). They thus define themselves politically as supporters of one or another status option, first and foremost. Roughly speaking, statehood and autonomy each have the support of 45-47 percent of the electorate. The vote for the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (the Puerto Rican Independence Party or PIP)

was less than 3 percent in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Independentistas, of course, have a

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far more significant presence and often play a leading role in labor, environmental, student, and other struggles. Many vote for the PPD in accordance with the same “lesser-evil” logic that leads many U.S. progressives into the orbit of the Democratic Party.

**Working People’s Agenda: From
Discontent to Class Awareness**

Yet, while most workers support either statehood or autonomy, many are also increasingly alienated by the policies pursued by both PNP and PPD administrations. While they do not support independence, many are sympathetic to the economic and social policies advocated by the left. The PPT, the Party of the Working People, seeks to nurture and engage with this inclination. Its basic message is: In order to resist those that would make us pay for the present crisis, workers need their own party. In order to reach workers and help them move forward, such a party must be both broad and firmly independent. It must be firmly independent of the two ruling parties and opposed to their policies while being open to all workers, and all of the oppressed, regardless of their position on the “status question.” Workers need to begin to think of themselves, first and foremost, not as supporters of a “status option” but rather as working people who need to organize politically as such.

The fact that the program of the PPT does not favor one or another status option does not

make it a “catch-all” party in which “everything goes,” as some critics have argued. Its program finds few takers among corporate, economically privileged, or socially conservative sectors. It opposes all policies that increase social inequality or expand the prerogatives of the employers against the rights of labor. It rejects policies and existing economic rules that place private profit over social well-being and ecological concerns. It denounces the existing economic structure dominated by U.S. corporations and the resulting massive outflow (as corporate profits and debt servicing) of much of the wealth created in Puerto Rico. It seeks an expansion of the role of the public sector in the creation of employment, guaranteeing the basic needs of all, extending social and labor rights, and protecting the environment. It defends women’s, reproductive, and LGBT rights.

In the context of the present fiscal emergency, the PPT has formulated a five-point program that includes: auditing and renegotiating the existing debt of the central government and most of its public corporations; reconsideration of the policy of tax exemption both to obtain emergency funds and as part of a medium- and long-term overhaul of government development policy; a democratic and participatory government reform, including active labor participation; the elaboration and adoption of a plan of economic reconstruction based on internal initiatives, with an emphasis on public and cooperative endeavors; and negotiation with the U.S. government regarding its responsibilities toward such a program.

One could be tempted to summarize the PPT’s perspective with the phrase “from status to class politics.” But this would be a mistake, since the PPT acknowledges that working people must also work toward the solution of the status question. It acknowledges that the present status is unacceptable and cannot be perpetuated. But it seeks to create a context in which working people can address that problem as part of their common struggle, and not as the

foot soldiers of warring parties led by privileged and corporate interests.

Some Questions, Problems, and Opportunities

The project of the PPT differs in several regards from past and existing organizations and orientations of the Puerto Rican left. The creation of a party runs counter to the views of those who feel parties should yield to movements, grass-roots coalitions, and other such initiatives as the main vehicles of an alternative politics. The PPT's electoral participation and activism is rejected by those who feel such options help strengthen or legitimate existing institutions, as well as by those who feel it constitutes a waste, or, at least, a misuse of the left's limited resources. Finally, its nature as a broad party has been criticized by those who feel that this cripples both its analysis and its proposals, preventing it from denouncing colonialism and capitalism as the ultimate causes of the problems it seeks to address and from spelling out the abolition of both as the condition for effectively addressing them.

The fact is that most of the founders of the PPT are independentistas and socialists. The initial push for the creation of the PPT in 2010 came from the Movement to Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo or MAS). The MAS had been organized in 2008 as a fusion of several organizations, such as the Youth of the Revolutionary Left (Juventud de Izquierda Revolucionaria), the Revolutionary Party of Workers and Macheteros (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores-Macheteros), and the Political Education Workshop (Taller de Formación Política), that had collaborated since the early 1990s as members of the Socialist Front (Frente Socialista), and the Political Work Project (Proyecto de Trabajo Político), as well as individual militants. The promotion of a broad party identified with the working class, within which socialists could interact with workers beginning to break with their past political af-

filiations, has been one of the party's objectives since its inception.

Does the participation and leading role of independentistas and socialists in a broad party that does not define itself as either one of those constitute an act of betrayal, capitulation, opportunism, or whichever other term one may choose to use? Only if such participation implies hiding, silencing, censoring, or self-censoring their positions as socialists. But it does not: Socialists in the PPT are not expected to, and do not, hide or silence their views. As the PPT gubernatorial candidate in 2012, I often and openly acknowledged that I am a socialist, while also explaining that the PPT is not. It is true, nevertheless, that while we never deny or renounce our anti-capitalist, socialist positions, we do emphasize that we are eager and willing to join with working people who may not share these views in order to build a new party on the basis of the many issues on which we do agree at present, such as the five-point program mentioned above, as well as the other points in the PPT program regarding living and working conditions, women and LGBT rights, protection of the environment, the need to tax corporate profits and to defend public services against privatization, and so on.

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Is this then a renunciation of independence for those of us who defend it? That conclusion would only be warranted if one felt that an increasingly conscious, mobilized working people would turn away from independence. The fact is that *today* the overwhelming majority of people in Puerto Rico do *not* support independence (close to half support statehood). It is in the process of self-organizing as working people

that they can gain the understanding and the self-confidence needed to transform present society. And it is as part of *that* process that they may also come to see self-government as an independent republic as a means of completing that transformation. Thus, independentistas and socialists should not abandon or hide their views, but neither should they make the adoption of those views a precondition for participating in a broad project that promotes working people's political independence and self-organization.

Do independentistas and socialists run the danger of diluting or abandoning their views in the quest for unity on such a basis? Certainly. But we also have the opportunity to help workers detach themselves from the colonial and capitalist parties they now support, as they move to a clearer awareness of their shared interests

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as working people. We should seek to create that opportunity, even if it inevitably comes with dangers that we must always keep in mind.

Seeking and gaining ballot status and participating in the 2012 elections enabled the PPT to bring its ideas to a wide public. Since the elections it has remained a visible political actor, intervening in public debates regarding such issues as government austerity policies (including attacks on public-sector union contracts and pensions), the budget crisis and tax-reform proposals, state debt, drug policy and the legalization of marijuana, the need for single-payer universal health insurance, the restoration of double pay for those working on Sundays, exten-

sion of maternity leave, LGBT rights, prisoner voting rights, the problem of waste generation and disposal and the projected construction of an incineration plant, and the high cost of electricity and the urgent need to transition to renewable energy, among other issues. It has gained a foothold in the mainstream political conversation, a tentative, still limited and fragile foothold, but a palpable one nonetheless.

Beyond the Ballot Box

The PPT does not underestimate the need for organizing beyond the electoral field. Even if it were to gain office or gather significant electoral support, most aspects of its program will face relentless opposition from the employers and other privileged sectors and could only be enacted with the support of significant mass mobilizations. To build such movements is as important as building a viable electoral project. But we reject the choice between electoral and non-electoral activism: We must be active on all fronts, and there is no reason why advances in one may not strengthen the other.

Furthermore, in the context of the acute economic and fiscal crisis, almost all immediate battles regarding wages, pensions, university fees, minimum-wage legislation, electricity rates, and health coverage for the poor are inseparable from larger policy questions regarding, for example, the fluctuations in government income and its tax policies toward corporations and mega-stores, debt servicing and the demands it places on the government's reduced earnings, or priorities in the allocation of public funds. In other words, the immediate and specific demands of diverse sectors should be formulated as part of an integrated program covering all of these, as well as other, issues. Plus, a wide movement must be built to demand the implementation of that program. But, then, what is a movement seeking the implementation of an integrated program if not the most basic definition of a party, regardless of the name it adopts? We believe that it is better to call

things by their name and to thus acknowledge that we feel a party is still necessary if we wish to move from the undoubtedly crucial work of resisting government and the employers' policies, to formulating and seeking to enact our own alternative policies. Here we again reject a false choice between party and movement: We need active, effective union, environmental, student, and women's movements as well as an organization that integrates their demands into an alternative political project, in other words, a political party, which must, of course, be as democratic and participatory as possible.

In the present context, no party linked to the working class can simply plan according to the electoral calendar: During 2015 and 2016 events such as possible budget shortfalls requiring mass lay-offs or a partial closing of government agencies, new increases in electricity and other rates or university fees, or new attempts to privatize government agencies or public corporations could ignite mass protests and mobilizations, which the PPT must be ready to support and help orient with its analysis and program.

Results and Prospects

The PPT ran around ninety candidates in the 2012 elections. Two of its four national candidates and its electoral commissioner were women. It obtained around 20,000 votes, or close to 1 percent of the vote. It elected one municipal legislator in Vieques, Elda Guadalupe. The PPT had only gained ballot status in May 2012 and selected its candidates in mid-June. Thus, it only campaigned for four months. Of the six parties that participated in the elections, it was the newest and the least known at the start of the race and was expected to come in last. It came in fourth, behind the three traditional parties. Of the three new parties, the PPT is the only one seeking ballot status for the 2016 elections.

After the elections, the PPT adopted three priorities: collecting the 55,000 signatures required to regain ballot status, strengthening the party's organization, and developing its pro-

gram. By mid-2014 it had collected the required signatures, yet since mid-2013 it had become evident that extensive fraud was being used to deny the party its rights. Under present legislation, the signed forms submitted by a party seek-

We reject a false choice between
party and movement: We need
an organization that integrates
movement demands into an
alternative political project.

ing ballot status are evaluated by representatives of the parties that already have such status. It is perhaps an indication of the impact of the PPT's 2012 campaign that Puerto Rico's two dominant parties have left no stone unturned in their attempt to prevent the PPT's participation in the 2016 elections. Suffice it to say that at times they have rejected close to 80 percent of the endorsements submitted, arguing that the signatures do not correspond to those registered in their records. This is a situation that normally affects 10-15 percent of the signatures presented (some voters do change their signatures after they register to vote). But rejection rates of more than 25 percent, not to mention 50 percent or 70 percent, are unprecedented. This issue is now part of a suit brought by the PPT against the State Electoral Commission.

Regarding organization and programmatic elaboration, much work remains to be done. The objective of having a group in each municipality is still somewhat remote, but regional centers that include several municipalities are beginning to function effectively. The party now has a lively and very active chapter in Ponce, Puerto Rico's second-largest city, which it lacked until recently. It is preparing a document that should become a template for PPT municipal programs

around the island.

Given the composition of the Puerto Rican left and labor movement, government employ-

The struggles for radical reversal of the dominant economic and social policies and structures in Puerto Rico and in the United States must advance together.

ees, teachers, and progressive professionals (labor lawyers, university professors) are over-represented among PPT activists. An effort must be made to attract private-sector workers most of whom are unorganized (a meager 1 percent of private-sector workers are unionized). Since the October 2009 one-day public-sector general strike, which was already hindered by growing divisions, the Puerto Rican labor movement has, with few and limited exceptions, undergone a period of demobilization, divisions, and fragmentation, a process that merits a separate analysis but that evidently affects the PPT as a party identified with working-class struggles. The PPT supports all attempts to create coalitions or united fronts on specific issues (resisting attacks on public-sector wages and union contracts, opposition to new sales taxes and a regressive tax reform) that should ideally include all union sectors in spite of their divergent orientations.

Unlike other parties, the PPT does not hide its present deficiencies. Its program is still an uneven document. Written during 2010 and amended afterward, it includes areas where analysis and proposals are very specific and comprehensive, and other aspects in which general orientations are spelled out, but concrete proposals are insufficient or lacking. A program commission is redrafting the document, a process that should include seeking the

input of labor, environmental, women's, LGBT, health rights, civil rights, and other groups and coalitions.

The elaboration of a plan of economic reconstruction is a particularly complex and pressing task. Such a plan will surely demand an expansion of the public sector—an extension of economic planning at the expense of the blind and destructive imperatives of capitalist competition, thus placing social well-being over private profits, that is to say, the very opposite of the neoliberal policies dominant since the 1980s. But, broadly speaking, this must also be the agenda of working people in the United States, who are suffering the consequences of the great recession brought about by several decades of pro-business policies promoted by both dominant political parties. All the more reason, then, to join together the agendas of progressive movements in Puerto Rico and the United States.

It is in the interest of U.S. working people (including, needless to say, the more than four million Puerto Ricans that reside in the United States) to see that Puerto Rico acquires a healthy economy that no longer requires major subsidies to dampen the poverty from which a handful of U.S. corporations profit. The struggles for radical reversal of the dominant economic and social policies and structures in Puerto Rico and in the United States must advance together. Building alliances and common proposals with like-minded currents and movements in the United States is indispensable in order to enhance the credibility of the PPT's program for Puerto Rico. For those of us who are independentistas and socialists, and thus, internationalists, such collaboration is essential now and will remain so after independence. The fact that these movements are still minority forces in both the United States and Puerto Rico makes it all the more urgent that those seeking to build them join forces and collaborate as effectively as possible. I hope this article will be a small but real step in that direction.

What Next in the Greek Crisis?

BARRY FINGER

IF THE ONGOING STANDOFF between the Syriza government and the Troika of the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) could be boiled down to its essentials, it would be this: The “institutions” will only equip the Greek economy with enough operating funds to manage a bare-bones operation. And they will begrudgingly accede to this only if Syriza maintains a primary surplus and the neoliberal labor market reforms that the Troika judges necessary to keep the Greek economy, and other eurozone economies, competitive in the global market. The left-wing government must, in essence, demonstrate that its loyalty to the European bankers’ project takes precedence over its obligations to democracy.

If accepted, this means, for Syriza, that it will not be able to implement its anti-austerity measures—the massive public works projects needed to revive the country’s economy, expand its tax base, or drive down its public debt through growth. Bailout of the private and national central banks, which had or still hold sovereign Greek debt on their balance sheets, is, in any case, now being internalized by the ECB by means of quantitative easing. These toxic assets have been swapped out for euros at terms far in excess of their actual market values. This is not a complete bailout of the banking system. It will not restore that sector to its previous level of profitability. But quantitative easing is suf-

ficient to guarantee eurozone-banking-system liquidity should the Greeks refuse to listen to “reason” and renege on their “commitments,” thereby triggering a run on the banks.

This dispute is no longer about maintaining the structural integrity of European capitalism, which has been shored up in advance, but about fashioning an unmistakable demonstration for would-be movements to challenge the status quo.

And this has already had the intended dampening effect, as evidenced by Podemos’ disappointing results in the Andalusian elections.

But national banks do not exist merely to lubricate the European economies. That ultimately is the role of the European Central Bank and, to a lesser extent, of the IMF. Private banks are primarily profit-making institutions. They make their profits on the spread between the rates at which they borrow, in the final analysis, from the ECB to maintain operating reserves, and that which can be extracted from their borrowers. Quantitative easing can be counted upon to keep bond rates low. But the banks, nevertheless, cannot find promising private entities in this profit-barren economy to lend money to, despite the rather meager profit margins the banks might be willing to accept. Industrial and commercial enterprises cannot make lucrative use of their existing capacity and so are loathe to expand. Debt-ridden workers are already under water and can, in any case, declare bankruptcy, leaving banks holding the bag.

This is not the case with nations and governments. There is no mechanism for them to write off excess debt. And, lacking a proper

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sovereign bank to underwrite fiscal decisions in accordance with the popular will, nations are captive to private market forces. So the bloodletting continues: austerity in exchange for loans. A housebroken Greece is to be granted future loan rollovers, arranged through the Troika, to pay off and service existing loans *ad infinitum*—a permanent Ponzi scheme, with no identifiable end game. And the only collateral that Greece can provide against these loans is its public assets, its cultural resources, and its tax base, all of which are rapidly shrinking in value due in no small part to the imposition of the “bailout” system itself.

In the meantime, as this is being written, Syriza has been forced to give its creditors, now basically the ECB, an ongoing veto over measures that might impact the economy, Greek banks, or the budget. It has to finance its state from tax receipts and cannot bridge the gap between receipts and expenditures by issuing short-term bonds to the ECB, which has already capped what it is willing to accept. The ECB has failed to lift the limits on what Greek banks can borrow under the Emergency Lending Assistance scheme. Neither has it requalified the Greek banks to borrow from the ECB. Tying off the last loose end, the ECB has, as well, prevented Greek banks from accepting government bonds needed to raise short-term capital. The Greek government and the Greek economy are gripped in an ever-tightening vise. Promised financial assistance of €7.2 billion has been held hostage since August of last year. In a variant of “your money or your life,” Syriza is faced with this: Contribute to the restoration of euro banking profitability and recognize your ongoing subordination to the neoliberal project, or your regime and your economy will be on indefinite lock down. Accept these conditions, and be kept on short rations.

Greek companies and households, according to the *Financial Times*, “pulled €7.6 [billion] out of their bank accounts during the government standoff with its international bailout

creditors in February, driving deposits down to €140.5 [billion]—the lowest level in 10 years.” All this makes the need for capital controls an all but inescapable imperative.

This power asymmetry was baked into the EU framework. All nations, upon joining the eurozone, ceded their fiscal autonomy to an unelected banking technocracy. Unlike the consolidated federal banking system in, say, the United States, England, China, or Japan, the ECB exists by mandate solely to maintain price stability. It does this by setting key interest rates and by, supposedly, controlling the money supply—neither of which, incidentally, are directly meaningful in stemming state-induced inflation. And while the ECB can have a determining effect on interest rates, it cannot, in actual fact, control the money supply since all private banks create money by issuing loans. What the ECB can do, and what private banks cannot do for themselves under all circumstances, is to backstop the private banks by making available adequate operating funds to conduct business. The ECB has the sole ability to spend euros into existence. As such, the ECB, unlike private banks, can never run out of money.

The ECB’s demand that its loans be repaid is therefore a *political* demand and cannot be seen otherwise. It has no functional meaning beyond enforcing fiscal discipline, since “repayment” by Greece, other nations, or any other entity with which the ECB conducts business has absolutely no effect on the ECB’s ongoing ability to maintain operations. Repayment is nothing more than ledger decoration. If repayments were made in physical euros, rather than in electronic keystroke entries, the physical euros would simply be shredded.

But the ECB also has, by design, no mandate to maintain full employment. And, more generally, it has no mandate to support any of the spending decisions of democratically authorized governments. Countries that issue their own sovereign currencies, in contrast, are never revenue-constrained. Such governments

are themselves the sources of the money needed to pay for their own expenditures. They are not revenue-dependent on their populations, either as sources of taxes or of loans. Taxes, under such circumstances, exist first to drive state-issued monies, by defining the medium under which government liabilities can be law-

fully extinguished. They then exist as tools for siphoning off inflationary (excessive) demand, for redistribution, for carving out additional fiscal space to expand the public sector, and for discouraging activities deemed detrimental to the public welfare.

Foreign contracts, like domestic public



The Troika—capitalism, neoliberalism, and austerity

contracts, when denominated in the national currency, can always be serviced in money the countries' central banks have the bottomless capacity to issue. Countries that issue their own sovereign currencies cannot suffer sovereign debt crises.

It follows from this that anything that a currency-issuing economy is capable of producing, given the limits of its accumulated capacity, it also can fully afford to produce. And until the point of full capacity utilization is reached, no nation can be justly said to be living beyond its means.

The architecture of the European Union has quite simply robbed the constituent nations of this autonomy. It has created debt colonies subject to perpetual domination at the hands of an autonomous, unshackled, central banking system. That banking system has appointed itself, by dint of prior social engineering, the executive committee of Europe's ruling classes. And its agenda is clear. The Troika is prioritizing, for the moment, rent seeking and national exploitation over jump-starting the productive sectors of capitalism until the latter is drained of its social-welfare legacy and overhead. The financial sector is enriching itself, while preparing capitalism for renewed accumulation based on a more propitious basis for exploitation and profit extraction.

Social democracy has largely surrendered to this agenda without resistance. It is only the pace and timing of implementation, rather than the agenda itself, that distinguishes its mainstream from the business community "austerians," as Syriza calls them.

Once a socialist or radical left has ruled out a similar capitulation, there are really only two alternative solutions to this. On the one hand, Syriza can challenge the existing limits, find stopgap measures that free fiscal space, implement as much of its program as this permits, elbow the monetary union into a looser federation, and build a multinational insurgency within the eurozone having, as its intermediate aim, the

socialization of the ECB. That is, it can advocate and work for the ultimate subordination of the ECB to democratic norms and accountability by relentlessly pushing boundaries and recruiting allies within the existing framework.

Or it can prepare for as orderly an exit from the zone as it can negotiate and go it—for the moment—alone. It can repudiate its external debt or write it down and redenominate the remainder of that debt in its own newly defined currency. Greek socialists can choose, in other words, to operate on the political terrain that they have already "hegemonized" and which plays to their acquired strengths. By so doing, Syriza can regain Greece's fiscal autonomy on a national basis. It can, through example, be a beacon of inspiration to other oppressed nations, who may be similarly emboldened to peel themselves away from the monetary union. With enough defections, the future of the union as a bankers' dictatorship might itself be placed in jeopardy, precipitating a later regroupment on a different institutional footing.

But, while a Grexit (a Greek exit from the eurozone) will reclaim the essential monetary and fiscal levers the government now lacks, these levers will not overcome the structural dependence of the Greek economy on foreign investment, nor shield it from the pressures of global finance. Greek capitalism, with the exception of merchant shipping and tourism, is largely based on small enterprises. Extensive nationalization would be difficult to coordinate, inherently chaotic, and probably politically and economically unwise. Even ardent proponents of an early Grexit, such as Marxist economist Costas Lapavistas, restrict their calls for nationalization to the banking sector and to those public utilities that were previously privatized. Alluding to the New Economic Policy experiment in the Soviet Union, Lapavistas has raised the distinction between public control, which may only entail the disciplining of capital combined with extensive public works programs, and a widespread socialization project, reserved for

the remote future.

The immediate aftermath of departure would have to be meticulously planned in advance—something we have yet to see—and the population prepared for the likelihood of extensive rationing as the prices of imported goods skyrocket. This may lead Syriza to impose controls on the movement of capital and commodities. While the Syriza government, liberated from restraints from on high, should be able to mobilize the available resources to jump-start its economy, the economy it jump-starts will still be one of relative deprivation—and one vulnerable to continuous siege from the continental forces at its perimeter.

Did the Greek electorate sign up for this when they voted for Syriza? Are the citizens being mobilized to confront these issues? How are they being readied to face these challenges? Will the question be put to a vote? And if so, by whom? The existing government? Or a new one created to effect the transition?

What is even more worrisome than a planned and orderly exit, however, is indecision and drift. For there is certainly a yawning gap between Germany's hysterical demonization of Syriza, and Syriza's actions. If, for instance, the Greek banks, unfettered by capital controls, are permitted to become insolvent in a prolonged impasse, Greece would be compelled to print its own currency under conditions not of its own choosing and under ad hoc circumstances for which it had not adequately prepared. Recourse to this contingency, under emergency settings, would signal that the decision had already been implicitly made on high that the cost of letting Greece exit the eurozone is lower than the costs of granting variances that would later have to be scaled up in answer to a euro-periphery insisting on similar deals. A "Grexident," rather than a planned exit would add another dimension of turmoil and upheaval to an already perilous situation.

There is still another dimension to this. While the ECB retains the ability to shore up

the system against liquidity shortfalls in the event of a departure, the prospect of future fragmentation is worrisome for capital on a different front. It introduces a mountain of new investor risk and uncertainty. Would Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, or Italian corporations issue bonds to raise funds in euros, if a later redenomination would cause them to go under? Would a corporation invest outside its own country if there were ongoing uncertainty about the future denomination of its investment? If a Grexit is followed by peripheral fragmentation, crises and paralysis contagion could set in, undermining neoliberal integration and leading predictably to wide-spread financial retrenchment. The Troika must be evaluating a response to this scenario. But how? By turning a blind eye to Greek initiatives that formally violate the terms of agreement, but keep Greece from exiting? Or with plans to isolate and crush an "independent" Greek economy, demonstrating decisively that the path out of the eurozone leads from disaster to ruin?

What has to be kept in mind is that there is no legal framework for Germany and the Troika to expel Greece from the Economic and Monetary Union of the EU. Greece must elect to do so freely, or be made to do so under duress. The initiative, in any case, formally resides solely with the Greeks.

The lack of a legal framework for expulsion accords Syriza with an unintended license for experimentation and maneuver. France and Italy, for instance, have already set precedence by missing deficit and structural adjustment targets, suffering little or no consequences for having done so. Germany violated the limits on its external balance. The Greek finance minister, Varoufakis, failed to convince the Troika to swap out existing debt instruments for perpetual interest bonds that would not add to the public debt for lack of a principal repayment obligation. Varoufakis tested the waters. But Greece's overlords were not about to be complicit in Syriza's efforts to jump-start its economy even by means

that were in technical compliance with budgetary proscriptions. Clearly, an expansionary fiscal policy is something that cannot be negotiated. It is an obstacle that must be surmounted creatively, but without assistance.

One method, and one which Varoufakis evidently considered in 2013, would be for the Greek government to generate a parallel currency for internal transactions. They have already committed themselves to ramping up the intensity and efficiency of tax collection. This is probably the one place where Syriza and the Troika agree. When the necessary institutional changes are implemented, the Greek government can begin to securitize future taxes and issue scrip based on revenue anticipation. This scrip can be an electronic entry into accounts, personal and corporate, with which the government has business. Or it can be issued in small denomination bills intended for day-to-day purchases. It is denominated, in either case, in euros, with an exchange rate of parity. Euros will remain the unit of account, but scrip can be introduced as an additional means of payment. And since this means of payment is only acceptable for internal transactions, scrip is implicitly a form of direct capital control.

This parallel currency should be acceptable for settlement of private-sector tax liabilities and must be transferrable within the nation and to foreigners who have business or pay taxes in Greece. It is precisely a scrip's acceptability to extinguish tax liabilities that assures its ability to circulate. It is in effect a short-term loan granted by the population to the government. And because it is perpetual without a defined maturity date requiring repayment of principal, it would not technically increase the public debt-to-GDP ratio. On the contrary, if used to prime the pump of economic expansion, it should reduce that ratio. Moreover, as long as the government makes no effort to pay principal or interest on existing government bonds, it can avoid the danger of triggering default clauses.

Because this proposed scrip would be

pegged to the euro and in demand as a means of tax payment, the process of arbitrage should be sufficient to maintain par value. If its market exchange rate falls below par, taxpayers might be expected to scramble after cheap scrip to meet their obligations, which, after all, will be accepted at par value by the treasury. This process of driving up the scrip's exchange value with the euro should be sufficient to counterbalance speculative forces operating to undermine the peg.

Socialist economist Michael Burke has pointed out that Greek business claims the highest share of national income among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, at 56 percent. Of this, only 11.3 percent of the national income is actually invested. This is a vast pool of surplus value that can be socialized. There is no reason why this untapped remainder cannot provide a firm platform to securitize taxes for countercyclical activity. With adequate capital controls, Syriza is in a position to present business with a Hobson's choice: Either invest this savings now or it will be confiscated and spent by the state later. In the meantime, these savings will be securitized as scrip for immediate relief.

Scrip can pay civil servants and support the expansion of public services. With it, Syriza can fund infrastructural improvements and research and development needed to earn additional euros for Greece through improved trade and import substitution. And at the same time, it frees euros for the large-scale import purchases of food, medicine, and fuel. It offers Syriza the opportunity to build a commanding heights to the Greek economy, which is crucial for any future socialist transformation. And it augers the possibility that Greece may no longer face the Troika as a supplicant.

But neither is this a sufficient plan B. Even if the fiscal restraint imposed by the eurozone's limiting of primary deficits to 3 percent of GDP were circumvented, its tax base would still restrain a Greek economic recovery. The advan-

tages to this parallel currency is that it permits a path through which the tax base, once securitized, can pump a self-expanding loop through the system generating additional incomes to tax. Scrip issuance would allow Greece to run a fiscal deficit with at least perfunctory debt service potential until the economy recovers, and to do so without borrowing from the institutions. Any recovery would increase Greece's creditworthiness and Syriza's bargaining strength. Nevertheless, the type of robust recovery needed is still unlikely given the country's structural limitations. According to one estimate, Greece needs to run a primary deficit of 10 percent to return it to a fully elaborated growth path. Without the total fiscal autonomy of a supportive central bank, this is unlikely to be attained.

Can the ECB still starve Syriza of euros and lock up the Greek economy? There are two issues involved here. Clearly the government would no longer be dependent on receipt of additional euros to pay for public services. Euros here would have been displaced by scrip for that purpose. And again, banks create money when they issue loans. So a banking system that is again lending money would create additional system-wide reserves. But would these reserves be adequate to fully cover the additional loan exposure of a reviving economy and offset possible future bank runs, without also being backstopped by the ECB? This is where the power of the Troika resides: The ECB alone can do that. Because of fear of ECB abandonment, Greek banks are unwilling to extend short-term operating loans. This, in turn, is blocking otherwise viable Greek exporters from fulfilling their contracts and taking on new business. And that business is vital to obtaining additional euros.

How can this be offset? Beyond what can be generated by scrip, Greece, which is Germany's seventh largest customer for military equipment, could rip up existing contracts and earmark

those funds to bank reserves. It can similarly review and repudiate any other public contracts with foreign nations and firms that do not serve the commonweal. Greece is still earning euros through shipping and tourism. These euros need to be sequestered in special bank accounts and swapped out for scrip to conduct internal transactions. Investment bank accounts should not be insured by the state. And Syriza should fully renounce its "odious" debt obligations to further tighten centralized oversight over the leakage of euros that promise no tangible benefit to the Greek population. It can, in other words, find creative ways of economizing on the use of euros while freeing itself, in the short term, from the ECB.

And there is the larger picture. What such stopgap measures can do is to transform the eurozone from a monetary union to a looser monetary federation. Greece can "exit austerity without exiting the euro." It can chip away at the power of the Troika and provide hope and encouragement to similarly minded insurgencies such as Podemos, Sinn Féin, and trade union militants eager to break with or move existing mass workers' parties to the left. By stoking the anti-austerity brushfire, any success by Syriza, no matter how modest, would mobilize an emboldened left to ask larger questions about the structure, design, and necessity of this bankers' federation.

This is not the time for left critics of Syriza abroad to pass judgment, to issue edicts from on high, or to grandstand with revolutionary rhetoric devoid of concrete substance. Syriza will sort this out in dialog with the Greek people. It is a time to fully comprehend the enormous obstacles Syriza faces in implementing its program. It is a time, above all, for constructive, comradely engagement; a time to think this through together.

Putin, the War in Ukraine, and the Far Right

JEAN BATOU

PUTIN'S RUSSIA IS AN IMPERIALIST state dominated by a capitalist oligarchy that controls the state and that has developed a bellicose attitude toward its neighbors, whom the oligarchy reproaches for having taken advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to escape its century-long tutelage. Embracing an ultra-nationalist ideology that gives a good deal of space to racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, its authoritarian neoconservatism has become a veritable standard for the European extreme right. For those of us dedicated to fighting Western imperialism, be it American or European, an understanding of the Russian state's imperial nature, of its expansionist tendencies, and of the real nature of its contest with the West is essential.

In Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation is supported by important sectors of the extreme right such as Attack, in Bulgaria; the National Party, in Slovakia; Jobbik, in Hungary; the National Democratic Party, in Germany; the National Front, in France; the Freedom Party of Austria; the Northern League and the New Force, in Italy; the Flemish Interest Party, in Belgium; and so on.¹ On March 22, 2015, at the Holiday Inn in Saint Petersburg, the Russia Patriot Party organized an International Conservative Forum involving a large number

of these movements, with participation from Eastern Ukraine military leaders linked to fascist groups. That network will strengthen the connection among European nationalists who support the Russian Federation's foreign policy against Brussels and Washington.

Which Russian Imperialism?

Some people nostalgic for the post-Stalinist Soviet Union close their eyes to this reality, forgetting that the denunciation of Russian imperialism was always at the heart of Lenin's thought and action. Did he not advocate the defeat of Russia in 1914? On December 12 of that year, Lenin wrote,

The Great Russians cannot "defend the fatherland" except by desiring the defeat of Czarism in any war, this as the lesser evil for nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia. For Czarism not only oppresses those nine-tenths economically and politically, but also demoralizes, degrades, dishonors, and prostitutes them by teaching them to oppress other nations and to cover up this shame with hypocritical and quasi-patriotic phrases.²

Replace the word "Czarism" with "oligarchy" and Lenin's judgment remains completely true today.

Russia is a unique imperialist power because as it colonized the non-Russian people of its empire, at the same time it brutally repressed and virtually enslaved the mass of Russian and non-Russian peasants inside Russia, generally from the seventeenth century onward, a process that resembled those perpetrated by the European powers in their far-flung colonies. With the emergence of capitalist imperialism in

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the last third of the nineteenth century, Russia sought to compensate for the relative weakness of its economic and financial monopolies by the exclusive military control of a vast territory and, as Lenin suggested in 1916, by “special facilities for robbing minority nationalities.”³ In this way Russia could try to play in the big leagues, as a junior partner of France and England. Not understanding this, some Marxists refer to Lenin in order to call into doubt the imperialist nature of today’s Russia, pointing out the relative weakness of its finance capital sector. But this only shows that they do not understand Lenin’s characterization of Russian imperialism before 1917.

Great Russian Chauvinism and Soviet Russia

While finance capital’s monopoly was shattered by the October Revolution, leading to the creation of the Soviet Union, Great Russian chauvinism and the privileges associated with it remained. That is why Lenin in his last writings proposed affirmative-action measures for the oppressed nations and gave cardinal importance to the struggle against social-nationalism, not hesitating to confront Stalin regarding his report on the Georgian Communists and accusing him of being a “vulgar Great Russian bully.”⁴ After Lenin’s death, this battle would be lost and the theory of “socialism in one country” would mask the triumph of Great Russian chauvinism over the rights of other nationalities. This largely explains how “atmospheric” violence (to take a word from Franz Fanon) of the Stalinist order of the years from 1930-1940 can be compared to that of the colonial world: massive expropriations, work camps, deportations and exterminations, forced Russification, and so on.

After World War II, the Soviet Union reigned again over its empire and its claims on an area that extended from China to Iran (Azerbaijan) to Turkey.⁵ Beyond that, in July 1945 Stalin even proposed establishing a Soviet protectorate over Tripolitania (Libya) in North

Africa. When Great Britain took a position in favor of the independence of Libya, Soviet diplomats took the fallback position of proposing a protectorate of the four great powers (United States, England, France, and Russia). Finally, when the Soviets perceived the possibility of a Communist Party victory in the 1946 election in Italy, they turned to the suggestion of an Italian protectorate, but unsuccessfully.⁶ That little-known attempt of Moscow to revive for its own benefit the League of Nations’ mandates that had been established after World War I says a lot about its Great Power politics toward colonial people. Nevertheless, the Soviet Russian Empire’s hour of glory would last less than half a century and would be followed by an unprecedented collapse after 1991, with the loss of 14 non-Russian republics (some 5.3 million square kilometers of territory).

The Reunification of Great Russia?

Today the Russian Federation still has 21 non-Russian republics which comprise 30 percent of its territory. Reconstituted finance capital, the relative fragility of which is once again compensated for by the support of a powerful state apparatus, now becomes the first recipient of profits from the exploitation of the natural resources of Siberia and the Far East. Once again this is organized in a colonial fashion: Resources flow to the center, which returns a small part of them to the various regions for their own development. At the same time, this system encourages Moscow to adopt an expansionist policy toward neighboring states, which ultra-nationalists present as an effort at “the reunification of Great Russia.” For Aleksandr Dugin, one of their current main ideologues and a follower of the “war between the continents,” the integrity of its former dominions can only be guaranteed if they agree not to leave the Russian orbit. He proclaims that “Every State [in] the post-Soviet space, if it decides to violently oppose Russia, cannot exist except in a truncated form.” (*Liberation*, April 27, 2014).

We have the same story from Igor Strelkov, a Russian military man who was engaged on the side of the separatists of Transnistria (an area between the River Dniester and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine), with the Serbs in Bosnia, and with the pro-Russian forces during the two wars in Chechnya, before leading combat units in the Eastern Ukraine. Then Strelkov became the Minister of Defense of the self-proclaimed Peoples' Republic of Donetsk until mid-August, 2014, when he was removed from power by the Kremlin in obscure circumstances. "I believed that Moscow would quickly annex the Donbass region as it had Crimea after the referendum," he told *Der Spiegel*. "Kiev is a Russian city. I want a new Russian domination, which is historically justified. The Ukraine has been and remains a part of Russia. My dream is that Russia re-establishes its natural borders as they were in 1939."⁷ One wonders if he means before or after the Hitler-Stalin Pact of that year.

With the rise of Great Russian ultra-nationalism, the racist and anti-Semitic ideologies in the tradition of the Black Hundreds that formed in reaction to the Revolution of 1905 have once again found fertile ground. The Islamophobic campaigns against the peoples of the Caucasus and of Central Asia, of course, occupy first place. In November 2013, Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyannin (a right-wing nationalist) announced that the city would not be constructing any more mosques for the capital's 1.5 to 2 million Muslim inhabitants. To that one must add the right-wing propaganda against immigration of people of color, in particular Africans who have recently become the victims of a record number of aggressions. Jews, too, are once again in the sights of anti-Semitic groups operating openly through social networks and in the street.

When the Devil Gets Out of His Box

After Moscow's military intervention on the side of the Ukrainian separatists, the call for a sacred union justified the increase in political

repression. According to Olga Miryasova, the sociologist and militant Moscow civil rights advocate, the number of imprisoned activists rose from 1,500 in 2013 to 2,500 in 2014. A law against "inciting social hatred" allows the government to prosecute any criticism of police behavior.

Judicial harassment is particularly ferocious in Crimea, where any protest against the Russian annexation is systematically repressed. Such is the case of the student unionist, environmentalist, and anti-fascist Alexander Kolchenko, who was arrested in Simferopol last May 17 and transferred to Moscow, in spite of his Ukrainian nationality, together with other activists falsely and bizarrely accused of belonging to an extreme-right terrorist network.

It is in this context that Boris Nemtsov was assassinated near the Kremlin on February 27. A young physicist from Nizhny Novgorod and a neoliberal, he was elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1990, later appointed governor of the region, then an adviser to Boris Yeltsin in 1996 for his second term, along with Vladimir Putin, who became president in 1999. Since then the fate of these two young, neoliberal reformers (Putin age 47 and Nemtsov, 40) diverged. Nemtsov, out of power, criticized the corruption of the other in a series of publications with titles that left no doubt about his views: *Putin and Gazprom*, *Putin and the Financial Crisis*, *Putin and Corruption*, and so on. In 2009, when he was running for mayor in the town of Sochi to denounce the business deals surrounding the preparation of the Olympic Games, he was physically assaulted.

Nemtsov was particularly hated by the ultra-nationalist milieu because of his Jewish background and his critique of the wars carried out against non-Russian peoples within the Federation. Recently, he announced the publication of his last report on the implications of Moscow's involvement in Ukraine, after having posted on Facebook an explosive article that the press had refused to publish. The post

read in part:

Putin has declared a war of brother against brother in the Ukraine. This bloody folly by a crazed KGB man will cost Russia and Ukraine dearly: once again the deaths of young boys on both sides, bereft mothers and wives, children turned into orphans. An empty Crimea, which tourists will never visit. Billions, tens of billions of rubles taken from old people and children and thrown into the furnace of the war, and then after that even more money to prop up the thieving regime in Crimea. ... The ghoul needs a war. He needs the blood of the people.⁸

Ukraine, the Oligarchs, and Fascism

In the Russian media, whose analyses are often complacently relayed by Western left groups of Stalinist origin or by those who place the question of national sovereignty of Russia (but not the nations it subordinates) above all, Putin and the separatists of southeastern Ukraine are today combatting a “fascist junta” and its policies that discriminate against the Russian-speaking population of the country’s East. None of that, however, corresponds to reality, even if the Kiev authorities are dominated by conservative nationalist parties with ties to powerful capitalist monopolies.

In truth, in both the East and the West, Ukraine is ruled by several dozen oligarchs who have got their hands on the essential economic resources of their region, who control the media, political power, and the police force, when they do not have their own powerful, private militias. In the East, these monopolies are particularly concentrated and exclusive, most notably those of Rinat Akhmetov, the veritable baron of Donbass. According to the Russian nationalist *Sputnik & Pogrom* website, Akhmetov recently persuaded the separatists and their Russian supporters to give up trying to occupy the neighboring port of Mariupol enabling him to continue to export to Italy—he couldn’t do this from Odessa because that port is controlled by another oligarch—in exchange for providing emergency food assistance to the population

of the Peoples Republic of Donetsk (RPD). The former RPD Prime Minister Alexander Borodai, a Moscow man, justified this deal in the name of the defense of a national revolution, or rather an “imperial revolution” in favor of Great Russia, which should not in any case be confused with a social revolution.⁹

While Akhmetov supports separatists to defend his own privileges, other oligarchs support the government of Kiev that emerged after the May 2014 elections. The president, Petro Poroshenko, took advantage of the privatization of the confectionery sector to make a fortune in chocolate (\$1.6 billion, according to *Forbes*). That said, the rule of the oligarchs is more fragile in the West, because they have smaller monopolies, they oppose each other, and they face a degree of popular mobilization and independent political expression. Moreover, the Kiev powers endorsed an elementary democratic demand—the integrity of the Ukrainian nation—against the age-old oppression of the Russian Empire, which was made manifest again by a wave of repression in annexed Crimea. Finally, if the far right is present in Ukraine, its popular support is significantly weaker than in Russia and in most European countries. If its activists have been very active on the barricades of Maiden, their political influence remains marginal. For example, Dmitry Yarosh, head of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which Moscow denounces as omnipresent in Ukraine, received only 0.7 percent of the votes in the presidential elections of May 25, 2014.

The Western Imperialists and the Ukrainian Crisis

Of course, the Western powers, above all Germany, France, and England, but also the United States on a global scale, attempt to profit from the Ukrainian crisis. Historically, the twentieth century has demonstrated how the Ukraine, like Poland, is an area of confrontation between Russian and German imperialisms, the latter being at this time the dominant force in the

European Union. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, the predecessor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or OSCE), has been an expression of Germany's Ostpolitik (eastern policy) project since the end of the 1960s, aimed at bringing about the reintegration of Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Russia in the world capitalist economy through rapprochement rather than confrontation.

After the fall of the Soviet bloc and the Dayton Accord of December 1995 that brought about the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and brought it under the tutelage of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the CSCE gave birth to the OSCE. It aimed to promote representative democracy and market economies in the former Soviet bloc while at the same time attempting to prevent war. Its goal was to contain the social and political tensions caused by the implementation of brutal policies of liberalization and privatization. The time after the fall of the Soviet bloc was the OSCE's moment of triumph, during which it managed to quintuple its annual budget, raising it from €32.4 million in 1995-1997 to €155.8 million in 1998-2000, at a time when Russia was prostrate, its GDP falling by over 50 percent (!) from 1990 to 1999.

In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became members of NATO; then in 2001, it was the turn of the Baltic states, as well as Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Between 2003 and 2005, all of these countries joined the European Union. For Russia, the prospect of European security based on the central role of the OSCE was illegitimate, while at the same time Russia gradually returned to the economic level of 1990 and finally surpassed it in 2005. At that point, Russia's ambitions for power seemed less and less compatible with the interests of the Western powers, so that in December 2004, at the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Sofia, Russia criticized the OSCE's "bias and double standards." The following

year, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov stated the view of his country: "NATO deals with security matters and the EU economic affairs, while the OSCE is content to control the adoption of values of these organizations by countries remaining outside the EU and NATO." In 2007, in Munich, Putin again criticized the OSCE as "an instrument of a group of countries at the expense of another."

Anti-capitalists' support for resistance by people who are already under the tutelage of Russian imperialism, or are threatened by its expansionist conduct, should not lead those supporters to underestimate the aggressive expansion of Western economic interests in Eastern Europe. Such investments have indeed always needed political and military guarantees that the alliance with the major EU powers and the United States within NATO provides. In Ukraine, foreign direct investment (FDI) is still very limited because of the instability of the country, but it already attests to the dominance of Western capital: from 2006 to 2010, Russian FDI accounted for only 10 percent of the total, against 12 percent each for Germany and the U.S., 8 percent for France, 6 percent each for Switzerland and Poland, and 4 percent each for Sweden, England, and Austria.¹⁰

Which Side Are We On?

Putin has certainly won the battle in the Ukraine, but probably not the war. The price for this has been the strengthening of Russia's most reactionary nationalist sectors. Last December, in the largest stadium in Grozny, in front of thousands of armed men, Razman Kadyrov, pro-Russian head of the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, presented his men as the president's special battalions: "We know that the country has an army, a navy, an air force, and nuclear warheads," he said, "but we also know that there are missions that can only be performed by volunteers." In mid-February, the Night Wolves, the Russian equivalent of the Hell's Angels, who are close to the Orthodox

Church and to Putin, held a rally in Moscow under the slogan “There will be no Maidan in Russia.”¹¹

Those within the Western left who accept as legitimate Putin’s claim that Russia supports the struggle of the peoples of the Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine against the “fascist junta Kiev” (actually a conservative nationalist government) are, in fact, providing cover for the ongoing offensive of Russian imperialism on its western margins. This is all the more serious as they often adopt as well the bellicose and racist phraseology of Moscow. Consider the bravura of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the Left Party in France, who argued that the Russian Army is “the people in arms” and will not be intimidated by the bands of poor Chicano devils from the U.S. Army, and who “recommends that Putin keep” cool in dealing with “the collapse of the Ukrainian economy, the disintegration of this country” that finds it so hard to be unified.¹²

What a marvelous expression of solidarity of the “great French nation” with the “great Russian nation” against the “little Ukrainian nation,” tinged with contempt toward the Mexicans of the United States who are oppressed by another imperialism which uses them as cannon fodder. Isn’t it high time for the international left to break definitively with such a geopolitical and chauvinistic view of the world, often tinged with racism, that praises any form of opposition to the interests of American imperialism by any tyrant who comes along? Shouldn’t the struggles and aspirations of the exploited classes and oppressed peoples of the world for their own emancipation, in the East as in the West,

in the South and in the North, be supported unconditionally?

Translation by Dan La Botz.

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Europe

Portrait of a Continent in Crisis

STÉFANIE PREZIOSO

SEVENTY YEARS AFTER THE END of World War II and the defeat of fascism and Nazism, the extreme right is on the rise in almost every European country. The last elections for the European Parliament were instructive in this regard, with electoral gains made by Europhobic, racist, and/or protofascist formations: UKIP (the United Kingdom Independence Party), the Party of the People of Denmark, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Swedish Democrats, the Alternative for Germany, Italy's Northern League, and finally, the Hungarian Jobbik and the Greek Golden Dawn.¹ In France, with 24.9 percent of the votes, the French National Front (FN) emerged as the largest party. The dramatic growth of Marine le Pen's formation—from 6.3 percent in the European elections of 2009—did not end there. In the first round of France's regional elections, in March 2015, the FN won 25.2 percent of the votes. This was an exceptional achievement for that type of election, evidence of the party's increased territorial spread and growing appeal.

For months now, the political situation has been universally described as "exceptional." Yet reading the wealth of articles and analyses of an allegedly unprecedented phenomenon, one finds

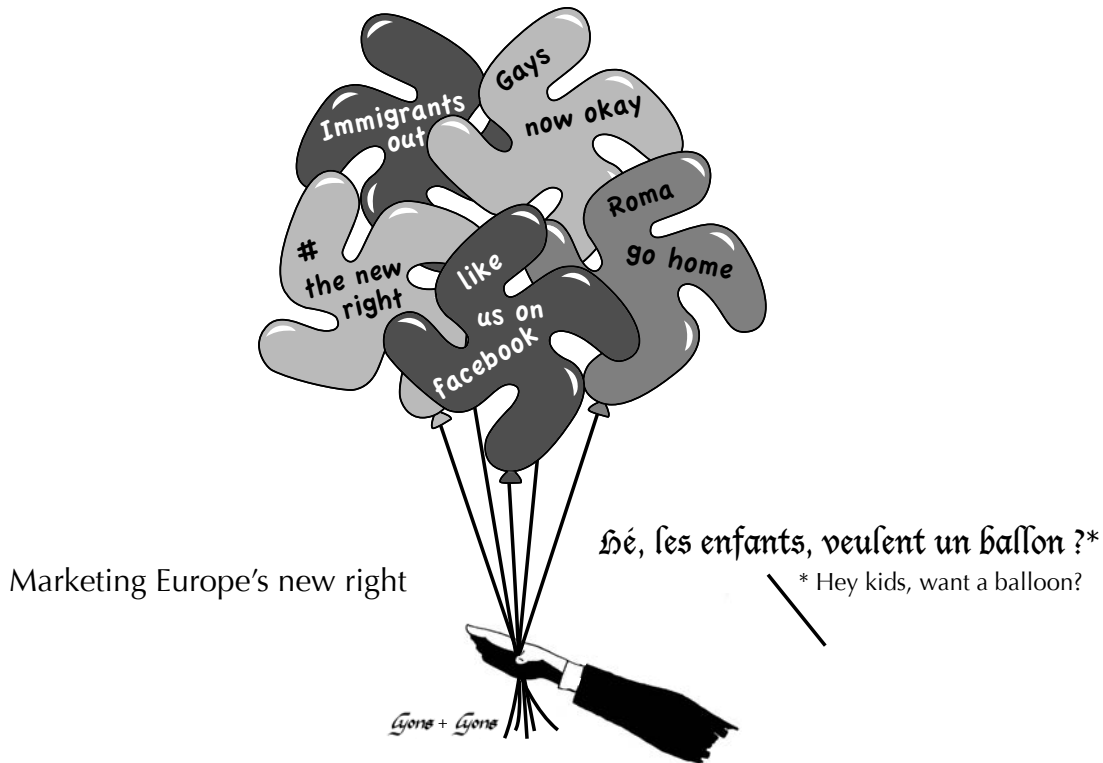
a lot to be desired. Some bemoan the failure of an undifferentiated "left" to respond credibly to this new right that appears to have emerged from the deepest recesses of European history, while others worry about the political direction of the parties in government, the so-called "mainstream" parties. Of particular concern are the European socialist parties, pressured to follow the siren song of political "modernization," and even at times to carry its torch, when it is in so many respects a reactionary, "regressive modernization."²

To this is often added an inventory of the

The economic crisis has also triggered a crisis in the legitimacy of neoliberalism and a broad political contestation.

great upheavals that have shaken Europe since the fall of the Berlin wall, thus finding at least a partial explanation for the rise of the right in the economic crisis: the emergence of a global "post-Fordist" society, the end of the "great" ideologies, the crisis of political representation and of the governing parties, a general depoliticization of society, the rise of Reality TV democracy, and the concomitant reduction of politics to personalities. In short, it is a great whirlpool, in which are mixed together deeply rooted common sense and concrete analysis of a specific historical conjuncture, rendering it diffi-

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cult to separate the incidental from the essential. This indeterminacy is likewise connected to the difficulty of clearly identifying, categorizing, and defining what is really included under the term “extreme right”—both because it is not possible to simply reduce what goes under this name today to its historical fascist or fascist-leaning matrix, and because a key strategy of the new formations is to confuse the political terms of reference.

Given the analytical difficulties that this phenomenon raises, one cannot help but recall the words written in exile in 1938 by Angelo Tasca, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, regarding another political movement new at the time: “To define fascism, one must write its history, ... for there are many fascisms, each harboring multiple, at times contradictory, tendencies, which can evolve to the point of changing even some of their essential features.”³ In this short article, I cannot attempt

to provide a complete map of the radical right in Europe. But I hope to delineate a few key tendencies by moving beyond the synchronicity of the journalistic snapshot, namely, by inscribing my reflection in the multiplicity of the phenomenon and the discordance of its social time.

The Rightward Swing

Looking back at the developments of the last decade, one is struck by the magnitude of political, social, and cultural backlash to an economic and social crisis of a depth that seems like a slow-motion replay of the Great Depression of the 1930s: the collapse of industrial output, commercial activity, and stock markets; skyrocketing economic inequality thanks to both rising unemployment and falling wages; and ballooning national debt leading to the brutal imposition of structural adjustment programs on Western European countries, notably on the so-called PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece,

and Spain, a group that Italy has joined). In fact, between the 1987 Wall Street crash and the subprime crisis of 2007-2008 there was a crisis every two years on average, implacably hitting the living and working conditions of wage-earners.⁴ The balance of forces in the workplace shifted radically and durably in favor of employers. Thus, since the 1980s, the class compromise that was established after World

This plural right has managed to place its flagship themes at the center of the political debates—chief among them immigration, its primary unifying principle.

War II in European societies has undergone a series of neoliberal counter-reforms, whose effects at the workplace led some to speak of the birth of a post-Fordist society. More prosaically, the notion of post-Fordism includes both the changes in the structures of capitalist production (the burgeoning new information and communication technologies) and in the labor force: flexibilization and subsequent feminization of labor markets; outsourcing and the dislocation of social life; the visible decline of the working class, *for itself* but not *in itself*; and the weakening of forms of solidarity and social ties (atomization). Yet the breadth of the right's counter-offensive cannot be understood without taking into consideration the "laws, decrees, regulations, and directives expressly thought of and approved by parliament under pressure from industrial and financial lobbies for the two purposes of weakening the working and middle classes and simultaneously increasing the power of the ruling class."⁵ European societies had to relearn at their own expense Antonio Gramsci's

lesson, that it is not an abstract agreement that safeguards the rules of democracy, but only the organic relation of forces in society, which is put to the test and must be re-established in each new situation.

These developments were accompanied by wide-ranging socio-cultural changes, including an attack on the welfare state, crude historical revisionism, the sanctification of personal responsibility, and the stigmatization of the unemployed and of "foreigners." These strong trends, already present from the end of the 1980s, became entrenched as economic crises followed one another, slowly but surely transforming the horizons and the political and social legitimacy of social struggles. As Warren Buffet concluded in 2006, "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning."⁶

The backlash of the last ten years appears all the more significant as it is accompanied by "dynamics of adaptation for the worse" tied to a kind of "trivialization of social injustice" and the dissolution of the essential principles on which people's relation to civil society and to the state had rested.⁷ This is particularly true in Italy, which saw the collapse, after twenty years of Berlusconiism, of one of the most important workers' movements in Western Europe with barely any struggle, and then, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the demise of *Rifondazione Comunista*, a political party that until the emergence of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain stood out in the landscape of the militant left for its capacity to make the connection with newly mobilized social sectors.

These processes did not unfold linearly and cannot be generalized to the totality of Europe (the capacity of resistance and bucking the tide by the people of Greece today is proof of that). The economic crisis has also triggered a crisis in the legitimacy of neoliberalism and a broad political contestation. Since the mid-1990s, various social movements have attempted to counter from below the neoliberal reforms that

were marketed as ineluctable and necessary for avoiding the worst. After the anti-globalization protests came the Spanish Indignados and the Occupy movement, which put in motion a new repertory of political action (of which Web 2.0 has been but one aspect) and above all defended a new way of conceptualizing politics, breaking with the traditions of the mainstream left and the large trade unions.

Too quickly relegated by the press and parts of the institutional left to the pejorative category of populism and anti-politics, these movements constituted jolts whose full impact is yet to be determined. But at least so far in the vast majority of cases, they have resulted neither in the constitution of new political organizations nor in the delineation of a strategic horizon on which the myriad of struggles that took place in Europe against all hope (and repressed in so many ways) over the last decade could be made to converge.⁸ This is perhaps linked to the underestimation of the present *as it is*, or at least of the impact of the social, political, and economic transformations that have unfolded since the 1980s. The counter-revolution unleashed by the dominant classes, “using the crisis to construct a majority,” has irrevocably changed our living conditions, “working on and through us.”⁹

Sub-cultural Hegemony and “Liquid Times”

In 1988, Stuart Hall warned the left against its dangerous failure to comprehend the implications of the “authoritarian populism” he saw represented by Margaret Thatcher’s government: “Unless the left can understand Thatcherism—what it is, why it arose, what its historical specificity is, the reasons for its success in redrawing the political map and disorganizing the left—it cannot renew itself because it cannot understand the world it must live in if it is not to be ‘disappeared’ into permanent marginality.”¹⁰ Hall advocated a “return to the subjective” as a way of fully grasping the impact of the extraordinary dissemination of that orthodoxy

in the society at large. Inspired by Lenin, Hall argued that in that moment “*absolutely dissimilar* currents, *absolutely heterogeneous* class interests, *absolutely contrary* political and social strivings [had] merged, and in a strikingly ‘harmonious’ manner” constituted a new political bloc and a new way of conceiving the political terrain.¹¹

Based simultaneously on the search for “active popular consent” and on coercion (restricting and then repressing collective freedoms), this “authoritarian populism” deployed a strong array of cultural tropes for its ideological legitimation: the end of history (Fukuyama); the emphasis on the value of individual liberties—of individuals without individuality; the stigmatization of rights, and in particular social rights; and last but not least, the widespread idea that *There Is No Alternative*. This ideological process has been so successful that “someone [could say] it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.”¹² This no doubt constitutes one of the greatest ideological victories of capitalism’s organic intellectuals.

However, although in recent years the crisis of neoliberalism has also put its instruments of ideological legitimation in crisis, not only has the trend failed to reverse, but to the contrary, it has gained in strength. From the trivialization of social justice, we have moved to the radical inversion of the values that undergirded European societies since World War II, allowing the tide of historiographic and political revisionism to conclude with ease the demolition of Marxist, and more generally critical, historiography. This was all the more effective since the new media individualizes memory and renders it more intimate, “in an apparent pluralism that has the same effects as a rigid ideological monopoly,” captured by Paul Virilio in the term “globalitarianism.”¹³

The French publishing world is today flooded with countless books that, to great media fanfare, promise to completely overhaul our understanding of European society in the last forty years, with the prime culprit

now the so-called cultural hegemony of the left, supposedly unbroken since 1968, and the root of all ills. These books castigate a period “completely defined by May 1968,” in which they find nothing but malaise and the “defeat

The European extreme right embodies the rejection of the politics of austerity.

of thought,”¹⁴ a period that saw the loss of the “true values” of national identity, undermined by the “triumphant internationalism” advocated by the left and in particular by the radical left. To this is added the stigmatization of immigrants, foreigners, and those with family or religious roots in formerly colonized countries.¹⁵ As one would guess, Muslims are in particular singled out for public opprobrium.

The writers of these books pretend to be bravely pronouncing long-denied, yet self-evident, truths. One is Eric Zemmour, columnist and polemicist for *Le Figaro*, the daily of the institutional French right, who wrote a book titled *The French Suicide*; another is writer Michel Houellebecq, a regular on the French talk-show circuit with a taste for provocation, whose novel *Submission* (in which a Muslim fraternity candidate beats the National Front’s Marine Le Pen in a presidential election) came out just as the Charlie Hebdo massacre took place; finally, there is Phillippe Val, managing editor at Charlie Hebdo between 1992 and 2009, whose book *Malaise amidst Boorishness* (attributing, among other things, the origins of Stalinism to Rousseau) came out in April 2015.¹⁶ As noted by French political journalist Edwy Plenel, these authors have mastered the art of sublimating “self-hatred paved with unhappy identity, of French suicide or imaginary submission, laced with acrimony, bitterness, and resentment.”¹⁷

It is as if the reversal of the balance of forces on the economic and social plains correlates to an inversion of values, and increasingly so, as the conditions of life and work of a growing part of the European population degrade (with a growing gap between rich and poor, ever-rising unemployment, and austerity measures attacking the fundamental rights of retirement, health, and education) and as the “moral crisis” and “ideological confusion of the dominant class” deepens with every additional failure of their reforms purporting to end the crisis and restart the economy.¹⁸ The advance of this inversion of values is made easier by the absence of a horizon of social transformation in a world that “no longer has any kind of stability; it is shifting, straddling, gliding away all the time.”¹⁹ It is also the reflection of the attractiveness of a new right-wing constellation, identified by Guido Caldiron as the “plural right,”²⁰ which manifests itself in the ever-expanding room for the cultural and political interventions of the extreme right. Enzo Traverso, the Italian historian of the holocaust and totalitarianism, speaks of the “porous border” between the institutional right and the extreme right.²¹

All over the world, this plural right has managed over the last ten years to place its flagship themes at the center of the political debates—chief among them immigration, which remains its primary unifying principle. But it was also able to seize what the Argentine political theorist Ernesto Laclau called “empty signifiers”—such as liberty, equality, universalism—and infuse them with its own political grammar, turning them into a “potent weapon of ideological hegemony.”²² On the eve of France’s regional elections of March 2015, French philosopher Jacques Rancière gave a bitter account of the phenomenon:

[The principle of] universalism has been confiscated and manipulated. Having been made into the distinctive sign of one group, it points an accusatory finger at a precise community. ... All the republican, socialist, revolutionary,

and progressive ideals have been turned against themselves. They have become the opposite of what they were supposed to be: instead of weapons in the struggle for equality, they have become tools of discrimination, contempt, and separation against a people viewed as backward and stupid.²³

A Specter Is Haunting Europe: The National-Populist Constellation

Since the last European elections, the forces of the radical right are the center of attention and a source of concern. The French sociologists Luc Boltansky and Arnauld Esquerre even speak of a “great fear,” worrying that “a Right that is dazed and pulled toward fascism by its extremes is in complete control of the situation.”²⁴

Indeed, the latest electoral achievements of the right give goose bumps: in the UK, UKIP received 27.5 percent of votes (against 16.1 percent in 2009); the Party of the People of Denmark, 26.7 percent (14.8 percent in 2009); Alternative for Germany, 7 percent; the Austrian People’s Party, 19.7 percent (12.7 percent in 2009); the Swedish Democrats, 9.7 percent (3.3 percent in 2009). The Finnish True Finns lost ground, receiving only 12.9 percent of the votes for the European Parliament, against 14 percent in 2009; but in the legislative elections of April 2015 they became the second largest party with 17.6 percent of the vote and 38 seats in the Parliament—in their own words, they “are here to stay.”²⁵ The openly fascist parties at the European periphery received 9.4 percent of the suffrage in Greece (Golden Dawn) and 14.7 percent in Hungary (Jobbik).

The earthquake seems all the more significant in France, where, under Marine le Pen’s leadership, the makeover of the FN, which has national reach and aspirations, looks successful on the face of it. The success of the party in the European elections of June 2014 was indeed confirmed in the regionals in March 2015, when the FN emerged as the third largest party in France—the new byword of the situation is

“tripartism.” Although the FN is not (yet) in a position to assume power nationally, its goal of achieving a national electoral base is advancing apace. The party has succeeded in implanting itself in places that were considered immune to its discourse, including some affluent areas.²⁶ This is an important development, especially if—as political scientist Joel Gombin argues—support for the FN is undergoing “stabilization, even stagnation in the most rural, lower-class, and peripheral areas,” against significant growth in “a number of more affluent, urban, and suburban areas.”²⁷

As the electoral success of the FN and its ever-growing nationwide reach in France attests, the nationalist-populist constellation is putting down strong roots in the European soil. The extreme right is no longer a marginal, nostalgic affair. In this sense, it can no longer be described as a remnant of postwar neofascism, a framing that has been quite convenient for the parties in government, allowing the Socialists to evade criticism of their politics that have effectively killed the left, and allowing the right to ever more openly integrate the political grammar of the extreme right in its discourse and practice. Moreover, while some of these extreme-right parties have until recently worn their fascist lineage on their sleeves, others have taken

Looking back at the developments of the last decade seems like a slow-motion replay of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

their distance from it publicly in order to win votes and build a national base—with varying degrees of success. The first to do it, although in the long run unsuccessfully, was the Italian Gianfranco Fini, who turned the openly fascist Social Movement into the *Alleanza Nazionale*

in 1995. In Hungary, Jobbik, which Marine le Pen's FN considers beyond the pale, seems to have followed the same trajectory, in particular by toning down its anti-Semitic and racist

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themes in order to win the votes of disenchanted conservatives.²⁸

This new, “de-fascized” extreme right clearly belongs to the twenty-first century. Whether nationalist or ferociously regionalist, like the Northern League in Italy, it wants to be resolutely modern, to the point that some even associate it with hipsterism. As French political scientist Jean-Yves Camus rightfully noted, it has traded the cult of the state for a neoliberal perspective that advocates economic deregulation, reducing taxes for corporations, and the respect of individual liberties,²⁹ and defends private property and free enterprise. The new extreme right is, however, strongly Europhobic, seeing in the project of European integration “a socialist plot, concocted by Eurocrats who live at the expense of small business, [and] encourage immigration and the welfare state.”³⁰ This right exalts “the people” and bases its attitude toward politics on the need to “purify” the political scene of a political “caste” perceived as corrupt.

The European extreme right embodies the rejection of the politics of austerity. It advocates an exit from the Euro as means of stimulating the domestic economy. It fights against the “Islamization” of a West threatened by “the clash of civilizations,” at times, however, raising the banner of women’s rights and even the rights of homosexuals, thus blurring the lines of demarcation between it and the institutional left (Pim Fortuyn, assassinated in 2002, had paved the way in the Netherlands). Its common

political objectives, however, openly advertised, are essentially limited to the destruction of the welfare state, anti-Marxism, violent racism—in particular against immigrants, “the heirs of the nineteenth century’s dangerous classes,”³¹ and above all against Muslims and the Roma people—the defense of patriarchy and imperialism, and the stigmatization of the poor, foreigners, the unproductive, and sexual minorities. Thus, for example, during a televised debate with the Italian anti-globalization organization No Global, the new leader of the Northern League, Matteo Salvini, said that “once I’m done with the Roma, I’ll take up the social centers.”³²

In most countries, these far-right parties reflect the loss of confidence, not only in European institutions, but above all in the political forces that drive them. It is an “anti-system” vote that rallies the petty- and middle-bourgeoisie (doctors, teachers, small businesspeople), but also has a significant following among the lower classes (workers, public employees, and the unemployed) and may also, as in the case of the French National Front, attract young people. The extreme right benefits from the left’s state of fragmentation as well as from the corruption scandals that shake parties in government almost everywhere in Europe, from Italy to France, Spain, and the UK. In France, the demobilization of the electoral base of not only the institutional left, but also, for different reasons, the anti-neoliberal—including the anti-capitalist—left, and the dynamics of voting on the right that keep favoring the FN, seem to confirm a sociopolitical decomposition of the so-called “left-wing nation,” the outcome of the disorientation and the growing despair spreading through the world of work and the less affluent neighborhoods in the context of a generalized political and social crisis.

The extreme right presents itself in this vacuum as the only possible alternative, nibbling at the popular electoral base of conservative parties, but also affecting the traditional base of the socialists, thus pushing the parties in

government to adopt their rhetoric and follow suit, in particular when it comes to immigration restrictions and national security. What has been defined as right-wing populism thus manifests itself also as “anti-popular-state populism.”³³

It is evidently tempting to read in the electoral successes of the radical right merely the political impact of an economic crisis that, since 2007, continues unacknowledged. However, this economic and social crisis coincided with a political and cultural crisis that has shaken the political and social field and the balance of forces inside European societies for the full length of the last three decades. The extreme-right tide is in this context only the crisis’s tip of the iceberg, its distorted and deformed appearance. What we must therefore rethink in order to give a political sense to the future is not so much our ability to defend what is left of our social rights, but our ability to call into question the full social order, a civilizational system that can no longer hold.

Yet the challenge we face today lies precisely in that kind of crisis in which, in Antonio Gramsci’s words, “the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” The next conference of Historical Materialism, scheduled for November, will be aptly dedicated to this very question (www.historicalmaterialism.org). We are most likely passing through the tail of the comet of

The latest electoral achievements of the right give goose bumps.

the slow political, social, and economic transformation that European societies have undergone since the 1980s. The new political and social configurations that will have emerged from this seismic mutation are not yet identifiable. But there is no inevitability in the emergence of a new order, within which this extreme right that is ascendant across Europe would play an

as yet undefined role in the social conflict. The only certainty is that the old paths of liberation are coming apart beneath us.

It has been ten years since the U.S. billionaire Warren Buffet declared the victory of the rich in the class war. It is undoubtedly true that the first big battles have been won by the 1 percent at the expense of the 99 percent. But the struggle is far from over, and its outcome is in our hands. It rests with our capacity to reimagine liberation together in the twenty-first century, to delineate a world capable of responding to the fundamental needs of society, democratically decided, in a way that respects ecological balances. We also need strategies that fully empower “the immense multitude that is unaware of its own strength” (Louise Michel), and modes of organization that reconcile individual initiative, and the federation of energies, with their centralization. Only then can we fight against “the skepticism with regards to all theories and general formulae” that characterizes our age.³⁴

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Neoliberalism and the Failure of the Arab Spring

YOUSSEF KHALIL

THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE ARAB uprisings that took place in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis were laid in the years before by the neoliberal restructuring of Middle Eastern and North African economies. After decades of dropping trade barriers, lowering wages, and dismantling industry, Arab governments had stripped their populations of the social protections necessary to cope with the increases in unemployment and commodity prices and the stagnation in wages that were characteristic of the crisis (International Labour Organization, Global Wage Report 2012/13, Dec. 7, 2012). While the gutting of state industry and the opening of trade policy paid dividends for those who were well connected to the state bourgeoisie that had developed during the state-capitalist period in many countries, those changes left many vulnerable to international economic crises and reeling from a deepening sense of social inequality (Hanieh, *Middle East Monitor*, Mar. 1, 2015).

Neoliberalism, a holistic ideology that has come to dominate political discourse in an unprecedented way, rose to prominence in the First World as a critique of the state-interventionist economic model in the period when Keynesian growth was exhausting itself. From a deep suspicion of the state, neoliberals understand the market to be the natural mechanism through

which society should be organized. Crucially, they fail to take into consideration the social processes that created the market itself. These processes would not have been possible, as Karl Polanyi influentially argued, without the intervention of a strong state, which is also necessary for the market to continue to function.

The Egyptian Opening and the Lost Decade

It is fitting that the process of neoliberal economic restructuring in the Arab world began in Egypt, which from 1952 to 1970 was the beating heart of the Arab nationalist project. The Nasser regime came to epitomize the Bandung Era—the era of independent, non-aligned Third World nations—and its “popular nationalism,” characterized by anti-imperialist foreign policy positions and economic and social modernization through the expansion of the state.¹ The destruction of the Arab armies by Israel in 1967, followed by the ascension of Anwar Sadat to Egypt’s presidency after Nasser’s death in 1970, sparked upheavals in that country, particularly from the student movements and labor unions. Under extreme domestic pressure, Sadat, together with Syria, launched a limited war against Israel in 1973, but it “was enough for him to sustain a temporary boost in popularity and drag the carpet from underneath the feet of the student movement” (el-Hamalawy, *al-Araby*, Jan. 25, 2015). With the pressure of the Israeli occupation of the Sinai and the 1967 defeat relieved enough to ease domestic tensions, Sadat had the political capital to pursue a rightward political shift, abandoning the policy

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of confrontation with Israel and embracing neoliberal economic restructuring in exchange for an alliance with the United States.

The Egyptian pivot, along with the decline in oil prices and debt crisis of the 1980s,

gave international financial institutions the opportunity to effect change in the direction of unfettered free market economy. Sudan in 1979/1980, Morocco in 1983, Tunisia and Egypt in 1987, and Jordan in 1989 all turned to the IMF and World Bank for financial and technical assistance. Algeria, Yemen, and Lebanon followed suit during the 1990s.²

Early adopters of neoliberal restructuring were held up by the Bretton Woods Institutions and the Western states as shining examples of

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economic reform in the region, despite the low growth rates, diminishing living standards, and repression of democratic expression in those countries, including the full nullification of elections in Jordan and Tunisia.

Whereas the neoliberal restructuring of Latin America is often considered the prototypical failure of this strategy, the Arab world experienced worse economic growth performance than did Latin America in its “lost decade.” The non-oil Arab states achieved almost zero growth, compared to the meager 1 percent or so for Latin America. The Middle East also emerged as the second largest indebted region after Latin America.³ Arab governments were compelled by the need to secure aid and favor

from the West to transform their governments from “social states” to “regulatory states,” as “fiscal austerity was prioritized over employment generation and inclusive growth.”⁴ In the period 1970 to 1990, the Middle East and North Africa region as a whole experienced an average annual growth rate of -0.2 percent, compared to the +2.5 percent average for developing countries as a whole, and the 0 percent average for sub-Saharan Africa.⁵ The “structural deficiencies” that came to be the main economic grievances of the youth that led the uprisings in 2011 were a product of these neoliberal policies.⁶

Narrowing the Choices

Neoliberal restructuring was not only an economic process; it systematically redefined politics itself. Social welfare policies in the Arab world had been a response to genuine social pressures and movements. Ignoring the history of these policies, the neoliberals replaced them with a very narrow set of prescriptions: trade and financial liberalization; balanced state budgets; undistorted prices; reduction of state intervention in general, including the collection of rents; and the promotion of policies conducive to foreign investment. During the process of neoliberal restructuring, whole social structures were written off and liquidated, as if deviating from the natural state of the market could only be the result of a temporary insanity, disregarding the social forces that had swept the state-led model into existence. Ideologically, deviations from the narrow neoliberal understanding of the market were characterized as dangerous and radical. To facilitate this shift, whole economic histories needed to be rewritten; the pre-eminence of the United States and Great Britain were posited as a triumph of laissez-faire economics over lazy French interventionism, rather than a bloody hundreds-year-long process of redesigning the world by force of arms at the expense of entire civilizations. The Soviet Union was descending into oblivion, and the neoliberals triumphantly believed that they could put an end, not just to

history, but to politics itself. As opposition to the international capitalist order became a less and less viable basis for an ideology of social transformation, an already disoriented anti-imperialism, which at its apex “self-consciously” placed itself “within the tradition of the European Enlightenment,” all but disappeared from the Third World (Malik, *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 2015). By systematically circumscribing the scope of political possibilities and stripping governments of their ability to protect workers and develop industry, the neoliberal pivot created a mass of people who were both materially deprived and socially vulnerable and, at the same time, lacked the discursive tools needed to understand and comprehend their positions. Thus, these societies were left only with what Tariq Ali, in his latest work, dubs “the extreme center,” an incontestable set of assumptions that severely hampers the ability of the state to deal with the problems inherent in peripheral economies.

In the Arab world, the modernization project was closely tied to the political legitimacy of the Arab state itself. The disorientation of the Arab world that resulted from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was built upon the importation, by force of arms and without consideration of existing social structures, of the European nation-state to replace the (nominally) universal state of the Ottoman Empire. This process culminated in the dissolution of the caliphate by Kemal Atatürk, who argued that the nation-state was the only scientific form of social organization, in opposition to the universal Ottoman State.⁷ Nascent national leaderships, whether elevated by dominant powers or inheriting past divisions created by them, had to scramble to legitimize their positions, because, by the logic of the nation-state, the Arab world, with its common language, history, and culture, should have been a single state. Thus, the promise of social and economic modernization became the main source of popular legitimacy. As the other Arab states retreated from their *raison d'être*—

the economic modernization project—“the implicit social contract struck between many Arab governments and their citizens began to fall apart.”⁸ Thus, as Samir Amin argues, in the process of abandoning the state-led model, these Arab governments liquidated their ideological content and popular legitimacy:

The Bandung regimes, despite their autocratic political practices, benefitted from some popular legitimacy both because of their actual achievements, which benefited the majority of workers, and their anti-imperialist positions. The dictatorships that followed lost this legitimacy as soon as they accepted subjection to the globalized neoliberal model and accompanying lumpen development. Popular and national authority, although not democratic, gave way to police violence as such, in service of the neoliberal, anti-popular, and anti-national project. (*Monthly Review*, September 2014)

Thus, while the state-capitalist phase ultimately succumbed to its own economic contradictions, it at least produced coherent systems with positive visions, as opposed to the nihilism of the neoliberal program, in which the masses are seen not as the backbone of society to be elevated through productive and socially coherent employment, but as cannon fodder to be marched into free-trade industrial zones, perpetual casualties in the never-ending war to attract international capital.

The Neoliberal Ascendancy

The ascension of neoliberalism to the dominant ideological discourse has stamped alternative understandings of economic history firmly out of the popular consciousness. The cleansed version of economic history, discussed in Western capitals at length and with a teleological certainty that would not have been out of place in Stalinist propaganda, is, however, as politically driven as the Keynesian and socialist nemeses against which neoliberals define themselves. Neoliberalism simply redraws the market-state boundary in a way that is consistent with its own particular ideological components, a combina-

tion of political libertarianism and Austrian economics (considered archaic even when this union was cemented during the 1930s) which reflect firmly the social institutions of that environment. As Ha-Joon Chang argues,

The “market rationality” that neoliberals want to rescue from the “corrupting” influences of politics *can only be meaningfully defined with reference to the existing institutional structure*, which is itself a product of politics. *And if this is the case, what neoliberals are really doing when they talk of the depoliticization of the market is to assume that the particular boundary between market and state they wish to draw is the correct one, and that any attempt to contest that boundary is a “politically-minded” one.* If there appears to be a fixed boundary between the two in certain circumstances, it is only because those concerned do not even realize that boundary is potentially contestable. ... In calling for the depoliticization of the economy, the neoliberals are not only dressing up their own political views as “objective” and “above politics,” but are also undermining the principle of democratic control [emphasis added].⁹

Effectively, neoliberalism has, using the force of Western capital, dragged the ideology of the far right into a new center. Jackson Lear, in a critique of Hillary Clinton’s autobiography (*London Review of Books*, Feb. 5, 2015) captures the neoliberal fantasy perfectly, arguing that in practice as well as theory

The centrists tend to be at least as ideologically driven as the zealots they deplore. The core of their ideology is the belief that the U.S. has a uniquely necessary role to play in leading the world towards an inevitably democratic (and implicitly capitalist) future. The process is foreordained but can be helped along through neoliberal policy choices. This muddle of determinism and freedom is a secular residue of providentialist teleology, held with as much religious fervor and as little regard for contrary evidence as other dogmatic faiths derided by self-styled liberal pragmatists. ... Clinton’s utopian faith depends on fantasies of a reified technology, unmoored from class and power relations and operating autonomously as a

global force for good.

The collapse of the state-led model thrust the neoliberal ideology onto the rest of the world, riding a wave of decrees from international creditors and financial institutions. The institutions that the peoples of the Third World built for themselves in their attempts to transcend the conditions of peripheral integration into the world economy were dismantled with reckless rapidity. National industries—once symbols of progress and national pride—were liquidated and parceled out (Hickel, *New Left Project*, Apr. 9, 2012) to multinational corporations to close balance-of-payment gaps, and societies heaved from the strain of social dislocation caused by massive unemployment and price hikes (Lewkowicz, *Open Democracy*, Feb. 9, 2015). As recent events in Greece have demonstrated, this process is not subject to a democratic check, even in a parliamentary democracy (Rankin and Smith, *Guardian*, Feb. 20, 2015).

The Current Crisis: A Clash of Extremists

In the Middle East and North Africa, the death of politics and the triumph of the neoliberal center have left a vacuum that culturalist ideologies, primarily Islamism, rushed to fill. Islamism is nothing more than an inverted Eurocentrism, and is incapable of dealing with the economic and political problems presented by international capitalism.¹⁰ These problems were once the territory of some form of socialism, which understood the profound failure and disarray of the Arab world after World War I as the result of European colonialism and the way in which the Ottoman Empire was integrated into the world market in a peripheral way. The solutions were thought to be political and economic: the creation of strong states to steward the development of industry and the tools through which to confront imperialism. When that collapsed, the region-wide pivot towards neoliberalism was rapid and hard.

In this context, the parallels between what happened to politics in the United States and what has happened in the Middle East as a result of the ascension of neoliberalism to hegemonic dominance are easy to see. The discourse that was once the venue through which real social conflicts were carried out is now hollowed out, leaving only the culturalist husks, perversions of actual political and economic grievances, which effectively “[transfer] struggles from real social contradiction to the world of the so-called cultural imagination, which is transhistorical and absolute.”¹¹ Whereas this can take the form of identity politics, xenophobia, or “the culture wars” at the center, in the periphery—where economic problems are more acute, social structures are in a position of perpetual collapse, and states struggle for legitimacy in the face of political humiliation and economic stagnation—this process is exponentially more extreme.

The Islamists rose to power through elections in Egypt and Tunisia, but their program failed spectacularly and with speed. What came to replace them were ancien régime figures,

who also lacked true political ideology; they have no substance outside of their opposition to Islamism and their promise to restore stability.¹² Just as Mohammed Morsi had no program

Social welfare policies in the Arab world had been a response to genuine social pressures and movements.

to reverse Egypt’s economic stagnation, Abdel Fatah al Sisi’s campaign consisted of nothing more than being the anti-Mohammed Morsi (Achcar, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Jun. 2013). He articulated no plan for getting Egypt out of the economic disaster it currently faces. In other words they were both the perfect neoliberals; empty vessels galvanizing the whipped-up

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masses behind false understandings of their own history and the scope of choices available, the epitome of those “machine men with machine minds and machine hearts” that Charlie Chaplin’s character in the 1940 film, *The Great Dictator*, implores the world to reject. Al Sisi led the resurgence of the neoliberal technocrat, repackaged as the anti-Islamist crusader. Riding a wave of anti-Islamism, he has continued the neoliberal restructuring of Egypt at a pace that even Mubarak could not muster. A similar dialectic process occurred in Tunisia, albeit without the extremes of political repression and bloodshed. After winning the largest number of seats in the 2011 elections, the Islamic Renaissance party has lost to the newly formed “Call for Tunisia” party in the latest parliamentary elections. Call for Tunisia is led by ex-Ben-Ali-regime apparatchik Mohamed Beji Caïd Essebsi and essentially campaigned on the same anti-Islamist platform as al Sisi.

This is the Arab world we find today: a world in which the fiery articulation of deep political and economic grievances, rooted in a history of humiliation and stagnation, that manifested itself in the Arab Spring has been wholly extinguished by the binary of inverted Eurocentrism and farcical Bonapartism, which reinforce each other at every turn (El-Baghdadi, *Foreign Policy*, Dec. 19, 2014). The great tragedy, of course, is that neither program actually addresses the political and economic problems of the region caused by the demise of state capitalism and neoliberal economic restructuring. It is only in this perverse world, stripped of the discursive space necessary to articulate any opposition to neoliberal ideology, that the Islamic State menace can exist, that King Abdullah of Jordan, whose kingdom could not

exist without British imperialism and American largesse, can don a flight suit and pose as some kind of strongman in the face of the Islamic State, or that a Gulf Cooperation Council jet flown by a female pilot can exist as a bulwark against Islamic extremism. It is only within this context that al Sisi can pose in the shadow of Nasser while cooperating fully in the crushing of Gaza (Kilani, *al-Araby*, Dec. 24, 2014) and the gutting of Egyptian social protections (Ramadan, *Middle East Monitor*, Jul. 18, 2014), where al Assad can successfully market himself as the civilized man in a battle with brutes from 1000 AD while killing hundreds of thousands of Syrians.

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Beyond Fear and Complacency

Critical Remarks on Taiwan's Democracy and Its Aporia

Poe Yu-ze Wan

BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE TAIWAN, the research on Taiwan's democratization has been overwhelmingly dominated by Western liberal discourses. In the mainstream liberal view, to the extent that the "most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington, 1991: 7), Taiwan was no doubt democratic by 1996, a year marked by the first direct election for president (see e.g., Rigger, 1999).

Since the Kuomintang (KMT) returned to power in 2008 (after being in opposition for eight years), however, a new wave of social movements has emerged that greatly exposes the anti-democratic nature of the KMT government. For the latest example, from March 18 to April 10, 2014, hundreds of students and activ-

ists occupied Taiwan's legislature, protesting the passage of the controversial Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the KMT without clause-by-clause review. On March 23, a group of protesters attempted to expand their occupation to the Executive Yuan, but were soon brutally evicted by the police. Dozens of people, including journalists and doctors, were seriously injured. An island-wide student strike followed soon afterward. The demonstrations during these three weeks were referred to as the Sunflower Movement, which involved more than half a million people in Taiwan (see particularly Harrison, 2014; Masahiro, 2014).

In view of the KMT's pursuit of further economic (and even political) integration with China, a number of scholars and activists in Taiwan now point to the danger that Taiwan's status as a "model Asian liberal democracy" will degenerate into an "authoritarian semi-democracy" (Fell, 2010: 195) unless the emerging "China factor" is recognized and the trend of cross-strait economic integration reversed. This article will evaluate to what extent the existing discourses on the "China factor" and its threat (or irrelevance) to Taiwan's democratic order are tenable. The accounts provided by left-wing intellectuals and activists will receive particular attention. It will be demonstrated that while there is much to learn from the left-wing independentists and unificationists alike, the arguments by which they justify their political agendas are based on a flawed understanding of socialism and democracy. This article will propose a radically democratic approach to socialism as a basis for assessing the gains and

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losses of both Taiwan's liberal democracy and the (allegedly) socialist practices in China.

A "Quiet Revolution," or Not Quite a Revolution?

Taiwan's democratization has often been described as a "quiet revolution" because it involved much less violence than did the political transformations elsewhere (see e.g., Copper, 1988; Hu, 1994; for a critical account see Lin, 2004; Chang, 2013).¹ Of course this can be seen as an achievement, especially if we evaluate Taiwan's democracy in terms of formal political institutions of representation and institutionalized civil rights.² To borrow the succinct words of Garver (2011: 4), by 1996 a liberal democracy had been established in Taiwan, characterized by "a vibrant political system, complete with freedom of speech, association and assembly, rule of law, and competitive and fair multi-party elections that enabled the island's citizens to choose and change their rulers."

Nevertheless, it becomes clear now that

Such a plutocracy certainly poses
a threat to Taiwan's democratic
gains (however limited).

the scope and depth of this peaceful "revolution" are in fact very limited, mainly because it has left largely intact the KMT's ruling apparatuses, especially the huge assets that the party accumulated in improper ways during the authoritarian period. These assets are about 100 times those of the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In 2010, the dividend income alone from these assets was reported to be US\$93-94 million (International Election Observation Mission, 2012). KMT assets, a product of the authoritarian

party-state, cause an unfair imbalance in financial resources and secure the KMT a massive advantage in elections (for critical discussions of the KMT's assets see e.g., Fields, 2002; Fell, 2006: 77-8; 2007; Liao, 2012).³ Besides, as is widely acknowledged, the KMT enjoys strong connections with the administrative and judicial systems, so much so that a number of prosecuted KMT politicians have managed to flee abroad.

These issues emerge as part of a broader problem of "transitional justice" that plagues the liberals and the left alike. As David Reid explains, the KMT has never been subject to any form of transitional justice mechanism. "The tackling of harder issues such as a Truth Commission and KMT party assets has never been realized. The DPP raised the issue of party assets a number of times while it was in power. Some accused it of using the issue simply for political gain during elections. The DPP was limited in the actions it could take because it lacked a majority in the legislature. The KMT has continually failed to make any efforts to reform itself" (Reid, 2009: 15; see also Fell, 2007, 2010; Wu, 2012a: 146).

The upshot is that some left-wing intellectuals in Taiwan (especially left-wing unificationists and some members of the radical left) tend to dismiss these issues as of secondary concern. They have been quick to focus their critique on the pitfalls of liberal democracy, apparently without considering the possibility that Taiwan's may be an "unfinished" democracy even from a liberal-democratic point of view. Linz and Stepan (1996) notably argue that democracy is only consolidated when all significant political actors and a strong majority of people see it as "the only game in town." On this account, Taiwan's democracy is far from consolidated, since a pro-Beijing, cross-strait power elite is in the making that not only denies the legitimacy of the democratic game, but deliberately takes advantage of the unfair system of institutions and rules in Taiwan that privileges the KMT (for instance, its ill-gotten party assets). In



short, “it is under such circumstances that the intermingling of KMT power and wealth with the interests of top Chinese leaders raises the question of whether a new cross-strait plutocracy is emerging” (Cheung, 2010: 21). Such a plutocracy certainly poses a threat to Taiwan’s democratic gains (however limited). While it is true that the criticisms of this plutocracy have originated mainly from liberals, it does not follow that the radical left should keep silent on this important issue. The enemy of an enemy may not be a friend.

Democracy in Danger? Between Fear and Complacency

As noted in previous sections, a growing number of intellectuals and activists in Taiwan are worried that Taiwan’s shaky democracy is being undermined by an ever-increasing network of political and business links across the strait. It is widely believed that Beijing is attempting

to replicate the Hong Kong model in Taiwan. “Today’s Hong Kong, Tomorrow’s Taiwan” has therefore become a popular slogan in recent times (for a recent study see Kaeding, 2014).

Among the left-wing independentists,⁴ Jieh-min Wu is one of the most important scholars who have attempted systematically both a “third view of China” and a grounded analysis of the “China factor” (Wu, 2012a). On the one hand, this “third view” serves to challenge the two mainstream views of China: an uncritical embrace of China (seeing China simply as a source of economic opportunities) or a wholesale critique and rejection of China (seeing China as nothing but a threat) (Wu, 2012a: 31-2, 88-9). According to Wu, both views fail to provide a sophisticated sociological analysis of the realities of China, which is no longer a “communist” state but is characterized by bureaucratic state capitalism, more or less flexible governing techniques, and the emergence of

various social movements and “social subjects” (Wu, 2012a: 88–90).⁵

On the other hand, a “cross-strait political and business alliance” that has been in the making accounts for the adverse impacts of the China factor.⁶ To put it simply, this alliance places Beijing in a position to intervene in Taiwan’s internal politics, thereby undermining the foundations of Taiwan’s democratic institutions (Wu, 2012a: 84). Examples include the

In fact, socialism boils down to a struggle for authentic democracy.

formation of the cross-strait KMT-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) platform in 2005 and its subsequent effects, the crackdown on protests against the visit of China’s officials to the island in 2008, the decision of the Taiwan government to refuse an entry visa to the exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer in 2009, the signing of the cross-strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010, the attempt of Want Want China Times Group (a media corporation owned by a pro-Beijing tycoon who denied the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 in an interview with the *Washington Post*) to buy up eleven cable TV service providers owned by the country’s second largest multiple-system operator in 2011, the open support of big Taiwanese corporations for the KMT’s China policy in the 2012 presidential election, and so on (Wu, 2012a: 81–7, 134–6). Importantly, the only way to mitigate the detrimental effects of the “cross-strait political and business alliance” is to form a “cross-strait alliance of civil society” that asserts such “universal values” as democracy, human rights, civility, and multiculturalism (Wu, 2012a: 55–60).

Wu’s analysis of China as characterized

by bureaucratic state capitalism generally hits the mark, even though he does not dwell on the uniqueness and contradictions of China’s bureaucratic capitalism (for an illuminating analysis see Au, 2012a; cf. Shawki, 1997; Hart-Landsberg and Burkett, 2005).⁷ But the point is that it matters a lot how we define the problem. Since the early 1990s, a group of liberal intellectuals (mainly economists) in Taiwan have urged the need for “dismantling party-state capitalism” (Chen et al., 1992), and their demand has been responded to by a gradual privatization of state-owned enterprises since the mid-1990s (for more discussion see Chu, 1995, 2004). Interestingly enough, Szu-chien Hsu, another leading liberal political scientist in Taiwan (also a member of the Taiwan Democracy Watch) has recently cited *Dismantling Party-State Capitalism* to substantiate his criticisms of China’s party-state capitalism (Hsu, 2014). Do Wu, Hsu, and other proponents of a third view of China believe that China’s future lies in further privatization of the economy, as a lot of liberals believe that economic liberalization will bring about or facilitate political liberalization? If not, they should clarify their position on what they envisage as a desirable future in China.

As for the strategic concept of “cross-strait alliance of civil society,” the problem is that it runs the risk of repeating the (in)famous “reductionist construction of a binary opposition between civil society and the state” in the 1980s by a number of dissident intellectuals in Taiwan and its “tendency to over-romanticize ‘the people’ as if there were no conflicts among them” (Lin, 2009: 231). Indeed, as Jeffrey C. Alexander (2001: 162) emphasizes, civil society is a “highly contested concept ... used to both justify capitalist market relations and to legitimize social movements that oppose and regulate them.” It is thus dangerous to attribute a significant strategic value to an ambiguous concept.

Wu (2012a: 94, 138) does highlight the key role of the “progressive forces in China” and “cross-strait NGOs and progressives” in

the construction of the “cross-strait alliance of civil society,” but his argument is not entirely consistent. For one thing, his critique of Taiwan’s narrow understanding of civil society is based on the observation that “publicness,” “civility,” and “civic virtue” are central to the notion of civil society but are widely neglected (Wu, 2012a: 204–7). This critique is reasonable in the context of Taiwan’s translation and reception of the concept of civil society,⁸ but is also flawed because it does not deal with the Marxian critique of civil society as the arena of class conflict. Since Wu’s employment of the concept of civil society is highly normative (that is, used as a weapon to defend democratic gains), a possible line of argument would be that the state (political power), the economy (economic power), and civil society (social power) constitute three domains of social interaction and power relationships. A “civil society” thus understood excludes market relations and capitalist economic power,⁹ and is afforded the potential of transcending capitalism, as Erik Olin Wright (2011, 2013) suggests.

From a left-wing perspective, it seems to me that the major problem with the arguments made by those who present the China factor as a threatening force is that their own vision of democracy is essentially limited to the confines of liberal democracy. Even Jieh-min Wu, who thoughtfully advances a third view of China and develops a careful analysis of the cross-strait political and business alliances, tends to write within the limits of the liberal democratic canon. Therefore Wu (2012a: 75, 59) writes that “Taiwan’s democratic politics have been rudimentarily consolidated after twenty years of democratic transformation and two party alternations,” and that it will be a defeat for China’s society if the “free, open and democratic Taiwan” is destroyed. Besides, he tends to restrict the notion of socialism to “social equality” (Wu, 2012a: 152) and thus severs democratic struggle from socialism. But in fact, socialism boils down to a struggle for authentic democracy (see the next section).

To do justice to Jieh-min Wu, it is worth pointing out that Wu shows a rare and valuable reflexivity about what he calls “collective anti-communist mentality” (see Wu, 2012a: 152–3). He warns that the Cold War structure produces such a mentality and that too many people in Taiwan, especially the independentists, are trapped in the anti-communist propaganda and therefore ignorant of “the values of the left.”¹⁰ While the “communist phobia” prevalent in Taiwan is in part due to the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party in China and its image as an oppressor, the effects of the Cold War anti-communist mentality cannot be neglected. One of the consequences of this “vague fear” is that “people cannot take seriously the major changes that China has undergone since the 1949 revolution.” Wu urges us (the independentists in particular) to ask the following questions: To what extent can China still be regarded as a communist society after more than twenty years of market-oriented reforms? In what sense can the current CCP regime be labeled as socialist? What Wu implies is that we should embark on an evaluation of the gains and losses of the 1949 revolution and its aftermath from a left-wing perspective. This is indeed an important self-reflection, since the anti-communist mentality he brings to light more or less accounts for the fact that even self-avowed “left-wing” independentists often speak the language of liberal democracy when confronted with China. Unfortunately, Wu himself does not provide persuasive answers to the questions he poses.

On the other end of the spectrum are the left-wing unificationists, the most notable of whom are the Labor Party (and its various satellite organizations), founded in 1989, as well as several members of “Taishe” (the group that edits *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*). They provide a unique approach to the question of democracy and the relationship between Taiwan and China.

What these left-wing unificationists have in

common is that they show little if any sympathy with any proposal of Taiwan self-determination or independence, which they consider to be a corollary of the Cold War division system between Taiwan and China. As Chen (2010: 574) puts it, the “challenge confronting the intellectual circles in Taiwan and China is to analyze historically the divided societies as one entity changing from an integrated unity, through Japanese colonization, to postwar division.” Indeed, one of the unificationists’ favorite strategic concepts in recent years has been that of “(overcoming the) division system,” a concept borrowed from Paik Nak-chung, an active public intellectual in Korea (see especially Paik, 2011, 2013).

In addition, a majority if not all of them tend to regard the rise of China (and the so-called “China Model”) as a counter-movement against and an alternative to U.S.-led globalization, imperialism, and militarism.¹¹ In fact they support nearly all the major policies put forward by the Chinese Communist Party, which they believe still represents the interests of workers in China and of the Third World movement worldwide. They may or may not be critical of the CCP in certain respects, but even when they are, they firmly reject the possibility that “the party has undergone a qualitative change in its class role and now is at the service of capitalism, not socialism” (Au, 2012b: 266). Concerning the controversies over the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in general and the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement in particular, the Labor Party’s position is that “free trade” between Taiwan and China will facilitate unification and benefit the workers on both sides (see e.g., Lixia Wang, 2012: 145-7). They even cite Marx’s 1848 speech on the question of free trade as a “Marxist” theoretical rationale for closer economic integration between Taiwan and China (see e.g., Chou et al., 2014).

It is worthy of note and of concern that all the values and institutions cherished by liberal

democrats, such as elected officials, free/fair/frequent elections, freedom of expression and assembly, alternative sources of information, and freedom of association (see e.g., Dahl, 1998), are denounced as either “imperialist universalism” or “bourgeois democracy” by left-wing unificationists in Taiwan in the name of socialism. (Worse, they often put such labels as “anti-Chinese” and “anti-China” on all those who take the CCP to task.) Interestingly, their outright rejection of liberal democracy is sometimes joined by postmodern-oriented authors, who regard China’s experience as a valuable resource for deconstructing Eurocentric discourses on democracy and liberty.

Their understanding of socialism and democracy is best exemplified by an article of the late professor of English Yuan-shu Yen, a figure highly respected and praised by left-wing unificationists in Taiwan. Yen stated as early as 1991 that “what matters most in China is state-building. You therefore should recognize the necessity of collectivism, of socialism, and of authoritarian dictatorship” (Yen, 2013: 5-6). Another revealing example comes from Lixia Wang, a veteran of the Labor Party. In a pamphlet on Marxism, he argues that

more and more foreign researchers and observers have discovered that the China-style democracy is becoming a new model of democracy for the world. They have found that what the China-style democracy emphasizes is “people as the masters of the country” (*renmin dangjia zuozhu*) rather than competition and participation underscored by Western democracy. Those trapped in the ideology of Western democracy are used to seeing multi-party representative democracy as the final goal, but it has been proved that it is the democratic centralism practiced and reformed in China, not multi-party competitive democracy, that can truly increase citizens’ political participation (Lixia Wang, 2012: 136).

This kind of identification of “socialism” with collectivism and dictatorship, or with the rejection of multi-party competition, is wide-

spread among Taiwan's left-wing intellectuals who pursue unification with China. Needless to say, their understanding of "socialism" is deeply shaped by the CCP's ideology.

It is true that "Taiwan society was subjected to the poignant 'identitarian' conflicts resulting from the controversy over Taiwan's sovereign status and ethnic mobilization" (Lin, 2009: 228), but it would be too quick, as some left-wing intellectuals in Taiwan have tended to do, to dismiss such "identitarian conflicts" as purely ideological or counterproductive. What is needed is a sympathetic understanding of the "structures of feeling" (that is, meanings and values actively lived and felt as defined by Raymond Williams) that lie behind such conflicts (Horng-luen Wang, 2012). These structures generate persistent effects on people's value judgment, moral evaluation, and ways of life. They can be explained but cannot be simply explained away.

In my view, while the radical left does not have to view Taiwan as a "sovereignty-contested democratic state" as does Wu (2002a: 51, 77), it should take more seriously the question of Taiwan's sovereignty and (international) status before concluding that such questions are nothing but ideological distractions from the need for a radical political-economic transformation. The unificationists should particularly take account of the following remarkable words by Chaohua Wang:

The reality is that the ROC and the PRC have lived in separation for many years and what Taiwan truly needs is a registration of this reality. Such a registration would not cancel the possibility of future reunification, any more than it has done in the case of the two Koreas: it would simply allow a more normal environment in which different possible scenarios for the island could be honestly discussed by the peoples of Taiwan and China, be it reunification or Taiwanese independence. Only such a formal registration of Taiwan's de facto separation from the PRC could form the basis for calm and rational negotiations over the future

of its 23 million citizens, with respect to their democratic rights. Confusing such a prospect with the issue of Taiwanese independence has been a widespread error in recent years.

The pro-unification, Stalinist-oriented left in Taiwan has generally opposed any form of self-determination.

It would not represent a covert form of it, but an acknowledgment that what is—or should be—really at stake in the new Taiwanese self-consciousness is the legitimate desire for equal standing in any political negotiations with the central government in Beijing, and for these to be handled in a democratic way, free of military threats, and without preconditions over definite reunification in the future (Wang, 2005: 100).

I agree with Löwy (1989: 218) that Marxists "must very clearly distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressors and the nationalism of the oppressed." They have to "support all struggles for national liberation, or for the right of self-determination of the oppressed nations, even if their ideology (or the ideology of their leaders) is nationalist."¹² Since the pro-unification, Stalinist-oriented left in Taiwan has generally opposed any form of self-determination, it is definitely important to emphasize that Taiwanese people's "legitimate desire for equal standing" (as Chaohua Wang calls it) and their right to self-determination have to be respected. The struggle for self-determination is an integral part of the general democratic struggle.¹³

The ironic fact is that (left-wing) independentists and unificationists in Taiwan mirror each other from time to time: While the former tend to regard Taiwan's (unfinished) liberal democracy as a model that China should follow, the latter simply dismiss Taiwan's demo-

cratic achievements out of hand by embracing a Stalinist rejection of liberal democracy. At the risk of oversimplification, both of them are unfortunately caught in the grip of fear and complacency. The independentists' fear of the looming threat of China is complemented by a sense of complacency over Taiwan's liberal democratic achievements; the unificationists are worried that Taiwan's democracy runs counter to the ideal of socialism as represented by the contemporary Chinese party-state, which they find unparalleled.

What they lack, I believe, is a vision of what Hal Draper (1992) calls "socialism from below," that is, an understanding of socialism as democratic self-management or self-governance. The latter, which contains "an inherently democratic, social and cooperative vision of justice and human fulfillment" (Rooksby, 2012: 514), is not a simple negation of the values and institutions of liberal democracy, but their radical expansion, deepening, and transformation (see e.g., Rooksby, 2012; Wan, 2011). I will conclude this article with a brief consideration of such an understanding of socialism.

In Search of an Alternative: Socialism as a Struggle for Integral Democracy

Despite everything that opposes social democracy and Stalinism to each other as theoreticopolitical currents, they nevertheless exhibit a fundamental complicity: Both are marked by *statism* and profound distrust of mass initiatives, in short by suspicion of democratic demands. (Poulantzas, 2000: 251).

One of the most important lessons that can be gleaned from previous socialist experiments may be that socialism will not have a future unless its democratic impulse is elevated to primacy. Indeed, the challenge facing the left worldwide is that "only a project aimed at the radicalization of democracy could re-establish an alternative global perspective" (Coutrot, 2005: 8). While both (left-wing) unificationists and independentists in Taiwan have little interesting to say

about the question of democracy, it is time for the radical left to bring to the fore a genuine notion of socialist democracy and prioritize it in their daily political work.

I fully agree with Au (2012a: 50) that "it is time to reassert the idea of socialism as a fully developed democracy which does away with the bureaucracy by creating the conditions for the state to wither away altogether." I believe that socialism amounts to the struggle for radical democracy, or for what Mario Bunge (see e.g., 1985, 1998, 2009, 2010) calls "integral democracy," which is supposed to consist of environmental, biological, economic, cultural, and political democracy. As Bunge explains:

Partial democracy, although possible, is not complete, just, nor sustainable. In particular, political democracy is not complete if individuals can buy votes and seats; economic democracy is not complete under a dictatorship imposed by the government without popular consultation; cultural democracy is not complete if the access to culture is restricted to the economically or politically privileged; biological democracy will not be complete until men share housework with their wives; environmental democracy will not be satisfied if companies, whether private, cooperative or state-owned, can freely exploit or pollute natural resources. In short, the ideal is to combine democracy with socialism. This combination could be called *socialist democracy*, to be distinguished from social democracy or weak socialism, which in fact is nothing but capitalism with a safety net, also called state socialism or socialism from above (Bunge, 2010: 20).

Furthermore, under integral or socialist democracy, everyone has the "freedom to enjoy all the resources of society, as well as to participate in any of its social (i.e. economic, political and cultural) activities—subject only to the limitations imposed by the rights of others" (Bunge, 1985: 172; see also Bunge, 1998: 173, 2009: 396).

What socialists strive for is Bunge's vision of integral democracy, which extends the

principles of democratic decision-making and participation into various spheres of social life. This resonates with the demand of a growing number of left-wing scholars and activists (many of whom have been active in the *alter-mondialisation* movement) for extending the participation of citizens in decisions that affect them in all areas, especially in the economy (for recent important contributions to this body of literature, see e.g. Archer, 1995; Fung and Wright, 2003; Coutrot, 2005, 2010; Wright, 2010; Santos, 2005; Albert, 2003; Hahnel, 2005; Devine, 2002; Schweikart, 2011; Wolff, 2012). Seen in this light, Taiwan's emerging movement against the free flow of capital across the strait can be interpreted as part of the more general demand for "democratic control of decisions on employment and investment" (Coutrot, 2005: 224), or at least it has the potential of moving in this direction. While right-wing economic nationalism does play a role in this movement, the radical left should see behind it ordinary people's need for participation in decisions regarding the economy.

In this article I have discussed the limits of the views of left-wing forces in Taiwan. In spite of the apparent differences among them (especially between the independentists and the unificationists), few of them have provided a rigorous analysis and a reasonable evaluation of Taiwan's liberal democracy and China's bureaucratic capitalism from the perspective of socialism understood as radical or integral democracy. While it leaves many questions unanswered, this article is an attempt to address a manifest theoretical void that must be filled to challenge the lamentable fear and complacency that prevail among the progressive forces in Taiwan.

NOTES

1. As Tien (1997: 124) writes, "Taiwan's democratic transition has incurred relatively low social costs. Taiwan's rapid democratic development has not led to significant economic decline, social unrest or serious political turbulence. ... The incumbent regime is not overthrown ... nor does it collapse."

2. It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the dynamics of democratic transition in Taiwan. This article will focus instead on the major challenge Taiwan's democracy faces now and will evaluate various, especially left-wing, responses to that challenge.

3. Only a very limited amount of real estate has been returned by the KMT to the state, and the party refused to cooperate with an investigation into its assets in 2001. So far the party has been more interested in selling off these assets for profit than in returning them to the state (Fell, 2007).

4. The term used here refers to a variety of left-wing, pro-independence forces in Taiwan, from the liberal left who subscribe to some idea of social democracy to those with a more radical agenda. As for the former, the Taiwan Democracy Watch (TDW), a loosely organized group of scholars, was founded after the government's violent crackdown on protests against the visit of China's officials to the island in 2008, and published a manifesto titled "A Declaration of Free Men" in 2013. This declaration demands that issues associated with "people," "human rights," and "popular sovereignty" be taken on board with equal importance in any cross-strait political and economic negotiations. As for the latter, a number of intellectuals and activists employ the language of Marxism to justify their views on Taiwan independence. Some of them identify themselves with the intellectual tradition inspired by the writings of Su Beng (1918-), a renowned political dissident (sometimes dubbed the "Che Guevara of Taiwan") who wrote a modern history of Taiwan from a Marxist perspective (Su, 1986). A newly formed political group called "Wing of Radical Politics," which advocates "autonomy of sovereignty" (against China's imperialism), "democratization of politics" (against KMT's colonization of Taiwan), and "liberalization of society" (against economic exploitation), arguably best represents this position. It should also be noted that the term "pro-independence" here includes the stances both of abolishing the current regime of the Republic of China by enacting a new constitution and of maintaining the status quo of Taiwan as a *de facto* independent country. The majority of the left-wing independentists are wedded to the idea of civic nationalism (instead of ethnic nationalism).

5. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Chinese are mine.

6. In a commentary published on Christmas Day in 2012, Wu described 2012 as the "First Year of the China Factor" because Beijing's influences were felt everywhere, from the presidential election to the media merger deals (Wu, 2012b).

7. As Au (2012a: 15) points out, "considering the degree of the party's privatization of the state, the extent of the bourgeoisification of the bureaucracy, and the fact that it is the bureaucracy which constitutes the core of the

bourgeoisie, Chinese authoritarian or state capitalism deserves a special name for itself.”

8. In the 1980s, “civil society” was generally understood as “folk society” in Taiwan (Wu, 2012a: 206).

9. As Varty (1997: 30) puts it, “authors, such as Marx, Polanyi and Schumpeter, have argued that it is the market that is dependent upon certain moral resources of civil society which the extension of market relations undermine and destroy.” Cohen and Arato’s work is a classic in this regard (Cohen and Arato, 1997).

10. The left-wing unificationists have systematically dealt with this mentality and its Cold War origins at least since the late 1970s. In my view this is one of their most important contributions.

11. In the words of Kang Chao, an influential scholar of sociology and a leading member of “Taishe”: “If China, as an idea that implies an appealing set of values and practices, paves the way for spiritual settlement, human coexistence and co-prosperity, or at least provides people in the region with justice, peace and dignity, then China as an idea will be the ultimate solution to the ‘Taiwan question’” (Chao, 2014: 284). It is noteworthy that

what Chao proposed five years ago was the concept of “methodological Chinese” (Chao, 2009), but now his commitment to the idea of China and Chinese is less methodological than ontological.

12. Löwy (1989: 218) adds that “Marxist internationalists taking part in a movement for national liberation should keep their independence, and try to persuade the exploited popular masses of the need to develop the struggle (in an uninterrupted way) beyond the national aims, towards a socialist-revolutionary transformation. But they cannot ignore or under-rate the significance of the popular demand for national self-determination.”

13. It is not enough to stay there, however. The radical left in Taiwan has long evaded the question of evaluating the implications of, for example, Taiwan independence or federal (or confederate) arrangements for socialist struggles. Some of them adopt a passive stance of “neither unification nor independence,” a stance that is driving them away from the majority of people in Taiwan. In addition, I submit that socialists in Taiwan should also examine closely the current electoral system (a mixed-member majoritarian system) that systematically favors large political parties and coalitions. Under the current electoral system, even a moderate, progressive party like the Green Party Taiwan (the largest extra-parliamentary party in Taiwan) can hardly earn a legislative seat. It is not that the radical left should commit themselves only to electoral politics; they definitely should not. But a political system dominated by two parties does tend to shrink the space for radical politics.

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Neoliberalism, Austerity, and Authoritarianism

RIAD AZAR

ASK ANYONE WHAT NEOLIBERALISM means and they'll tell you it's an economic system that corresponds to a particular economic philosophy. But any real-world economic system has a corresponding political system to promote and sustain it. Milton Friedman, who has become known as the father of neoliberal thinking, claims in his text *Capitalism and Freedom* that "the role of the government ... is to do something that the market cannot do for itself, namely, to determine, arbitrate, and enforce the rules of the game."^{*} While neoliberalism's advocates like to claim that the political system that corresponds to their economic preference is a democratic, minimal state, in practice, the neoliberal state has demonstrated quite the opposite tendency.

This essay will begin by sketching out the core tenets of neoliberal theory, tracing its history from the classical liberal tradition of the Enlightenment. I will then present some hypotheses on how relations between the neoliberal state and society operate, contrasting the state theories of Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas to create a framework that shows how the neoliberal state is a product and enforcer of anti-democratic practices. I will argue that the implementation of neoliberal economic policy, and the subsequent evolution of the neoliberal state, has historically been completed through anti-democratic methods. Further, in an effort to produce social relations that are more favor-

able to the accumulation of capital, austerity is employed as a tool to move further toward a market society, creating a larger, more interventionist state and promoting authoritarianism.

Neoliberalism in Theory

The term neoliberal is often convoluted, confused, and misinterpreted, especially in the American context where the center-left Democratic Party has traditionally held the title of liberal. The original liberals, or classical liberals as they are usually called, were those Enlightenment-era thinkers of Western European origin who desired to limit the authority of the feudal state and defended individual rights by restricting the power of the state, the crown, the nobility, and the church. The "neo" prefix serves as a romantic symbol, an attempt at establishing a (sometimes forced) common ground with historical figures like Adam Smith and the classical liberals, who challenged the tendencies of the monarchy to interfere in the economy for its own gain, producing inefficiency. Neoliberal economic thinkers are famously known for deriding government intervention in the economy, precisely because they trace their foundation to a period when markets were seen not just as a source of better economic outcomes, but as a weapon to challenge concentrated political power.

This revamping of liberalism appeared in the twentieth century at a time when its proponents believed they were facing a similar

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^{*}Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 40th Anniversary ed. (University of Chicago, 2002), 27.

struggle against the expanded state apparatuses of Europe—communist, social-democratic, and fascist. Friedrich Hayek, whose text *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944, is arguably the most celebrated of the neoliberal canon, sought to show how government interference in the economy forms the basis of fascist and other totalitarian regimes, contrary to the then widely accepted notion that it was capitalist crisis that had produced fascism in Europe. For Hayek, the strong state, whether in the form of fascism, Soviet communism, or the creeping socialism of the British Labour Party, was to be eschewed.

If neoliberalism springs from a desire to combat the growing power and influence of the state, how is it that neoliberalism has produced not only a very robust state apparatus, but, as I will argue, an authoritarian one? The answer is that neoliberalism in practice has been quite different from its theory.

The Necessities of the State in Neoliberal Theory

As David Harvey points out in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, the neoliberals' economic ideals suffer from inevitable contradictions that require a state structure to regulate them. The first of these contradictions revolves around the role of law to ensure the individual's superiority over the collective in the form of private ownership rights and intellectual property rights (patents and copyrights). A judicial system is necessary to designate and regulate the interaction between private actors on the market. While intimations of the regulatory state can be seen in this formulation, it is hardly anything controversial. Only the most extreme of laissez-faire economic thinkers would not acknowledge the requirement of a state structure that creates the space for and regulates contracts.

The second contradiction derives from the elites' historical ambivalence regarding democracy and mass participation. If the people were free to make decisions about their lives democratically, surely the first thing they

would do is interfere with the property rights of the elite, posing an existential threat to the neoliberal experiment. Whether these popular aspirations take the form of drives towards unionization, progressive taxation, or pushing for social policies that require the redistribution of resources, the minimal state cannot be so minimal that it is unable to respond to and crush the democratic demands of citizens. After all, as pointed out in the first contradiction, the neoliberal state exists in theory to guarantee the rights of the individual over the demands of a majority. Therefore, a system must be put in place that protects against the "wrong" decisions of a public that is supposed to buy, sell, act, and choose freely.

Two Levels of Authoritarianism

Any method that seeks to subvert the democratic demands of citizens, whether through force, coercion, or social engineering, is authoritarian. I argue here that the neoliberal state is authoritarian in two distinct but related forms. First, the historical imposition of neoliberalism on nation-states is the result of anti-democratic forces. Second, the maintenance of neoliberalism requires a market society achieved through a transformation in civil society. For this transformation to take place, welfare states must be slimmed down by austerity policies in order to turn over to the market potentially lucrative sectors of the social economy (in health care, education, social security, and so on). Public resources must become privatized; the public good must be produced by private initiative. Neoliberal economic policy can only function with a state that encourages its growth by actively shaping society in its own image, and austerity is the tool to push for that transformation. While the subversion of democracy is clearly authoritarian, the drive towards a market society and the social engineering necessary to maintain that society are further expressions of the de facto authoritarianism of neoliberalism and the neoliberal state.

Austerity traditionally has been defined as the economic policies surrounding deficit cutting. When public debt runs too high, according to the theory, the accounts must be balanced by cutting spending and raising taxes. It is important to look past the theory to see the results of austerity in practice and understand austerity as a social-historical force. To do this, one must define austerity from the perspective of its victims. Pablo Iglesias, leader of the Podemos party in Spain, in his February 17 appearance on the *Democracy Now!* show, did just that by arguing that austerity is when people are forced out of their homes, when social services do not work, when public schools lack resources, when countries do not have sovereignty and become the colonies of financial powers. He closes by saying that austerity is the end of democracy, because without democratic control of the economy, there is no democracy.

The State and Society

The nature of how the state affects society has been a contentious topic within left traditions. Most notably, the debate between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas that took place in the pages of the *New Left Review* in the early 1970s refreshed the study of the state. Miliband, in his *The State in Capitalist Society*, stressed an instrumentalist position, arguing that the reproduction of capitalism in society is due to the socialization of the ruling class in the tradition of capitalist dogma. As a large proportion of those who dominate the state and control its levers come from an elite education (he was writing from the perspective of British politics in the mid-twentieth century), it's no surprise that they believe their theories to be correct and just, while the state they run serves the interests of capital. The writings of Poulantzas, in particular *Political Power and Social Classes*, argued a structuralist position strongly influenced by the thought of Louis Althusser. He claimed that the relation between the ruling class and the state was an objective relation, meaning

that the coincidence of bourgeois ideology with the ideology of the state was a matter of how the system itself is organized. Their two state theories, the former arguing that the state is an instrument of the ruling class and the latter arguing that the state is the objective result of the capitalist system, shed light on the differences in conceptualizing not only the capitalist state, but how the state relates to and is legitimized by society. Is the market society a result of policies implemented by individuals in power who are trained in a particular neoliberal tradition, or an objective outcome of capitalist social relations that are the superstructural product of a system?

What could arguably be the genius of neoliberalism is the way in which it takes these two approaches to state theory and blends them. On the one hand, for Miliband, the neoliberal state is the extension of ruling-class free-market ideology, propagated by government bureaucrats, military officials, and technocrats who can speak no other language than that of the privileged status of capital and who hold the belief that they are serving the greater good. On the other hand, as Poulantzas suggested, neoliberalism needs to ensure its own survival by bending civil society, political institutions, and democracy to its will.

A state that so blatantly puts the rights and needs of one small class of citizens over others cannot be installed without a struggle. And further analysis shows us that once neoliberal regimes come into power, a certain degree of social engineering and coercion are necessary in order to guarantee the submission of the population and ensure the smooth accumulation of capital. In what follows, I would like to lay out how neoliberal austerity regimes were installed, and also draw on hypotheses of how they are maintained. However, as each socio-political system is unique in its history, culture, norms, and traditions, the manifestation and maintenance of the neoliberal state differs depending on whether we are talking about core countries or peripheral ones, to use the terminology

of World Systems Theory. The common denominator is the empowering of elites over the masses with the assistance of international forces through military action or financial coercion—a globalized dialectic of ruling classes.

Peripheral Neoliberal States

In the periphery, those countries that have been dominated by colonial and neocolonial developed countries, economic and political trends beginning in the 1970s show that neoliberalism has been installed by the use of force. The Latin American experience demonstrates how neoliberalism was established through military operations and coups d'état. In Chile, the democratically elected president Salvador Allende was overthrown and the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet proceeded to crush labor unions and popular movements, privatizing a chunk of the public sector. When Pinochet stepped down, initiating a transition to democracy, he left behind the constitution that he had signed and put in place after the coup. Demands to chip away at this “constitution of the dictatorship,” as it is referred to in Chile, are present in Chilean social movements, most recently the student movements seeking to reform the deeply unequal private higher education system. The reforms that were the bedrock of a reactionary counter-revolution in the country were brought about through force, violence, and physical coercion as seen in the torture and systematic repression of the regime's opponents.

The maintenance of such a regime could only be guaranteed through the dissolution of civil society to ensure that all avenues of dissent were illegal. Political representation in the National Congress was impossible because it was dissolved as civil liberties were proscribed. Organizations of a civil society, including unions, political parties, and groups set up by the Catholic Church to tend to the needs of the families of the disappeared, were treated as opposition organizations and were forbidden.

It is estimated that tens of thousands of Chileans were tortured, while up to 200,000 were exiled, shocking the population into submission through fear. The laws regulating dissent were so strict that when the plebiscite was held to transition to democracy, special arrangements needed to be made to allow political groups the ability to organize and campaign, an attempt to reinvigorate a minimal civic culture in the country.

While Chile was the first and one of the main examples of the growth of neoliberalism, it has been far from unique. Economic “shock therapy” has become central to U.S. foreign policy, from Argentina in 1976 to the reintegration of post-communist states into the global capitalist economy. A quick comparison between countries listed as “not-free” by Freedom House and those that employ free-market neoliberal policies stresses this point. From Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in Central Asia, to the crisis-ridden state of Mexico, and the neoliberal reforms of dictators in the Middle East and North Africa, the notion that capitalism and democracy form a symbiotic relationship and support each other has been debunked. The dissolution of civil society goes hand in hand with the imposition of a neoliberal state through violence, in order to ensure that threats to the state's activities remain unchallenged.

Core Neoliberal States

In core countries, meanwhile, austerity and authoritarianism follow a different pattern. There, neoliberal political systems have been created through financial coercion and are held hostage by financial interests due to the economic “necessities” created by bankruptcies and budget deficits. The test in this case is New York City, where the consequences of the depression of 1974-75 run deep. Kim Moody, in *From Welfare State to Real Estate*, traces the political and economic alliance that took advantage of social pressures from deindustrialization, white flight, and global economic crisis to implement

the reforms that would give rise to a complete transformation of the city's social fabric. His analysis shows how a united business elite was able to thwart the democratic interests of the city's working classes by using the budget, the deficit, and financial coercion to rein in what they saw as an unsustainable welfare state. A crisis regime was put in place representing a business class unified in its desire to reshape the social democratic polity of New York City, using the city government to achieve this transformation. What began as a move by bankers to shut the city out of the bond market evolved by 1975 into the establishment of the Emergency Financial Control Board, which set its sights on imposing tuition on the City University of New York system, increasing the fares for mass transit, and limiting welfare payments. It's a story that has become all too familiar in the twenty-first century and a tactic that is being replayed in other cities, states, and nations.

Given the history of uninterrupted constitutional rule in the United States, the installation of neoliberalism requires the engineering of society through the transformation of institutions. By giving the market the freedom to determine when wages will be lowered, when jobs will be shed, and when communities will be destroyed, while simultaneously dismantling social welfare programs to increase the market's authority, a social crisis is produced that requires a police force to maintain order. This relationship has inspired the work of sociologist Loïc Wacquant for two decades. Combining a Marxist materialist approach to observe the socio-economic conditions that have influenced the growth of the American penal system with a Durkheimian symbolic perspective, which stresses how the prison serves as a symbol of disciplining power, his work *Punishing the Poor* argues that the expansion of correctional facilities should be seen as correlated with the rise of the neoliberal state. He notes how "welfare reform" corresponded with the expansion of the imprisoned population, signaling a shift in

how contemporary neoliberal society treats the most vulnerable among us. This means that not only do prisons and jails serve as the place to physically keep those who have been convicted of criminal behavior, but they also serve as an alternative source of labor-power harvesting. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution explicitly allows penal labor, and while this has historically been organized by state-run corporations such as UNICOR, recent legislation allows the private sector to tap into the penal labor pool. Meant as an alternative to outsourcing, this practice is referred to as "smart-sourcing" (see www.unicor.gov/services/contact_helpdesk/).

The consequences of neoliberal reform and the penal society in the United States are related in more ways than one. While prisons are filled with those who have been affected by the welfare-to-workfare policies and war-on-drugs-era sentencing laws of the 1980s and 1990s, prisons are also an example of the process of privatizing government institutions and insuring that those institutions create profit for private investors, making the neoliberal state an agent in this wealth redistribution. The process of regulatory capture, where special interests are able to control the agencies that are supposed to be regulating them in the public interest, illustrates this point. While the market dictates the scope of what is possible for state institutions that are beholden to government funding, the market also creates the conditions, during periods of financial crisis, that lead to the bankrupting of state institutions through austerity measures and the privatization of these public assets.

Europe has also been subjected to the establishment of neoliberalism through financial coercion; however, the European case presents us with an instance of unprecedented democratic subversion on behalf of international capital. This is not to say that the establishment of neoliberalism has been imposed from the outside with no domestic encouragement, but rather that Europe presents us with a particular

case of an alliance between the bourgeoisie of individual European nation-states and their counterparts in international institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB). The rise of the political party Syriza in Greece and the election of Alexis Tsipras as prime minister, while nurturing a cautious hope, has also shown the extent to which the democratic aspirations of the citizens of Greece are sabotaged for the benefit of financial interests represented by the European Commission, the ECB, and the International Monetary Fund. The sovereignty of European countries is being attacked by advocates of neoliberalism under the guise of EU and ECB policy. In Italy, the technocratic government of Mario Monti was appointed without an election following the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi. Meanwhile in Ireland, the ECB held the democratically elected government in a stranglehold by attaching a series of austerity conditions to any bailout agreement. In practice, democratic demands must be made within the tight parameters that have been established by bankers, making a mockery of democracy itself.

The manifestation and maintenance of neoliberalism in Europe can be understood through the changing notions of citizenship in European countries. While at one time the citizenry was the sole constituency, a new group has evolved that claims dominance over the nation-state: creditors. According to the German political economist Wolfgang Streeck, in his work *Buying Time: The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, the growth of creditors has placed a strain on the state, allowing unelected and anti-democratic

authorities to regulate how the state handles its relations with its citizens, and defining the nature of state-society relations. The introduction of this “constituency” of opposing interests into the political equation holds the polity of Europe within a loop. On the one hand, the government is supposed to be representative of the people, while on the other, international forces are recognized as citizens and therefore claim a voice in how the government conducts its business. While the neoliberal state was imposed through financial coercion, it is maintained through the creation of new political constituencies.

Conclusion

By blending the state theories of Miliband and Poulantzas, we are able to see the neoliberal state in a multidimensional form. It is not solely the result of the decisions of those in power, but also a complex system that constructs its own acquiescence. The neoliberal state is a qualitatively distinct form of the capitalist state. Its authoritarianism is present not only in its unquestioned defense of the interests of capital, but also in the way that it actively seeks to shape society to be more favorable to its goals. Peripheral countries have borne the burden of this violence as their position within the world system is secondary and practically dispensable. Core countries require a much more skilled intervention through the introduction of reforms and the transformation of institutions to solidify obedience in the form of the market society. Austerity, understood as a social-historical force, is the tool of the neoliberal state to subvert democracy and promote authoritarianism.

Love Control

The Hidden Story of Wonder Woman

KENT WORCESTER

WONDER WOMAN WAS NOT the first female superhero, but she is the best known of the modern-day costumed heroines. Armed with indestructible bracelets, her Amazonian heritage, and a “magic lasso,” the character’s inaugural debut came in the pages of *All Star Comics* #8 in December 1941; a month later she was showcased on the cover of *Sensation Comics* #1. Seventy-five years on, Wonder Woman continues to appear in her own monthly comic book, as well as on innumerable licensed products, and the actress Gal Gadot is slated to play the character in the upcoming live-action movie *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. Like her male counterparts Batman and Superman, Wonder Woman is a decades-old slice of intellectual property that also represents a cross-platform revenue stream with virtually unlimited potential.

When Wonder Woman first appeared on the newsstands she was one of literally hundreds

of new pen-and-ink heroes designed to capitalize on the extraordinary success of Superman, whose circulation numbers skyrocketed in the late 1930s and early 1940s. While most of these superheroes were male, a smattering

were female, including Fantomah; the Phantom Lady; the Red Tornado; Sheena, Queen of the Jungle; and Miss Fury. The emergence of these flamboyant characters coincided with the U.S. involvement in World War II and the rise of Rosie the Riveter, and Wonder Woman in particular became an emblem of female emancipation from hapless victimhood and convention-

al gender roles. From a commercial standpoint, she was probably the most successful of the comic-book female adventurers; while precise circulation numbers are hard to come by, it seems that some of her titles sold well over a million copies. At different points in the 1940s, she was featured in no fewer than four ongoing series—*All-Star Comics*, *Comic Cavalcade*, *Sensation Comics*, and *Wonder Woman*—as well as a short-lived newspaper comic strip. Ancillary companies proved eager to stamp her image on toys, clothing, and costume jewelry. The character remains a “license to print money,” as

Wonder Woman: Bondage and Feminism in the Marston/Peter Comics, 1941–1948

NOAH BERLATSKY

Rutgers University Press, 2015, paperback, \$26.95

Wonder Woman Unbound: The Curious History of the World’s Most Famous Heroine

TIM HANLEY

Chicago Review Press, 2014, paperback, \$18.95

The Secret History of Wonder Woman

JILL LEPORE

Knopf, 2014, hardcover, \$29.95

KENT WORCESTER’s most recent books are *The Superhero Reader* (2013) and *Peter Bagge: Conversations* (2015), both published by the University Press of Mississippi.

the media mogul Lew Grade once said about owning a television station.

Comic-book publishers have long been amenable the idea of turning print-based heroes, casts, and settings into licensed products and transportable franchises. Within a decade of his arrival, for example, Superman's escapades had spawned radio plays, B-movies, and animated shorts. The Man from Krypton was even the subject of the first novelization of a comic book, George Lowther's *The Adventures of Superman* (1942). Wonder Woman was perhaps not quite as generative, but her visibility and durability have long placed her in the first rank of superheroes. Indeed, over time she has come to symbolize the very idea of the female costumed hero. As the status of women has evolved within the confines of the "DC Universe," and the society at large, so has the depiction and construction of the company's only truly iconic female property.

A growing number of scholars are starting to write about superheroes, and it makes sense that a significant portion of their work is

devoted to female superheroes, whose very existence raises interesting questions about social roles, social boundaries, and social hierarchies. The books under review here are part of this new wave of comics scholarship and have a great deal to say about the historical and biographical context that inspired Wonder Woman's emergence along with the broader cultural shifts that her 75 years' worth of history has recorded. In terms of style, methodology, and emphasis, they are decidedly different books, but they all hinge on an improbable real-life story, one that involves an enterprising academic, his close collaborators, and the startling assumptions that inspired his most famous initiative.

Golden Age superheroes were most often crafted by young men, many of them from New York City and Jewish. Wonder Woman's waspy creator, William Moulton Marston, was an exception. As Tim Hanley reports, Marston (1893-1947) was nearly fifty when Wonder Woman first hit the newsstands, and he had earned no fewer than three degrees from Harvard: "a BA in 1915, a law degree in 1918, and a PhD in psychology in 1921." By the late 1930s he had already made a name for himself through his books on human behavior, his public lectures, and his pivotal role in the development of the polygraph. "He was both an academic and a bit of a huckster," Hanley says, "using his lie detector for noble purposes by assisting in criminal trials while also appearing in ads for Gillette razors to definitely prove they were the superior brand." Marston was invited to join the editorial advisory board of All-American Publications after he had published an article in *Family Circle* that used advanced psychological theories to defend the fledgling comic-book medium. He then leveraged his industry connections to pitch a character called "Suprema the Wonder Woman." Suprema's name was shortened to Wonder Woman, and All-American Publications morphed into DC Comics, which for the past quarter-century has been owned by one of the world's largest media conglomerates, Time



Warner.

Female superheroes, then and now, tend to be fearless, tough, and a little generic. Wonder Woman is an altogether more exotic concoction, especially when Marston was writing her stories and overseeing her artwork. For one thing, the character came with an unusual backstory—Wonder Woman was raised on Paradise Island, where the Amazonians of pagan mythology lived in a separatist utopia that was entirely free of men and their baleful influence. Rather than being conceived via conventional means, her mother, Queen Hippolyte, “sculpted a baby daughter out of clay who was given life by the gods, and she named her Diana.” The Amazonian princess only learned about the outside world when a handsome U.S. fighter pilot, Steve Trevor, crash-landed on Paradise Island. As no man could remain on the island, Hippolyte’s daughter “flew Steve home in her invisible plane and established a secret identity as Diana Prince, Steve’s nurse and later his secretary, so she could stay close to her charge.” Hanley points out that when danger arose, “Diana Prince transformed into Wonder Woman and foiled the fiendish plans of whatever villain she encountered.”

Wonder Woman’s mythological roots are only part of what made the character distinctive. Even more unusual was the fact that Marston set out to create a self-consciously feminist heroine, one whose exploits could inspire girls and help boys come to terms with what Marston regarded as the obdurate fact of female superiority. “The future is woman’s. ... Women will lead the world,” he wrote in 1942. “As a sex,” he insisted, women “are many times better equipped to assume emotional leadership than are males.” Or as he told the *New York Times* in 1937, “The next one hundred years will see the beginning of an American matriarchy—a nation of Amazons in the psychological rather than physical sense.” For Marston, “Superman and his army of male comics characters who resemble him satisfy the simple desire to be stronger and more powerful than anybody else. Wonder Woman



satisfies the subconscious, elaborately disguised desire of males to be mastered by a woman who loves them.” In her original incarnation, at least, the character was designed to be the very best possible female superhero—wise, capable, and caring, as well as bullet defying and impossibly strong.

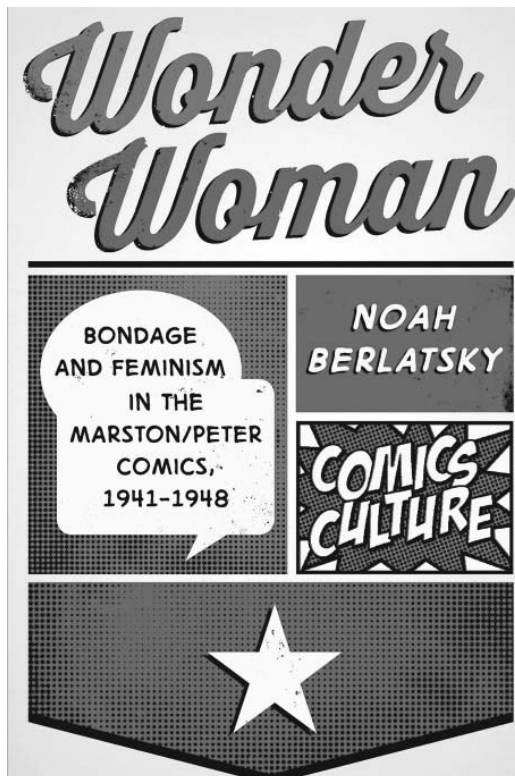
As Hanley shows in his informative survey of Wonder Woman’s appearances in comics, movies, and television, Marston’s radical vision for the character failed to live on after his untimely death from cancer in 1947. While the trappings of the character’s origin story were retained, messages of empowerment soon gave way to stories in which the Amazonian princess fretted over whether Steve Trevor would “pop the question.” As with *Daily Planet* journalist Lois Lane, the independent ethos of the war years gave way to cheerful domesticity in the 1950s and 1960s. This tonal shift not only played out in storylines and covers, but in the letters page and other supplemental texts. When

Marston first introduced Wonder Woman, for example, he made a point of including a few pages' worth of illustrated material that profiled "Wonder Women in History"—figures like Marie Curie, Clara Barton, Sacajawea, and Queen Margrete, a medieval Scandinavian ruler. After Marston's passing, these backup pages addressed such vital topics as dancing, fashion, jewelry, and hairstyles. An issue from 1954 included one-page pieces on superstitions that "could break off an engagement, like a woman putting cream in her coffee before the sugar," and "how doing up your buttons wrong would lead to bad luck all day." While the character recovered her independent spirit in the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary Wonder Woman stories rarely give off the feminist spark that lend the original comics their unexpected resonance.

So who was William Moulton Marston? For many years, superhero fans could only offer vague biographical tidbits that raised as many questions as they answered. Thanks to

Jill Lepore's thoroughly researched "secret history," we now know a great deal about the life and times of Wonder Woman's creator and his circle. Moulton's family traced its origins as far back as the Norman Conquest, and one of Moulton's ancestors put his name to the Magna Carta. As an undergraduate, he was active in the Harvard Men's League for Woman Suffrage, which had been founded by the radical writer John Reed in 1910. It was in this period that he met his future wife, Sadie Holloway, who was passionately committed to the feminist cause. Early in their marriage they made room for a third partner, Olive Byrne, a politically minded Tufts undergraduate whom Marston met when he was teaching in the psychology department there. As it happened, Byrne was also the favorite niece of the feminist speaker and birth control advocate Margaret Sanger. There were other lovers in Marston's life, but he was devoted to Holloway and Byrne, and they were devoted to each other. "He had a rather strange appreciation of women," cracked a DC Comics editor, many years later. "One was never enough."

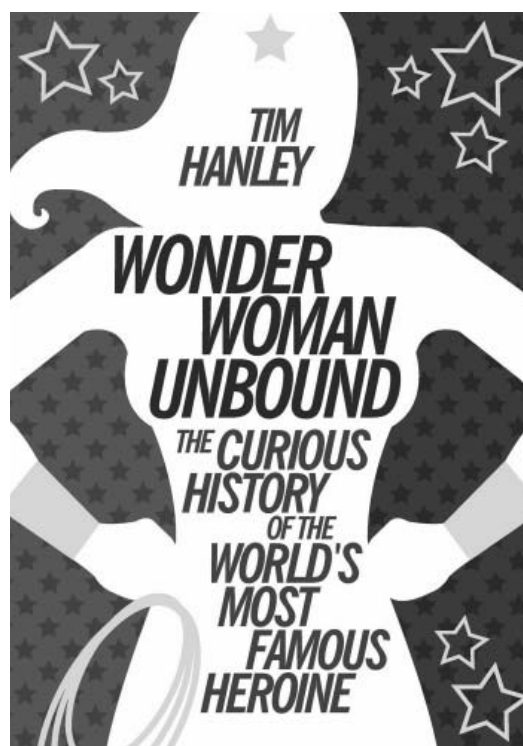
Marston, Holloway, and Byrne lived in a polyamorous relationship for more than two decades. Together they raised four children plus a menagerie of dogs, ducks, rabbits, and chickens. Two of the kids were Holloway's, and the other two were Byrne's, but the trio told the world-at-large, and their kids, that Byrne's children had been adopted. After Marston's death, Holloway and Byrne continued to cohabit, and their children eventually figured things out for themselves. Throughout their marriage, Holloway worked outside the home and coauthored books and articles with her husband, while Byrne looked after the children. Byrne also found time to write journalistic pieces and book reviews that cited Marston's avant-garde ideas without acknowledging their intimate familiarity. Her first article for *Family Circle* was a cover-story profile of Marston entitled "Lie Detector." "The big man saw me and smiled a welcome," she wrote. "'Hello,' he said, 'I've been waiting for



you.” In a subsequent article, she gushed that “No one can feel shy in Dr. Marston’s presence. He is the sort who brushes away social artificialities and makes you feel completely at ease.” As Lepore wryly notes, Byrne failed to inform her readers “that she’d known him for ten years and lived with him for nine.” Even as Marston’s celebrity grew, his family managed to keep their unorthodox arrangement to themselves.

It must have been quite a household. Lepore, who has a novelist’s eye for detail, has poured through the relevant archives and private correspondence, and conducted lengthy interviews with surviving friends and family. The result is a portrait of genteel midcentury eccentricity that leaves little to the imagination, with the courteous exception of their sex lives. When he was writing Wonder Woman stories, for example, Marston occupied “the study on the second floor” and “mainly worked lying on a daybed, wearing nothing but his underwear, a sleeveless undershirt, and slippers.” He had “grown gigantic. He weighed more than three hundred pounds,” and when he got out of bed, “the floorboards creaked. He smoked Philip Morris cigarettes, from cans of fifty,” and “drank rye and ginger ale, morning and night.” As a father he was “passionately affectionate,” Lepore adds. At bedtime he insisted that his only daughter “enter his study, say, ‘Goodnight Daddy,’ and kiss him on the mouth. Every night, she refused. ‘For Christ’s sake,’ Olive would say, ‘just run in there and kiss him quick and get it over with.’” Marston “administered IQ tests to each of his children,” and “promptly informed the children of their scores.” He was “the loudest person in the house, but he was also the most ridiculous,” Lepore writes. “He’d fume and he’d storm and he’d holler, and the women would whisper to the children, ‘It’s best to ignore him.’”

The “loudest person in the house” was not exactly shy about using Wonder Woman to advance his agenda. When he first proposed a new female superhero, his publisher suggested that female heroes were a tough sell in the



comic-book marketplace. “But they weren’t *superwomen*,” Marston argued back. “They weren’t superior to men.” A male hero, he explained, “lacks the maternal love and tenderness which are as essential to a normal child as the breath of life. ... The obvious remedy is to create a feminine character with all the strength of Superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman.” As he later told reporters, Wonder Woman represented “the new type of woman who, I believe, should rule the world.” To bring the Amazonian to life, Marston insisted on using artwork by Harry G. Peter, who at the age of 61 was “an antique by comic-book standards.” Peter’s figure work was stiff, and his compositions were stagey. But his visual style harked back to suffragette imagery from the 1910s and 1920s, and he excelled at drawing the blindfolds, chains, ropes, and traps that regularly turned up in Marston’s fanciful stories. According to Lepore, “Marston’s control over the final product is suggested in the scripts themselves,”

which typically included strict instructions about “page layouts, panels, and color choices.”

In her early stories, Wonder Woman was sometimes a fighter but more often a peace-maker. Her stories tended to revolve around the theme of rehabilitation rather than vengeance. She could throw a punch but preferred to convince wrongdoers to see the error of their ways. Her tools were protective rather than aggressive—bullet-deflecting bracelets, an invisible plane, and a golden lasso that could wring a confession out of the sourest of miscreants. Wonder Woman often shared the stage with a coterie of young women from the fictional Holliday College—sisterhood in action, as it were. She also spent quite a bit of time being tied up, sometimes by friends but mainly by her adversaries. “Not a comic book in which Wonder Woman appeared,” Lepore finds, “lacked a scene of bondage”:

In episode after episode, Wonder Woman is chained, bound, gagged, lassoed, tied, fettered, and manacled. She’s locked in an electric cage. She’s winched into a straitjacket, from head to toe. Her eyes and mouth are taped shut. She’s roped and then confined in a glass box and dropped into the ocean. She’s locked in a bank vault. She’s tied to railroad tracks. She’s pinned to a wall. Once, so that she can be both entirely bound and movable, her fettered feet are welded to roller skates. “Great girdle of Aphrodite!” she cries. “Am I tired of being tied up!”

None of this was accidental, or even incidental; from Marston’s perspective, these stories were intended to instruct young readers about the difference between brutal coercion and what Lepore terms “the enjoyment of submission to loving authority.” In a memo to his publisher, Marston averred that the “only hope for peace is to teach people who are full of pep and unbound force to *enjoy* being bound—enjoy submission to kind authority, wise authority, not merely tolerate such submission. Wars will only cease when humans *enjoy being bound*.” (Emphasis in the original.) For Marston, there was a world of

difference between what he described as “harmful, destructive, morbid erotic fixations,” and healthy role-playing. “My basic idea,” Marston explained to his publisher, involves “women fighting male dominance, cruelty, savagery, and war-making with love control backed by force.” The most elaborate displays of bondage in these stories were performed by the denizens of Paradise Island, that is, by women who ritualistically tied each other up during lusty ceremonies that celebrated female power and autonomy, rather than by the saboteurs and criminals against whom Diana Prince and Steve Trevor battled. In Marston’s comics, sadism was always wrong, and must never triumph, whereas the good kind of bondage, domination, and submission could help friends and lovers express their true selves and thereby transform the world.

While Lepore acknowledges Marston’s storytelling fixations, she seems far more interested in his family shenanigans and academic mishaps than in the comics themselves. Thankfully, Noah Berlatsky’s theoretically informed analysis of *Bondage and Feminism in the Marston/Peter Comics* provides a close reading of the early Wonder Woman stories and fills in some of the gaps left by Lepore’s ironic detachment. Drawing on the writings of Jacques Lacan, Janice Radway, Judith Butler, and others, Berlatsky argues that Marston “created a universe that was friendly to queer sexualities and lifestyles, from kink to lesbianism to crossdressing.” Marston’s “most important themes,” Berlatsky suggests, are “feminism, pacifism, and queerness—or if you prefer, bondage, violence, and heterosexuality.” His comics-centric study zeroes in on these hot-button themes and makes it clear just how atypical Marston’s stories were in relationship to the superhero genre as a whole. In so doing, Berlatsky makes a persuasive case for the claim that “*Wonder Woman*, the original comic, was much more interesting, beautiful, and worthwhile than Wonder Woman the popular icon.”

Before Ferguson

The “Justice” System and the Murders of the Civil Rights Era

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

JIMMIE LEE JACKSON WAS SHOT by an Alabama State Trooper in Marion, Ala., on Feb. 26, 1965, following a civil rights march. He died two days later. This killing sparked the Selma marches depicted in the now-famous film (the Jackson shooting is shown with a slight change in locale). The trooper was not even reprimanded, but 42 years later the case was reopened, and in 2010 the now 77-year-old man pleaded guilty to manslaughter and got six months, of which he served only five due to illness.

In *Racial Reckoning*, Romano’s objective is to examine “why the racial terrorism of the civil rights era went unpunished, and why it was possible to reopen investigations and bring new charges decades after the murders took place” (13). But beyond that, she asks another question: what was the impact of these later trials and convictions on the way many Americans, not

only in the South, viewed what had happened, and just as important, how did these trials influence our understanding of the present state of “race relations”?

In the first chapters of her book, she introduces us to 38 racially motivated murders of African Americans by whites in the South from 1951 to 1968, including five by law officers. Of this select group there were arrests in 15 cases, some of them only after they were reopened many years later. Romano uses these cases

to try to answer her questions.

There were actually closer to 200 racist murders in the South in those years, not all involving civil rights activists. (The Arkansas Delta Truth and Justice Center lists 53 from 1955 to 1970 in Mississippi alone, including 15 by police officers.) One of the more infamous murders was that of 14-year-old Emmett Till, in August, 1955. He was visiting relatives in Mississippi when he was accused by a white woman of whistling at her. Her husband and another man kidnapped him, beat him, shot him, and dumped his body into the Tallahatchie River. An all-white jury acquitted them. They later confessed in a *Look* magazine article, but were

**Racial Reckoning:
Prosecuting America’s
Civil Rights Murders**
RENEE C. ROMANO
Harvard University Press, 2014,
207 pp. plus footnotes and index.
Hardcover \$35.00

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never retried. Another “typical” murder was that of Herbert Lee, an NAACP activist who was shot by a Mississippi state legislator in 1961. No arrests were ever made even though there were witnesses, one of whom, an African American,

Why was the white South intent on terrorizing its African-American population?

was himself killed to keep him quiet. Many of the murders were assassinations, targeting particular leaders such as NAACP officers, activist ministers, people encouraging Blacks to vote, and so on. Others were the victims of random violence, terrorism, in short, as in the case of John Earl Reese, who was killed in October, 1955, when a group of white men shot up a local café in east Texas to discourage Blacks from attempting to go to school with whites; or Virgil Ware, age 13, who was shot by two white teenagers on their way home from a segregationist rally in Birmingham, Ala., in September, 1963. In the former case, the shooter was convicted but the five-year sentence was suspended. In the Ware murder, the teenagers got seven months, suspended. A number, like Till, were murdered for “transgressing customary racial boundaries” (22) including alleged intimacies with white women, lack of subservience toward white customers, or taking jobs traditionally reserved for whites. Yet others were random victims who were simply carrying out their daily business, as in the cases of Reese and Ware, or Johnnie Mae Chappell, a mother of ten, who was shot in Florida in 1964 while looking for a lost wallet on the street.

In the majority of these murders, no one was arrested much less tried at that time. In the handful of cases that did come to trial, the court was rigged in favor of the defendants. The juries were all-white because in many communities

jurors had to be registered voters, and there were few if any Blacks registered. Defense attorneys got informal help in identifying “safe” jurors. They made every attempt to stigmatize and belittle the victims, including red-baiting and accusations of sexual improprieties. They typically attacked federal prosecutors for interfering with states’ rights. Judges would not bar jurors who were openly racist even when they stated they could never convict a white man for killing a Black man. Even the prosecutors would tell jurors they were in favor of segregation and had no sympathy for the victims.

In the Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing of September, 1963, which killed four girls, no one was charged with the murders until 1977. One of the bombers was sentenced to life. But rather than heralding an era that would shine light on other murders, it was, in Romano’s view “an anomaly” (74). It took 25 more years for others to be convicted in this case. In the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner at the beginning of Freedom Summer in June, 1964, the state of Mississippi failed to prosecute. The federal government did win convictions of seven men for conspiracy. After Clifford Wilson was sentenced to life for his role in the 1966 murder of NAACP activist Vernon Dahmer, the governor of Mississippi commuted his sentence after three years.

Many murders, however, as in Till’s case, were never resolved. Among Romano’s 38 cases (not necessarily typical of all the murders), there were 12 killings where the murderers, even when known, as in the case of several police, were never arrested.

Why was the white South intent on terrorizing its African-American population? Romano tells us that “the white men behind the region’s racial violence feared the loss of the world they knew” (24), especially after the Supreme Court’s 1954 school desegregation decision. The (white) Citizens’ Councils, founded that same year, grew to 250,000–300,000 members in 500 local

chapters by 1957. The various Southern klans also grew rapidly in that period. Mississippi established a Sovereignty Commission (MSC) to do, at the local level, what FBI Director Hoover was doing via his Counter Intelligence Program (Cointelpro): using informers and surveillance to track civil rights workers and disrupt their entirely legal activities. The MSC apparently alerted Neshoba County Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price to look out for Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, in effect painting targets on their backs.¹ Up to that moment, the FBI had been reluctant, to say the least, to interfere with local and state law enforcement, claiming lack of jurisdiction, even though its agents collected reams of evidence. This material would come to light when cases were reopened later. But in these years many African Americans would not talk to the FBI since the agency sometimes turned evidence over to local authorities, with dire consequences for the informants. The FBI in Mississippi in 1964 was all-white, and most agents were native to the state.

Romano lays out for us the entire network of institutions that supported segregation, including the white churches, the media, and the political establishment which, with its “racist rhetoric and ... policies aimed at stifling black protest ... created an environment ripe for political violence and racial terrorism” (31). As the co-editor (with Leigh Raiford) of a prior book, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (U. of Georgia, 2006) it is logical that Romano would be particularly interested in how the media (including film) portrayed this violence and how the public’s understanding of the circumstances was shaped. In her view, media coverage of the trials, then and later after cases were reopened, obscured the complicity of “respectable” community leaders—the “white power structure” (28). She comes back to this point repeatedly.

As for those few brave white souls who dared to support integration in the 1950s and 1960s, the consequences could be grim. Juliette

Morgan, who supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott, lost her job, was targeted with threatening phone calls, and committed suicide. Ira Harkey, a newspaper editor in Mississippi, had his offices shot up, his delivery staff beaten, and his advertisers threatened. Florence Mars, who cooperated with the FBI in an investigation, had her business boycotted, and she was ostracized by her church. The family of 1964’s Miss Mississippi invited some civil rights workers to dinner and became the victim of a “vicious” campaign of intimidation (38). In none of these cases did white community church, business, or political leaders or even neighbors speak out, either because of their segregationist views or out of fear. This crushing atmosphere helped Florence Mars understand “how Nazi Germany was possible” (38).

Medgar Evers, the NAACP Field Secretary for Mississippi, was shot and killed on July 12, 1963, by an arch-segregationist, Byron De La Beckwith. Two trials ended in “hung juries.” Twenty-six years later, some of the Sovereignty Commission’s files were leaked. By now the political climate of the South, even in Mississippi, had shifted, due in part to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which opened the door to the election of some Black officials. By 1990 one-third of Mississippi’s registered voters were Black, and there were more Black elected officials there than in any other state. Romano also tries to make the case that the era of sweeping civil rights murders under the rug was coming to an end. “By the 1980s,” she claims, “white Americans from a range of political backgrounds had accepted the position that the government should not discriminate on the basis of race” (77). Romano is quick to point out that this did not imply support for policies that might make this rhetoric a reality. But this changing atmosphere did lead the media to be more open to reinvestigating some of the more notorious murders. The release of the film *Mississippi Burning* in 1988 made a considerable impact regardless of its deeply flawed portrayal

of the Freedom Summer murders and the FBI's (highly fictionalized) role. It won seven Oscar nominations.

The upshot was that Medgar Evers' murder case was reopened thanks to a kind of partnership between Myrlie Evers, Medgar's widow; Jerry Mitchell of the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion-Ledger*; and a white assistant district attorney named Bobby DeLaughter, who, while at first reluctant, soon became "a vocal advocate for the need to show that Mississippi courts could treat blacks and whites equally" (67).² De La Beckwith was convicted and sentenced to life in 1994. He died in prison.

The relatives of the victims, Till's mother, Chaney's brother, Schwerner's widow, and others who had been working for years to keep these cases visible, were now able to press more actively to have them reopened. Soon their cases and others were indeed reopened. "Within a decade, a range of new activists—who were dedicated to uncovering the full extent of the racial terrorism of the 1950s and 1960s as well as state complicity with it—embraced the project of seeking prosecutions" (68). But for the Southern white establishment, the trials had another purpose: "to close the door on a troublesome past." Activists wanted to open up the past; the establishment wanted as quickly as possible to bury it.

Since the 1980s, Romano tells us, there have been more than one hundred reinvestigations of racially motivated killings that took place between 1955 and 1970. They have resulted, so far, in 13 trials and more than twenty men sentenced to prison. In addition to Evers' murderer, there were convictions and long sentences for the Birmingham church bombing, a retrial and conviction in the Freedom Summer murders, and a life sentence for the Vernon Dahmer murder, among others. In 2008 further pressure resulted in Congress passing the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act, passed unanimously in the Senate and with only two dissenting votes in the House, and signed

by President Bush. The Department of Justice reopened 112 investigations, but within a year had closed all but twenty of them because, the FBI determined, "prosecutions were no longer viable" (199).

STILL, MANY SOUTHERN WHITES and some Blacks did not favor reopening the Evers or other cases. All sorts of excuses appeared: the defendants were too old, the trials would cost too much, they would just open up old wounds. "Stirring up old crap," one white man said, "just makes it stink worse" (81). The defenders of reopening responded by comparing the trials to pursuing aging Nazis. Maybe, the thought went, sometimes old wounds needed to be reopened so that they could be cleaned.

Yet in Romano's estimation even when trials did take place there were serious problems. Foremost is the fact that trials by themselves could not "foster the kind of understanding of history [that is] necessary to serve the cause of racial equality and social justice" (171). This was mainly due to the way trials are structured. In short, it was difficult to raise issues beyond the narrow question of the guilt or innocence of defendants. Efforts were certainly made, and continue to be made by movement activists and relatives of the deceased, to correct the way the trials functioned to portray the South and to deepen the public's awareness of the roots of racism and the collusion of white power structures in fostering the climate in which the murders took place. But Romano suggests this was a losing battle.

The trial narratives did several things: For one, they sent the message that Mississippi was not like *Mississippi Burning*, which portrayed Mississippians generally as a bunch of hoodlums. Rather, the murders were the acts of a "monolithic group of thugs and racists" (82), and guilty verdicts demonstrated evidence of racial progress. In fact, defense attorneys called none of the defendants as witnesses in any of these cases: They were deemed too "repulsive"

to the jury to be heard" (129). Less-repulsive defendants were never tried because they might arouse sympathy or because the case might have raised larger questions about state complicity. Moreover, prosecutors facing Southern juries (even though no longer all-white) felt they needed to steer clear of connecting the murders to the controversial area of civil rights since many whites might have felt that the victims "brought it on themselves," and so they concentrated on the "narrow question of individual culpability" (115). In this way racism became defined as overt hatred by these particular individuals, rather than deeply woven into the fabric of southern (and American) life. So the trials "presented history in ways that excused the government or community of any complicity" (137).

Romano hammers away on this theme repeatedly. She sees the trials as an evasion. They let governments and institutions off the hook, allowed the North to blame the South for all the violence, and let the South put the blame on a few aging klan members whose deeds took place years ago. Yet she admits that trials did, and do matter. Trials do, in theory, help to overcome Black mistrust of the legal system and make clear that the wider community does not condone racist violence. Such trials function much, perhaps, like hate-crime legislation, which also does little to stop hate, but reassures minority communities of their legitimate place in society. Also, the trials did act as entry points for broader community activism just as police shootings do today. Still, if civil rights murder trials are to be more than just "a way to close the door on the past, or as proof that history has been fully dealt with" (193), it must be kept clear that they are only "a first step towards [the] goal of racial justice."

How were steps towards "a deeper conversation about the region's past" (180) to take place? By 2004 a number of communities in the South had been commemorating some of the civil rights-era victims. Notably in Philadel-

phia, Mississippi, the site of the three Freedom Summer murders, an interracial coalition had been formed to "rehabilitate" Neshoba County's image. It organized a 40th anniversary (of the murders) commemoration to press for justice in the case. (Edgar Ray Killens was convicted a

The film *Mississippi Burning* in 1988 made a considerable impact regardless of its deeply flawed portrayal of the Freedom Summer murders and the FBI's (highly fictionalized) role.

year later.) Within the coalition, a more radical group advocated that it should go on to "fight for educational initiatives and political reform" in the community and to uncover "the whole truth" about what had been going on in the county (179). In 2006, 24 different community groups from around the South met at the University of Mississippi to create a "regional alliance to confront the region's history of racial terror" (181).

Several of these groups, including Atlanta's Southern Truth and Reconciliation and the earlier Greensboro (North Carolina) Truth and Reconciliation Commission, were interested in "restorative justice" (after the model of South Africa). The Greensboro group had been organized a few years after the 1979 killings of five people during a "Death to the Klan" march. The perpetrators were associated with local extremist groups. The police did nothing, and the six accused were acquitted. (The families of the victims won a civil suit in 1985.)

The idea, apparently shared by all these groups, was that "shaping people's views of America's racial history was ... an important part of achieving a more equitable society" (183). It was thought that contemporary poli-

cies such as Affirmative Action, aid to “inner cities,” improving public education, and other expensive reforms would not gain a following (among whites) unless people learned how current economic problems were “the consequences of slavery and segregation” (187). If Romano believes this, as apparently so many did and still do, it suggests a rather naïve view of the processes by which attitudes and beliefs change (or don’t).³ Nevertheless, movement veterans also continued to press for trials as a way of paying a debt to the victims and their families, despite the drawbacks.

Racial Reckoning was not intended to go beyond the South. As we know, there were many other civil rights murders.⁴ Probably the most notorious, after that of Martin Luther King, Jr., was the Chicago police assassination of Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark while they were asleep on Dec. 4, 1969. A federal grand jury cleared the officers, but years later the families of Hampton and Clark won a civil suit against local, state, and federal authorities.⁵

Romano’s book is meticulously researched. There are 45 pages of footnotes. However, for anyone not deeply familiar with the period it would have been useful to have synopses of the major cases, from murder to trial or other result, rather than forcing the reader to switch back and forth to the index or refer to Wikipedia for a quick overview. The book is nevertheless a fine contribution to the history of the civil rights period.

Romano concludes that the civil rights murder trials functioned to depict “the United States as an exceptional nation committed to equality, justice, and democracy” (207). This myth promotes the message that we live in a

“post-racial” society, and that further remedies to overcome racial disparities in income, education, housing, health, and more are unnecessary. The series of police killings of unarmed Black men and the lack of indictments in their cases 2014 and 2015 illuminates once again that disparities continue, and that our society is very much racial.

NOTES

1. Immediately after the murders, President Johnson ordered the FBI to clamp down on the klans of the South, and they, too, became targets of Cointelpro. (See David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*, Oxford U. Press, 2013). On October 20, 1966, seven men, including Price, were found guilty by an all-white jury on various charges and sentenced to up to six years. One of the others arrested, Edgar Ray Killen, was freed but retried in 2005 and convicted. He was sentenced to 20 years for each of the three victims. As of December, 2014, he was still alive, at age 89, at Mississippi State Prison, better known to activists as Parchman.

2. The story is portrayed in the film *Ghosts of Mississippi*, which Romano castigates, together with *Mississippi Burning*, for centering on the redemptive story of white heroes to the neglect of Black activists, and most important, for the lack of attention to the complicity of the white power structure in racist practices over the years.

3. The social science on this subject is immense. A good early example is Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Doubleday Anchor, 1954 and 1958).

4. On November 5, 1980, Steve Harvey, a Black musician, was bludgeoned to death by a 19-year-old white man in a Kansas City, Missouri, park. An all-white local jury acquitted him. In a federal trial (because the murder had been in a public park), he was found guilty and sentenced to life. The man responsible for getting the case reopened, Alvin Sykes, was soon to initiate the campaign for the Emmett Till Act. Harvey’s widow was related to Till.

5. See Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton* (Lawrence Hill, 2010).

Slave Labor, Melville's Rebellion, and Captain Delano's Journal

LINDA BRAUNE

IN HIS NEWEST BOOK, historian Greg Grandin provides background to Herman Melville's classic *Benito Cereno*, an 1855 short novel about a slave rebellion.

Reflecting on this story written almost two centuries ago, Grandin opens up space for further research by those investigating the Black Atlantic. Melville's novel told the story of a concerned and liberal sea captain, Amasa Delano, who boarded the slave ship *San Dominick* and encountered a deferential slave, Babo, caring for his slave master who had taken ill. Delano was moved by the humble slave's concern for his master, the ship's captain. Not until the end of that day does Delano realize that he had been deceived and that the slaves on the *San Dominick* had revolted and had actually taken charge. Babo was not a deferential slave, solicitous toward his sick master, but rather was the revolt's ringleader! When Delano discovers the true circumstances, he directs his armed team of sailors to round up the rebels, and a fight ensues. The Melville narrative is extraordinary, ironic, and liberatory, and Grandin's book provides some remarkable background material to the novel. *Benito Cereno* had been based on actual events recorded in the non-fictional Delano's

1817 journal.

Grandin provides a context for grasping this late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century revolutionary era, reflecting a whole period of slave rebellion. However, three special contributions by Grandin deserve explication here: his emphasis on the Muslim influence on the slaves, the brutality of the free-enterprise seal-hunting industry, and the harsh march of slaves over the Andes.

First, one of Grandin's striking contributions is his situating the real and the fictional Amasa Delano, and fictional Babo, within a revolutionary history and alerting his readers to the Muslim background of many West African slaves. Grandin reports that "some estimate as many as 10 percent" of over twelve million African slaves taken to America were Muslims (195). Grandin shows us, in fact, that when Protestant Delano meets Babo, he is possibly not confronted with a Christian slave, but a Muslim one, a Muslim brother of those who rose up and fought for a decade to acquire Haitian independence in 1804. (Melville may not have known this Muslim connection fully, but he clearly had Haiti in mind when writing his own version of the story.) Grandin further removes our blinders by stressing the significance of the prime counterpart to the Haitian revolution, "the largest urban slave rebellion in the Americas" in 1835 in Bahia, Brazil (195-96):

The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World

GREG GRANDIN

Henry Holt and Company, 2014. 360 pp., \$30

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many of these slaves in Bahia were also practicing Muslims with a rich history of advanced education and culture. Ironically, Grandin shows, Muslim culture and knowledge were not passed to the Americas predominantly through

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economic freedom.

wealthy travelers, but rather arrived through the slave trade, as West African Muslims were ripped from their homelands, trapped in the Middle Passage, and forced into bondage—and many, perhaps like Babo, fought back.

Second, Grandin broadens the discourse on this historical period by revealing a graphic aspect of the callousness behind the commercial sea world. The non-fictional Delano captained a “sealer” that sent out teams to slaughter the abundant seals on small islands. Grandin critically describes the hunting of terrorized seals and the vividly gory ins-and-outs of early factory processing. He tells of enormous elephant seals and human-sized seals and the violent clubbing, mass slaughtering, and then methodical processing of them (134–37). Melville scholars will enjoy how Grandin takes up Melville’s method of describing and cataloguing labor processes, a virtual extension of Melville’s cetological explanations of the detailed anatomical and social aspects of whales and raw whaling in *Moby-Dick*; this time whales are replaced by seals. Describing the actual steps involved in sealing, Grandin states, “When the killing was finished, the men skinned the carcasses, ... cut the hides ... [into] two-by-two-foot squares, each as thick as eight inches with blubber, ...

strung [them] on poles, ... carried to the tryworks ... by a stream or a river ... [where] sand and blood could be washed off the blubber. ... Ripped [them] into two-inch strips, scored, and tossed into ... pots ... fired ... with wood” (135). Grandin is clearly referencing *Moby-Dick* with the use of “tryworks,” as in whale processing on the *Pequod*. He also catalogs the late eighteenth-century Argentinian factory production of beef jerky, tallow, and animal hides with extensive salting, drying, steaming, and boiling—and as readers of Melville’s *Moby-Dick* know—nothing immediately profitable goes to waste (102–104). And tragically, slaves were forced to provide the labor in these factories so men like Protestant Captain Delano could further their own spiritual and economic freedom. Although the sea captain did not favor slavery (83), it comes as no surprise when Grandin informs us that Delano’s huge debt from failed sealing voyages eventually spurred him to join the many other merchants maintaining slavery by selling dried fish to Caribbean slave islands (255).

During this era, men like Captain Delano sought their own liberty by going to sea, and they thought that by doing so they were building a better world through commerce. Perceptively, Grandin exposes those who went to sea only to discover themselves caught up in bashing helpless seals and penguins and trading in slaves in order to further that sense of enterprising freedom—oblivious to how the animals might fit into a wider ecology and blind to their own entanglement and complicity in the subjugation of other human beings. Grandin reports that although Captain Delano’s journal indicated that one island had millions of seals, it was only a few short years before there were no more seals to hunt (139–141). Realizing the divergent natures of the whaling and sealing industries, Grandin carefully distinguishes between the two on the basis of labor relations: Melville, in *Moby-Dick*, expressed the “intense coordination and camaraderie” (Grandin, 142) required on a whaling ship to master one huge whale that could tear off a

sailor's leg, while sealing involved "pitting desperate captains and officers ... against equally desperate foremast hands" (142)—the former brutalizing the latter for not rapidly bringing in wealth, and the latter extending their anger toward nature by violently brutalizing innocent seals and their pups.

The third aspect of the period that Grandin elaborates is the harsh marching of slaves to their labor destinations and a comparison of the forced movement of slaves across the plains and mountains of South America with the compulsory march west of large numbers of slaves in the United States (265).

Grandin is quite explicit in the following juxtaposition:

Just as merchants decades earlier had begun sending more and more slaves over the pampas and then up the Andes, drivers now were moving ever greater numbers of enslaved peoples out of the old slave states ... to new sugar and cotton plantations in the Deep South and the Southwest. Many of them traveled the way Babo [crossed the pampas and the Andes], in single or double columns on foot, their necks shackled together like links in a chain, across flatlands and over mountains. (265)

Grandin extends the now frequently discussed "Black Atlantic" to the Pacific: he melds the slaves' long—often very long—forced trudges from the interior and western Africa into the trek across South America from east to west, to waiting ships on the Pacific, one of which was the ship where Babo revolted.

There are two further matters of special interest to this reviewer: Grandin's strength in delineating the Enlightenment paradox and a possible weakness in his interpretation of Melville. Grandin's focus, and one to which he repeatedly returns throughout the book, is the permeable border zone between freedom and slavery, which has long confounded the Americas. Grandin's understanding of this hazy interstice is evident in his contrasting of the early nineteenth-century desire for amplified individual freedom with the felt necessity for

an expanding slave workforce. Grandin clearly references this moral disparity as a paradox: "[Merchants] didn't mince words saying what they wanted: ... more liberty, more free trade of blacks" (7). And he surely perceives the ramifications of this contradiction, where the slave trade gained momentum and the liberals reveled in their increased commercial success that led to their expanded liberties.

A version of this paradox was similarly elaborated by Susan Buck-Morss in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009), engaging Enlightenment thought as upholding a contradiction between "freedom ... as the highest ... political value" and "the economic practice of slavery"—both were simultaneously envisioned (Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 21). Buck-Morss was concerned that although current authors have all the facts before them, some writers still form their historical narratives of human liberty along solely positive trajectories (22), ignoring the Enlightenment's cozy relationship with slavery, colonization, and other forms of oppression. But Grandin explicitly departs from that sort of blind interpretation of history held by some current writers; he readily explores a version of the paradox. In fact, in preparation for his book, Grandin stepped beyond his extensive museum and library research to physically travel the South American slave route over the Andes (293) in order to tease out

Grandin misses the revolutionary spirit of Melville in the early 1850s when *Moby-Dick* and then *Benito Cereno* appeared.

the tensions between the adventurous striving for freedom and the "necessity" for enslavement.

I did uncover one possible problem in

Grandin's book. Grandin thinks that Melville was a pessimist, who saw America in crisis and was waiting for the catastrophe to hit. Although Melville, as his life progressed after the Civil War, did become deeply disappointed that America did not keep its best promises, Grandin misses the revolutionary spirit of Melville in the early 1850s when *Moby-Dick* and then *Benito Cereno* appeared. And he too narrowly insists that Melville was not a rebel and that he was afraid of revolution's outcomes (269). He almost interprets *Benito Cereno*, where Babo is recaptured, as Melville cautioning the oppressed against rebellion. There is a history to Melville interpretations which Grandin may not know. True, with the 1920s Melville revival, many read *Moby-Dick* through Captain Ahab's voice, ringing with daring, driven, virtually insane persistence to send out that floating factory, the *Pequod*, to subdue the wild whale. But some African-American writers of the 1940s, in particular Richard Wright, C. L. R. James, and Ralph Ellison, began a new "signifying on" Melville's work ("signifying on," as described by Henry Louis Gates in *The Signifying Monkey*). Wright, James, and Ellison did not identify with Captain Ahab, but rather with the crew, being driven to death by America's captains. And, I believe, they understood Melville's true intent. Melville was against slavery and disgusted with his Northern relatives. He had been to sea, and never as a captain. In his writings, he humanized the internationalist sailors he met

and repeatedly mocked America's arrogance. Frederick Douglass was often on Melville's mind, reflecting Melville's interest in the oppressed and reinforcing the view that in no way was *Benito Cereno* a cautionary tale against slave insurrection. Melville studied the works of the Abbé Guillaume Raynal, and understood, like Hegel (who interested Melville), the rebellion in Haiti fifty years earlier, alluding to it in his novels. He was aware of the rising number of slave rebellions shaking the South. *Moby-Dick* is filled with cooperative labor but also threats of rebellion, and *Benito Cereno*, written just a few years later, can be seen as its sequel: We're back! And we can run the ship. *Benito Cereno* is not a message that revolution ends in recapture, but that revolution is a process with repetitive incursions, and will move revolutionary history into the future.

Although Grandin seems to misread Melville somewhat, Grandin's strengths surely outweigh any weaknesses, and his book should be useful for those exploring the Black Atlantic scholarship developing over the last two decades. In addition, those, like this reviewer, who take an interest in the Enlightenment paradox can profitably mine Grandin's recent historical work. But Grandin's description of seal slaughter and of the dreadful slave march Babo would have endured over the Andes, with the horrifying link to marching chained slaves westward in the United States, would, alone, justify this book.

Mixed Legacy

REGINALD WILSON

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM: *CATALYST FOR CHANGE* by Barbara Winslow brings back to our attention one of the most notable and esteemed African-American women of the 1960s and 1970s. Winslow reports that “a 1974 Gallup Poll listed her as one of the top-ten most admired women in America.” She was the first black woman elected to Congress. As a Democratic candidate for president in 1972, Chisholm was then at the height of her prominence and fame. But she had been a controversial and divisive figure since her entry into politics in the 1960s.

Chisholm was born in Brooklyn in 1915 but spent the first ten years of her life in Barbados. She always “identified herself as a Barbadian-American” whose characteristics, as Winslow notes, were “discipline, thrift, hard work, and ambition.” In Barbados, she was surrounded by black teachers and black administrators and began each day singing “God Save the King.” Upon returning to Brooklyn, she encountered a neighborhood that was Jewish, African-American, Caribbean, and poor. It took all of her discipline and hard work to enable her to thrive and succeed in Brooklyn, but she did.

With her background, Chisholm excelled in school, graduating from Girls High while earning a medal in French and being chosen vice-

president of the honor society. She graduated *cum laude* from Brooklyn College and earned an MA from Columbia Teachers College.

In 1954 Chisholm worked as director of the Hamilton Madison Child Care Center in Manhattan with a staff of 24 caring for 130 children. Many of the children were from Puerto Rico, and Chisholm learned their language in order to be more helpful to them. This

Spanish-language facility turned out to be extremely helpful in her later political endeavors.

Chisholm’s career in politics began while she was still in college. She joined the Seventeenth Assembly District (17AD) Democratic Club. The club’s primary function was to support the party’s candidate at election time. Although the district was majority black, the candidate was usually white. At club meetings, blacks sat on one side of the room, and whites sat on the other. No women were present. Chisholm was appalled. She provided leadership to the women in the club, spoke out against discrepancies in support of the black community, and forced the white men to treat her with respect. She was elected to the club’s board of directors—a feat for a twenty-year-old black woman.

The year 1960 was a momentous one for the nation. The sit-in movement began in Greensboro, North Carolina. The 1954 Supreme Court decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional was being implemented, and a preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr. was

Shirley Chisholm:
Catalyst for Change
BARBARA WINSLOW
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beginning to be heard.

In 1963 Chisholm placed her name in nomination for New York State Assembly. Winslow says, “Chisholm’s greatest hurdle was the hostile

Her first piece of successful
legislation was a bill to provide
unemployment insurance for
domestic workers.

ity she encountered because of her sex—hostility she would face for the rest of her political life.” But she had the support of Brooklyn’s black women and their organizations, such as Key Women of America, which was the backbone of Brooklyn’s church, community, and political circles. Chisholm won the election easily, getting 18,151 votes to the Republican’s 1,893.

In her four years in the State Assembly she worked closely with powerful African Americans such as David Dinkins, later mayor of New York City; Charles Rangel, later member of Congress; and Percy Sutton, later Manhattan borough president. Her first piece of successful legislation was a bill to provide unemployment insurance for domestic workers. This was a key goal of the civil rights and labor movements. Her work in the State Assembly well prepared her for her next challenge in the United States Congress.

Her most formidable opponent for a seat in Congress was James Farmer—nationally known hero of the southern civil rights movement, former chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality, and an outstanding speaker. But these advantages were offset by his negatives: he was not a resident of Brooklyn (though residence was not required), and he had to run as a Republican in an overwhelmingly Democratic Brooklyn, which was governed by the clubs and women’s

organizations that were the source of Chisholm’s strength. Moreover, she spoke Spanish, which endeared her to the Puerto Rican community.

The *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* were totally devoted to Farmer’s candidacy despite Chisholm’s plea for coverage. Yet she won by almost 2.5 to 1, with 34,855 votes to 13,777, becoming the first African-American woman to serve in Congress.

Shirley Chisholm had a strong and formidable record in Congress, but I want to spend the rest of my review devoted to two major decisions in Chisholm’s life: one, her decision to run for president of the United States, and two, her turn to retrograde politics later in her congressional life.

Shirley Chisholm took the oath of office for a second term in Congress in 1971. She had just published her autobiography, *Unbought and Unbossed*. Chisholm was making a national name for herself with such actions as supporting the movement against the Vietnam War, raising bail for Black Power prisoners such as Joan Bird and Angela Davis, and joining the picket lines of the United Farm Workers.

She was considering a run for the U.S. presidency. Yet, she “took a slightly less confrontational stance in her second term in office,” according to Winslow. “Why, we may never know; she never explained her shift in tactics.” For example, she did not support John Conyers, a liberal member of the Congressional Black Caucus, but instead supported Hale Boggs of Louisiana and conservative southerner Joe D. Wagonner for the House Rules Committee, both of which endorsements angered her black supporters.

Perhaps she thought, foolishly, this would make her more attractive as a potential presidential candidate. In contrast, Margaret Chase Smith, a Republican from Maine who had her name placed in nomination for president at the 1964 Republican Convention, had no illusions about winning the nomination. She was making a statement as a woman and did not campaign

or compromise her principles with the hope of winning something illusory.

In September 1971, Richard Hatcher, black mayor of Gary, Indiana, called a meeting with the purpose of “translating the ideas of Black Power into an effective strategy.” Every leader of the black struggle was there, including members of Congress, state legislators, and leaders of the major civil rights organizations. The one thing they unanimously agreed to was that African Americans should “stand aloof from the entire list of candidates for the Presidency of the United States,” and that included Shirley Chisholm. Chisholm, however, did not attend the conference, sending her aide, Thaddeus Garrett. Garrett reported back that Chisholm was thought to be “a black woman of the black experience and from one of the blackest districts in the country.” Yet, at best she was considered a black woman’s candidate and not representative of the entire black experience.

On January 25, 1972, at Concord Baptist Church in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, Shirley Chisholm announced that she was running for the presidency of the United States. Unlike Margaret Chase Smith, she did not submit her name symbolically, but spoke as an actual candidate. She said, “I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women’s movement of this country, although I am a woman and equally proud of that.” She spoke as a candidate of the people. Two of her staff people, Garrett and Shirley Downs, “thought she was out of her ever-loving mind.” Garrett asked incredulously, “Mrs. Chisholm! Do you know the work that’s in that?”

Winslow writes, “[Chisholm] was under no illusions that she had a chance of winning the presidency, let alone even the Democratic nomination.” Lacking a national staff, having no fundraising skills or major support, Chisholm was acting as an actual candidate. But she had almost no national political people in her camp. Most of the black politicians opposed her can-

didacy. There was constant conflict between white women of the National Organization for Women and campaign workers from the black community. “They did not know how to connect the issues of abortion ... and the Equal Rights Amendment ... to the concerns of the black civil rights and liberation movement.” Although she had the support of prominent blacks such as Ossie Davis and Harry Belafonte, who raised money and spoke for her, the support of the majority of black politicians and mainstream feminists was “problematic” and “lukewarm.” Bella Abzug appeared at Chisholm’s second announcement of her candidacy but would not endorse her. Gloria Steinem said, “I’m for Shirley Chisholm, but I think George McGovern is the best of the male candidates.” Chisholm criticized her for her equivocation.

In the Florida primary, which George Wallace won, Chisholm got 3 percent of the vote. In Chicago, Richard J. Daley’s machine won all of the delegates. In Massachusetts, Chisholm came in fifth but did win seven delegates. In Michigan, which Wallace also won, Chisholm came in eighth with 3 percent of the vote. In California, she came in third with 157,455 votes, but California was a winner-take-all state, so all

“Chisholm was under no illusions that she had a chance of winning the presidency, let alone even the Democratic nomination.”

delegates went to McGovern.

Chisholm experienced triumphs and betrayals, disappointments and broken promises, during all of those campaigns. She said at the end, “I ran because somebody had to do it first. ... I ran because most people think the country is not ready for a black candidate, not ready for a woman candidate.” Chisholm did not say the

country was perhaps ready for a better-prepared candidate, one who gathered a national staff and had serious fundraising mechanisms in place—for one who wooed black politicians, admittedly chauvinistic and male-focused, but who might have modified the tone of their

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member of the congressional
women's caucus.

objection. She raised some of these criticisms in her post-candidacy book *The Good Fight*, but expressed no regrets for having run as she did.

Following her presidential run, Chisholm was in demand as a now nationally recognized figure. She used her new fame to influence national legislation and to “consolidate her power in Brooklyn,” by gaining projects and money for her constituents. But she would ultimately become diminished as a fighter for liberal causes and a speaker for progressive issues.

Her speaking fees at the time totaled over \$30,000. This, in combination with her salary of \$42,500, enabled her and her husband, Conrad, to build a “lavish” home in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Her trips to speak at colleges and to women’s groups inevitably resulted in her compiling the lowest voting-attendance record of the entire New York State delegation. Still, Chisholm managed to score some progressive victories. With three more African-American women elected to Congress, making nineteen women in all, she became a founding member of the congressional women’s caucus. She also fought for minimum wage laws for domestic workers, who were overwhelmingly African-American women. It had been one of her main

causes in the New York Assembly.

But in her political actions she was becoming more often a machine politician as opposed to a fighter for liberal causes. She endorsed machine candidates against liberal and progressive African-American and feminist candidates. She did not support Bella Abzug in her two primary campaigns and did not support her “long-time ally Percy Sutton in his failed campaign for mayor.” She campaigned against Arthur Eve, a liberal African American who was running for mayor of Buffalo. Instead she supported a white conservative Democrat who was close to Meade Esposito, the Democratic machine leader. In 1982 she announced that she would not seek re-election.

Barbara Winslow, her biographer, points out these faults marking Chisholm’s fall from being an icon of liberalism to a machine apparatchik. She tries to explain that Chisholm “had to battle politically in a white man’s political world where daggers were out at all times.” But she does not say that Chisholm, in an overwhelmingly black district, could have continued speaking out strongly for liberal and progressive causes and would have garnered the continued support and love of her constituents. Instead of burnishing her national credentials, she could have solidified her stature with her Brooklyn constituents. She could then have retired with an overwhelmingly positive record, instead of leaving with a mixed legacy including compromise of her principles. For example, she would like to have been named the first president of the newly established Medgar Evers College, but “she had made opponents during her political life who opposed the notion,” and she was not chosen. Winslow concludes that, “Like her life, Chisholm’s legacy remains confused and contentious.” And that seems to be a fitting conclusion to her story. Chisholm died in 2005.

Selma's Real Lessons

JAMIE MUNRO

IN AVA DUVERNAY'S FILM *Selma* we first meet Martin Luther King Jr. as he's preparing to accept the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Minutes later he's in the Oval Office with President Lyndon Johnson unsuccessfully pressuring the president to introduce voting rights legislation. Not too long after, he's in a church basement discussing how to provoke a confrontation between a segregationist county sheriff and the Black community of a small Alabama city.

The opening half-hour of *Selma* deftly cuts to the core of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) strategy under King's direction. The movement's power came not from celebrity—or even oratory—but through provocation, disruption, political division, and open, ugly conflict. The King that urges the movement to “negotiate, agitate, resist” in the film is a far cry from the sanitized King of American history textbooks and traditional MLK Day parades.

By delivering this long-concealed King to the public, DuVernay has made a tremendous contribution not only to American cinema, but to the Black Lives Matter movement that is still gaining its footing. DuVernay's refusal to make *Selma* into a hagiography or a one-man show makes it one of the few honest portrayals

of a movement that America has purposefully mis-remembered. It also allows DuVernay to share the true roots of King's successes with a new generation of activists.

And yet, while DuVernay skillfully depicts the contentious relationship between King and LBJ, as well as the brutal violence inflicted by police and white vigilantes, *Selma* leaves out

another crucial aspect of the SCLC's strategy in each of its southern campaigns: the fracturing of the white power structure in the segregated South and in the New Deal coalition nationally. We see King extolling the power of “drama” in putting pressure on the West Wing, but little attention is given to how the SCLC's campaigns skillfully took advantage of a slowly changing South and shattered alliances between northern liberals and southern segregationists. The SCLC did both to further their ultimate aims, and they made few friends doing so.

One film can't show it all, of course, and the gradual pulling apart of a political coalition probably wouldn't be great cinema. But today, young activists are constantly being urged to avoid conflict and work within a broken system. More than anything, these activists need to know that the most successful civil rights activists at the height of their power ignored similar admonitions. The best organizers of the civil rights movement understood that their campaigns had to tear at the fabric of a hostile society, not meld into it. This involved extensive knowledge of local political and economic conditions, and they knew it meant exposing

Selma

Directed by AVA DUVERNAY
2015

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fair-weather allies to extreme political risk.

The SCLC's strategy was rooted not just in high-level negotiations, but also in antagonistic engagement with the political-economic order of the Deep South. The segregated South in the 1960s was still undergoing a long-term economic transformation that began during Reconstruction. Reeling from decades of losses in agricultural employment, many southern cities were electing moderate segregationist mayors who pledged to attract industrial capital that was slowly abandoning the Rust Belt for warmer, less unionized climes. These officials were not as tethered to the traditional planter elites and were more concerned with portraying their cities as orderly, reliable, and employer-friendly. Enforcing segregation with vicious and unpredictable police violence was not a high priority. While most of these mayors still supported segregation, they often went to great lengths to avoid violent confrontation between police and demonstrators.

Selma's Joseph Smitherman was one such mayor. Determined to avoid the reputation that Birmingham had earned during and after the 1963 demonstrations, Smitherman sought to deal with protesters in a way that would not attract the national media. Smitherman's police chief, Wilson Baker, received orders to ignore an injunction blocking any meeting of three or more people discussing voting rights. This modicum of respect for the First Amendment allowed basic organizing to take place in the city, including the boisterous mass meeting in Brown Chapel depicted in the film. In smaller towns across the Deep South with more conservative elected officials, such meetings were often subject to brutal violence by vigilantes. Numerous murders of organizers, including the shooting of Medgar Evers referred to in the film, made such meetings more risky and rare than many now assume.

While Baker and Smitherman hoped to keep overt conflict to a minimum, County Sheriff Jim Clark, who controlled the County Clerk's office and areas outside Selma's city limits, had

other plans. A hard-line segregationist, he guaranteed horrific violence towards demonstrators. Selma thus could offer a less hostile—though still dangerous—organizing environment as well as an assurance of confrontation. As King—expertly played by David Oyelowo—says in the film after being punched by an unnamed white man in a hotel lobby, “This place is perfect.”

But these “perfect” conditions made most outside observers uncomfortable—even those who professed sympathy for the SCLC's cause. As they had in Birmingham, many tepid supporters of King urged him and the SCLC to side with the less reactionary political leaders in Selma and work with them to achieve the change that everyone agreed was inevitable.

Instead, the SCLC's Selma strategy exploited the differences between the moderate Smitherman and the hard-line Clark as well as the constituencies they represented. The strategy pitted these competing factions against each other in order to create a massive, disruptive media event. This local disruption reverberated through state and national politics and exerted pressure on officials at all levels. Though the film touches on the local dynamics briefly, we only get a sense of how essential they were to the movement through references to the failed Albany Campaign of 1961-62, in which officials colluded to avoid dramatic confrontation. DuVernay shows us how King used chaos to get LBJ's attention, but we learn less about the complex process of creating chaos that can effectively build power and bend elected officials to one's will.

Without recognizing the deep power dynamics involved in the key civil rights campaigns, we can fall into the trap of thinking that King's power flowed exclusively from moral suasion—that the images of southern Blacks beaten and killed by cops stirred the conscience of the nation. Many *were* stirred, and many joined the movement. But far more saw King's activism as unnecessarily divisive and counterproductive. To them, the SCLC—and particularly King—were a bunch of agitating publicity-seekers, not bril-

liant strategists and tacticians. To be sure, much of white America and its political representatives thought the actions of southern police and vigilantes were excessive, but many people placed blame on both King and the segregationist establishment for the violence. Many members of the Black elite felt the same way.

By the time of the Selma campaign, Gallup polls* showed that a consistent plurality of Americans thought the government was focusing too much on civil rights for Blacks or moving too quickly to grant those rights. Nor was King a wildly popular figure. Polls from the 1960s showed that the percentage of respondents rating him as “highly favorable” never topped 20 percent. The percentage of respondents who labeled him “highly unfavorable” was always higher.

In short, moral suasion only got the Selma campaign so far. It was disruption and political threats to the Democratic Party that played a much larger role in delivering an impressive string of victories. While DuVernay comes closer to showing us this than any other popular illustrator of King and the SCLC, we don’t really get the full picture. Instead, we’re shown how brutal white violence delivered to King regular meetings with a wavering LBJ and caused trouble for Alabama Governor George Wallace. We see King’s “drama” unfold, and we see its positive results. But it is the links between that “drama” and political power that are still a bit gray.

This is perhaps best illustrated in a scene between LBJ and Wallace late in the film. They talk of being hounded by protesters, the urgency of change, and their political legacies. Wallace makes clear that he’s not changing his hard-line segregationist position; LBJ sides with the SCLC and shortly thereafter introduces the Voting Rights Act. While it is a powerful conversation, the scene doesn’t quite carry as much weight as it should. Both men knew

that acceding to the SCLC’s demands meant the abandonment of the Democratic Party by southern whites. It meant breaking the political coalition that they had both risen on and that Democrats had painstakingly built and struggled to hold together. *Selma* doesn’t quite show us that. Instead it hints that through stirring drama and protest, politicians can be forced to change their positions. While this is partially true, it’s important to note that King and the SCLC were also wielding a serious political threat just in case moral suasion didn’t cut it.

For activists today, this is important to absorb. As the Black Lives Matter movement charges forward, it will undoubtedly be confronted with half-supportive mayors, governors, and presidents. It will be offered half-measures and weak concessions and will be diverted from its original, radical demands (fergusonaction.com/demands) by supposedly sympathetic politicians and commentators. It is at these moments that it will need the power analysis that King and the SCLC had.

The movement will also need to know how to communicate with a largely unsupportive public. It is perhaps the greatest shortcoming of *Selma* that we hear mainly from elected officials, civil rights organizers, and violent segregationists but get little sense of broader American public opinion at the time. We are presented with an honest and illuminating portrait of King and the SCLC without an equally honest depiction of how hostile most of America was to their actions. This is an essential part of the story because it could help dispel the insistent claims that Black Lives Matter is somehow different—more annoying, less focused, less *historic*—than the Selma campaign. More than anything, today’s young activists need to be reminded that these civil rights heroes were hated and scoffed at too—not just by reactionaries but by moderates and many liberals. This is important to keep in mind as a new generation “negotiates, agitates, and resists” and is met with admonishments to “be civil” and “go slow.”

*See www.gallup.com/poll/149201/Americans-Divided-Whether-King-Dream-Realized.aspx.

Even Better the Second Time Around

Reflections on an Updated Socialist-Feminist Classic

JOHANNA BRENNER

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1979, *Beyond the Fragments* (BTF) was an intervention in the left by three British socialist-feminist activists who offered a thoroughgoing critique of democratic centralism and the vanguard party ideal as it was then practiced on the revolutionary left. BTF argued that left groups had failed to capture the creativity and enthusiasm of the tremendous numbers of people who had entered political activity in the 1960s and 70s. The authors recognized the necessity of an organization capable of gathering the energy of social movements and union struggles—the “fragments”—and focusing that energy on a revolutionary vision and anti-capitalist politics. However, they argued that the left would inevitably fail unless we were ready to revolutionize ourselves, taking on board insights from the women’s liberation movement.

The current edition includes the original work and each author’s reflections, thirty-odd years on, in which they locate their intervention in the context of the late 1970s and then

assess where they have moved to and how they think about the same questions today. In their contemporary reflections, the authors try to capture the political environment within which they wrote. The 1970s had seen the rise of conservatism, increasing attacks on unions, and cuts in the welfare state. And the authors were well aware that gains made

through struggle can always be rolled back. Still no one envisioned the extent and power of the coming defeats. Rather than attributing the revolutionary left’s marginalization to the political times—as we might be tempted to do today—the authors believed that the left could do much better. Indeed, it was the strength and scale of the social movements, working class community and shop floor organizing in the 1970s; the authors’ own participation as activists in a range of issues; and their experience of the political and theoretical inventiveness and the extraordinary breadth of women’s liberation groups and projects that gave them the confidence to make this intervention in the left.

The current edition is actually the third. The first *Beyond the Fragments* was a small book built around Rowbotham’s essay “The Women’s Movement and Organizing for Socialism,” with short commentaries by Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright. They originally intended to print 1,000 copies, but Rowbotham insisted that they do 2,000 so Segal and Wainwright (who

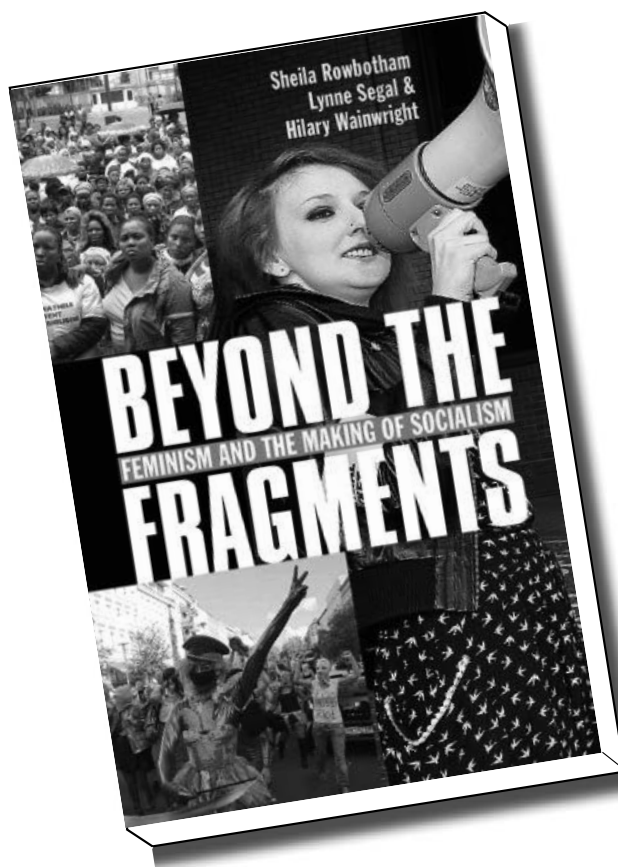
Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism

SHEILA ROWBOTHAM, LYNNE SEGAL,
AND HILARY WAINWRIGHT
Merlin Press, 2013. 324 pp., paperback, £14.95

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had full-time jobs and put up the money for printing), could get their money back. The book sold out very quickly and generated a lot of discussion and opposition. When Merlin Press offered to reprint the book, Wainwright and Segal substantially expanded their essays—partly to take into account the critiques and to more fully communicate their arguments (10–11). The book remained very controversial on the left. According to Rowbotham, one left paper published two opposing reviews because of disagreements on the editorial board.

I remember myself being very conflicted. I understood many of the negative patterns of democratic centralist organizations that Rowbotham so pointedly described—I lived them in the International Socialists (IS). On the other hand, I resisted mightily the idea that these patterns reflected the “Leninist” party form itself. Partly this was because, at least on some key questions such as support for the autonomous self-organization of oppressed people and for caucuses (such as a women’s caucus) within the revolutionary party itself, the American IS was much better than the British Socialist Workers Party. Perhaps even more important, I was defensive of positions that had been hard won for me over my young political life, for example, that the working class, organized at the point of production, was the primary revolutionary subject, that the Russian revolution would have failed but for the strategic intervention of the Bolsheviks, and that a party capable of making such an intervention was a party with deep connections to the most advanced workers and with a democratic centralist organization, where after discussion and debate all were disciplined to carry out the line. I had also struggled personally to develop



my intellectual capacities and my skills—such as public speaking—along the model that male leaders offered.

Upon first reading the original edition of BTF, I focused more on what was missing than what BTF had to offer. But the book, and the discussions it generated, had planted a seed—one that my subsequent experience in the revolutionary left would validate and encourage. When I helped to form Solidarity as what we hoped would be a new kind of organization, I was already moving away from the basic tenets of democratic centralism. Reading BTF today, including the authors’ contemporary reflections, I feel even more aligned with their socialist-feminist critique of democratic centralism and particularly with their approach to building “left” organization. It is unfortunate that since

1979 the organized revolutionary left has made so little progress in finding an organizational form that would help us break out of our marginality, although there continue to be interesting experiments (for example, Left Roots). For this reason, BTF retains value for revolutionary

What would a participatory, democratic, politically and intellectually open left organization look like?

activists and organizers.

As Rowbotham says, the context of BTF was framed by twentieth-century experience and particularly the existence of strong unions and social democratic and labor parties, the enduring touchstone of the Russian Revolution, and debates about the nature of China and the Soviet Union. Much of what was taken for granted in the arguments on the British left—for example, the strength and reach of national unions, the traditions of working-class support for the Labor Party—has evaporated, and thus some of the arguments made in BTF might not resonate directly with contemporary activists. Wainwright, for example, writes in the current edition that upon reading her original essay she was quite shocked by the amount of time she devoted to talking about the party-focused dilemmas of the British left (51). Yet, the questions these socialist-feminists identified remain central: how does consciousness change? What is the role of a revolutionary organization? What should it do? Should revolutionaries engage with the state, and if so, how? What would a participatory, democratic, politically and intellectually open left organization look like? How can we make our political organizing, organizations, and projects “pre-figurative” of the society we want to win?

While acknowledging their failure to fun-

damentally shift how the left understood itself and recognizing the serious demoralization that ensued from the disorganization and defeats of the 1980s and 1990s, the authors remain hopeful. They write about the importance of the struggles against neoliberal capitalism and austerity, struggles that have animated creative protests across the globe and particularly the democratic participatory elements within those movements. Segal points to the melding of personal expression and political discourse in the street protests of a new generation. Approvingly, she quotes an observer of the Greek anti-austerity protests in the squares, “The poems recited, the personal stories and historical references narrated, transformed public speaking from instrumental and demagogic act into artistic performance, making it deeply political.” Wainwright surveys how the same impulses that formed the participatory, democratic ethic of women’s liberation continued to percolate and widen their influence through the twenty-first century in a variety of experiments, such as the participatory budgeting of the Brazilian Workers Party and the dense national and international networks of grass-roots activists stimulated by the “horizontalist” Social Forum process. Both Segal and Wainwright reference Syriza as an exciting, innovative, left-unity project, which remains rooted in and gives political expression to grass-roots movements. For example, rather than using state funding to support the parliamentary party organization, Syriza directed resources to the Solidarity for All Network—the hundreds of self-organized/self-help local projects (soup kitchens, farmer’s markets) that had sprung up to meet the everyday needs of people suffering from the economic crisis and welfare state cutbacks (52–53).

In both editions, BTF strikes a very different tone from most left writing (whether from the anarchist or socialist traditions). It is exploratory and non-definitive. The authors believe strongly that the insights of the women’s liberation movement and its practices, how-

ever imperfect and problematic they were, have something important to offer the left (see, for example, page 141). They acknowledge that they have no answers to the issues they raise. They argue instead for experiment, trying things out, and rejecting the tired dualities that have so hamstrung real dialogue on the left (for instance, whether to seek to reform the state or to build alternatives outside of it). For every experiment or effort they discuss, they report the difficulties and limitations. Instead of saying, “Aha, you see that failed, proves us right to have opposed it,” they argue for analyzing our experiences and our strategies, together in an open-hearted way. In writing BTF, their disgust with the overweening certainties that have so often characterized the left was matched by their confidence in the *collective* production of knowledge, which they experienced in the women’s liberation movement. There, without received wisdom and already existing sacred texts, women activists had to “make their road by walking” and to rely on each other’s recognizably very partial contributions in order to come to a consensus or approach—one that was expected to last only until more information and experience could be used to revise it. (Please, reader, do not jump up to say that many times women’s liberation projects and groups fell short of this ideal—BTF authors are quite aware of these failures and acknowledge them openly.) It was from the “best” of women’s liberation that the authors built their suggestions for how to move toward a different sort of left.

Their inspiration came from other political experiences as well. Both Segal and Wainwright had been participants in organizing local socialist centers. (Presentations at those centers were the origins of the first BTF.) The socialist centers brought together shop floor/trade union rank and file activists and community-based organizers hungry for achieving solidarity, strategic clarity, and a broader left presence in society. There was a sense that these disparate groupings and projects, locally based but not

parochial, were groping toward a new kind of revolutionary organization and culture. Wainwright describes how the decision-making norms of the Tyneside Socialist Center were shaped by both the shop stewards’ very explicit structures for democratic decision-making and accountability, and the feminists’ commitment to a “horizontalist” organization. Additionally, Wainwright references her participation in the shop stewards movement and its democratic from-below organizing, while Segal describes the influence of her first political activism within the left-libertarian counter-culture and its many local collective projects.

They are not afraid to talk about their personal experience as a source of knowledge. Indeed, they argue that unless the left recognizes and pays attention to the psycho-social and emotional aspects of activists’ lives and organizations, the left will fail to understand some of the most powerful sources of conservatism (and divisions) within the working class and will stifle the potential of our organizations to nurture activists’ personal capacities and their contributions to the development of knowledge. The contemporary left (with some dishonorable

BTF strikes a very different tone from most left writing (whether from the anarchist or socialist traditions). It is exploratory and non-definitive.

exceptions) has made tremendous strides compared to thirty years ago in terms of recognizing the importance of *autonomous* organizations of oppressed people and in terms of recognizing that struggles around “personal issues” such as access to abortion or sexual assault can be as fruitful a source of radicalization as struggles for union contracts. However, as demonstrated by

the recent upheavals in revolutionary socialist organizations (as well as anarchist projects, union caucuses, and non-profit groups) in response to their failure to address gender violence within their ranks, not enough progress has been made in changing left culture, and, in particular, the masculinist styles of leadership, the strength of informal hierarchies, and the assumptions about knowledge and whose knowledge counts that BTF so trenchantly criticized. Here we would all do well to listen to what BTF has to say.

This somewhat sprawling work is difficult to summarize and I do not wish to flatten out the complexities that the text recognizes by con-

They are not afraid to talk about
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densing arguments the authors take some space to lay out. Here, then, I will just point to some themes in hope that readers will be intrigued enough to read in more depth.

Five themes stand out for me:

1) *The importance of organizing through political differences rather than by suppressing them.*

The democratic centralist model demands closure in order to create the basis for unified action. The ideal of the vanguard party—coherent in its analytic framework and program, and united in its actions—is a recipe for factionalism and splits (167-171). The notion of a vanguard, and of identifying those with “advanced” versus “backward” consciousness, fails to acknowledge the contradictory and very mixed consciousness that feminists had come to identify as a “normal” part of being a political activist. Rowbotham did criticize the general tendency within the women’s liberation movement to reject as “Le-

ninist” all attempts to assess consciousness. We do need to think through “who is likely to stick their neck out in particular circumstances,” she says. However, the Leninist parties tended to identify certain groups as “advanced” without appropriately considering the very mixed nature of their consciousness (for example that skilled workers militant in defense of their control over work could also be conservative in defense of their position as family patriarchs). Within the revolutionary left, the definition of “advanced” tended to incorporate unacknowledged biases that party members brought with them into the organization (195-198, 210-211).

Instead of a vanguard party tied to the most “advanced” section of the class, BTF envisioned a much more loosely knit organization—more like a network than a party. As Wainwright puts it in her 1979 introduction:

We discuss some of the difficulties which need to be overcome to create such a democratic, and united—albeit loosely, socialist organization out of those involved in all the fragmented movements, campaigns and political groups in which socialists are involved. ... Before the women’s movement, socialist politics like all other sorts of politics, seemed something separate from everyday life, something unconnected with looking after children, worrying about the meals. ... It was something professional, for men and among men, for the shop steward or the party activist. The activities of the women’s movement have ... meant a different way of organizing, a way of organizing which does not restrict political activity to “the professional.”

2) *A feminist critique of knowledge and leadership in the revolutionary left.*

BTF criticized the ideal of the party as the bearer of scientific knowledge as well as the premium placed on familiarity with the Marxist and Trotskyist foundational texts and the historical experience of political parties. As an historian, Rowbotham certainly values learning from history. All three authors had read the books that formed the intellectual currency of

the party left. But they also came to see that reliance on this knowledge as the touchstone for revolutionary analysis and strategy inevitably set up a (masculinist) status system in which the kinds of knowledge that emerged from this learning trumped other forms of knowledge. If leadership required a deep familiarity with a particular body of theoretical/historical knowledge, then too many people would be *ipso facto* excluded from exercising leadership. In particular, they argued that “the social production of knowledge has many sources: practical, emotional, historical, theoretical” (42). Wainwright pointed out that the radically democratic and participatory shop stewards movement of the 1970s, as well as women’s liberation groups, “quite self-consciously ensured time and space in their organization[s] to share and reflect on people’s sometimes tacit knowledge and also draw on academic research” (43). Further, the BTF authors argued, the ideals of leadership central to left culture were fatally flawed. The women’s movement had demonstrated that “it was not just what you said and did but how you said and did things which transmitted your politics (176). Furthermore, personal capacities crucial to building an effective organization had too long gone unacknowledged and unsupported in the revolutionary left: “the ability to relate to people, to express feelings directly; to recognize and express difference and personal needs; to take care of one another” (175).

3. *An appreciation of local community-based organizing.*

Having been involved in setting up many different “local” projects (newspapers, women’s centers, tenants organizations, child care centers), the BTF authors were well aware of the limitations of “the local” (for example, limited perspectives and knowledge based on local particularities and the potential for a kind of cozy parochialism). However, they were inspired by the range of local organizing that engaged so many women in meaningful

collective action—women’s centers, conferences, publishing groups, theater groups, folk and rock bands, film collectives, trade union caucuses, and food co-ops are aspects of the women’s movement (141). In their experience, local projects had nourished the sort of loving, supportive culture within which activists could take the personal, intellectual risks necessary to creatively develop their analysis and politics. Again, all three authors were very honest and clear-sighted about the failings of these same groups—exclusiveness, personalization of differences, emergence of informal hierarchies, divisiveness to the point of destruction, to name a few problems. They simply proposed that, with all their flaws, the new group cultures, group dynamics, and participatory democratic norms of the women’s liberation movement should be tried out, their mistakes learned from, and the practices further developed within the left. Today, the revolutionary left is less likely to completely dismiss community-based organizing. But, at least within my left circles, there is still a skepticism about “localism” and community-based organizations (especially those with paid staff) that does not apply to unions or “point of production” organizing, regardless of the flaws and weaknesses of those efforts.

4. *An insistence on the value of “pre-figurative” politics.*

This grew out of their experience in the women’s liberation movement, which itself drew inspiration from participatory left currents. Beyond attempting non-hierarchical forms of decision-making and direct democracy, feminists were engaged in setting up community-based organizations, such as women’s health clinics and child care centers, that challenged the business as usual of health care and child care provision. Some of these were autonomous, self-help organizations, for example, cooperative nurseries. Some were existing, state-funded organizations transformed by the workers, parents, and patients involved, for example, a clinic in a public

housing project. In 1979, the revolutionary left considered these as hopelessly utopian or even counter-productive to building a national movement. In contrast, the authors argued that these projects open up a broader political vision for the working-class people who are involved. As Rowbotham says, "Self-help community activity is not a substitute for the equally important radical struggles within the welfare state sector. But [it] can indicate ways of questioning the role

but helped to create more community-based, non-authoritarian, non-sexist relations in the nurseries we helped to establish (252).

While Segal now is doubtful that the left will ever move away from the either/or conflicts between anarchism and socialism, Rowbotham and Wainwright remain stalwart proponents of this possibility. As staff members in the Greater London Council under socialist mayor Ken Livingstone from 1982-1986, they experienced some success in opening up government decision-making around policy and engaging working-class activists to take charge of publicly funded projects (38-41). The GLC experiment lasted only a short time and was quickly shut down by the Thatcher government. However, Wainwright continued to be attuned to these new possibilities for participatory democracy. She mentions the emergence and development of participatory budgeting in Puerto Alegre, Brazil. (In her work *Reclaiming the State*, Wainwright develops these ideas much further than in her BTF essay, analyzing a number of experiments in reorganizing and democratizing government departments and programs.)

Again, what is most notable about all three authors' reflections is their appreciation for the creativity and innovation showed by contemporary movements such as the Arab spring, Occupy, left initiatives like Syriza, and the whole panoply of radical organizational experimentation that has characterized the response of workers and communities to the neoliberal assault. Clear-eyed about the challenges, Segal, Wainwright, and Rowbotham continue to place their hope in the (broadly defined) left's ability to find organizational forms and political practices that express the feminist, pre-figurative, participatory, democratic spirit that moved them to write *Beyond the Fragments*.

BTF criticized the ideal of the party as the bearer of scientific knowledge.

of professionals and the means of creating more direct forms of control over welfare resources" (224, 248).

5. *A "both/and" approach to the anarchist/socialist debates around whether the left should engage with the state or build autonomous institutions* (224).

Following from their appreciation of "pre-figurative" politics and their experience in winning changes in welfare state provision (not just increasing funding but gaining some control over local institutions and policies), the authors reject both the anarchists' fear of reformism and the socialists' failure to be very concerned about the oppressive aspects of the welfare state itself. As Segal describes,

It wasn't just that we widened the areas of political activity in which the left had been active in order to include women's needs. There was also the recognition of the need to have control over any gains we might make. For instance, in the demand for nurseries, we didn't just demand money from the state for more nurseries,

Bookchin's Political Vision

STEPHEN R. SHALOM

MURRAY BOOKCHIN WAS ONE of the most prolific, original, and influential thinkers on the libertarian left. He was a major theoretician of anarchism and a passionate historian of cities and of popular uprisings and movements. As important, Bookchin was a groundbreaking writer on ecology, not just being one of the first to see

the environment as an issue for the left, but indeed predating Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in warning about the environmental crisis. In the late 1980s and 1990s Bookchin waged vigorous polemics against individualist anarchists, primitivists, and deep ecologists, among others. Ultimately, he stopped calling himself an anarchist altogether, preferring "communalist" (an unfortunate term, given its association with religious conflict in India) or simply libertarian socialist.¹ Today, remarkably, he's a hero to Kurdish revolutionaries.

In 1998, Bookchin contributed an essay to a *New Politics* symposium on *The Communist Manifesto* in which he noted that "The question of the institutions of political and social management by a class as a whole—and eventually by citizens in a classless society—has no easy resolution." The current volume is a collection

of Bookchin's writings on this challenging question. The book consists of essays that Bookchin wrote between 1990 and 2002, along with an introduction from the editors and a foreword by Ursula K. Le Guin. Unfortunately, the essays are not presented in chronological order and there is no index, so it is not easy to trace the evolution of Bookchin's

thinking over time. But the general thrust of his argument comes through pretty clearly.

Power and the State

One way in which Bookchin parts company with "authentic anarchists" is in his attitude toward power. Where Proudhon hoped that power would disappear entirely, Bookchin believes that power is inevitable, like gravity, and the goal is not its elimination, but its taming, by putting it firmly under democratic control.

Bookchin opposes the state, any state, but he argues that we need to distinguish the state and statecraft, on the one hand, from politics, a polity, and government, on the other. The former are inevitable instruments of oppression while the latter include the means and institutions by which a free people organize their lives. Law, which to many anarchists is a dirty word, is not something we should oppose. Indeed, it has been the demand of the oppressed throughout history.

The Next Revolution: Popular
Assemblies and the Promise of Direct
Democracy. Essays by Murray Bookchin.
Edited and with an introduction by DEBBIE
BOOKCHIN AND BLAIR TAYLOR
Verso, 2015, xxii + 198 pp.,
paperback, \$16.17; ebook, \$13.48

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Unfortunately, from Bookchin's writings it is not easy to pin down exactly what the difference is between state and government. Bookchin notes that Marx favored the right of recall of deputies at all levels, minimal bureau-

How many people would feel comfortable replying to Pericles in an auditorium with 1,000 people, let alone a stadium of 30,000?

cracy, and a militia system based on working class recruits—but none of these institutions “were incompatible with those of a ‘bourgeois-democratic’ state” (159). (Marx went beyond this in his praise of the Paris Commune in *The Civil Wars in France*, but, says Bookchin, Marx later backpedalled from this position.) Is it states’ coerciveness that distinguishes them from government? Apparently not. Consider a question posed by Jeremy Brecher regarding libertarian municipalism (Bookchin’s term for his political vision): What prevents a commune from polluting a river that harms other communities downstream (68)? In 1990 Bookchin replied that it was only reasonable to assume that in a society that was guided by communitarian and ecological principles, people wouldn’t behave this way (70). But the next year Bookchin wrote that if a community or a minority grouping within a community violated human rights or indulged in environmentally destructive policies, the majority in the confederation of communes “has every right to prevent such malfeasances” (88–89). He doesn’t spell out how this preventing is to be done, but it’s hard to see this as not being coercive. One can understand why many anarchists were alarmed at the evolution of Bookchin’s thinking.

Bookchin even argues that once a commune has joined a confederation it may not leave

without the permission of the confederation. Bookchin is rightly concerned about situations where interdependencies have been established and withdrawal by one commune might harm the others. “Imagine if the electrical complex in upstate New York ‘autonomously’ decided to pull out of a confederation with the Vermont electrical complex because it was piqued by Vermont’s behavior.”² This is the same reason why the right of divorce is not absolute: Before one can leave a marriage, responsibility for children and an equitable division of assets need to be worked out. Nevertheless, even those who believe that the right of secession is not absolute would not want to give absolute veto power to the larger group either—just as we wouldn’t want to make divorce contingent on the approval of the spouse. I don’t mean to suggest this is an easy issue, but Bookchin seems overly glib here.

Majority Rule

To many anarchists, majority rule is inherently coercive and thus morally unacceptable. Bookchin quotes Kropotkin’s observation that “Majority rule is as defective as any other kind of rule” (10n5). And one can cite modern-day anarchists to the same effect: “When there is no unanimity the vote becomes the tyranny of the many over the reluctant few.”³ The philosophical argument against majority rule strikes me as weak. It doesn’t seem to be a violation of my liberty if I voluntarily decide that I want to join a collective where all members agree that they will submit their disagreements (or a specified subset of their disagreements) to majority rule. After all, when I sign a contract to trade something, I am constraining myself (I have to provide the goods in question) but assuming I agreed to the contract freely, my liberty has not been compromised.

The usual anarchist alternative to majority rule is consensus: a process of respecting and accommodating minority views until everyone agrees. Consensus decision-making indeed has

many benefits: It builds solidarity, it indicates that each individual is valued, it facilitates the finding of less polarized solutions. But consensus also has some real disadvantages. It may have the effect of stifling, rather than promoting debate. In its effort to avoid the tyranny of the majority, it may allow the tyranny of the minority, indeed the tyranny of a single dissenter. There are various schemes to mitigate (though not eliminate) this problem, for example, limiting the number of times a “blocker” may block, or requiring a certain minimum number of blockers. Of course, some principled anarchists will reject these schemes on the grounds that anything less than unanimity represents oppression.

But consensus decision-making has another serious defect. In general, we will want our movement organizations to prefigure the kinds of institutions we want in a future good society. If we want a future that is non-authoritarian, non-racist, and non-sexist, then we need organizations today that embody these values. But the opposite logic doesn't hold. Our movement organizations today have at least one characteristic that a future society will not have: namely, an incredibly narrow ideological spectrum. When one reads an account of how an alter-globalization organization resolved the question of whether or not to support an existing moderate demonstration using consensus decision-making (they opted to let those who wanted to join it with critical flyers and clothing do so, and those who wanted a separate demonstration to do that), one is struck by how easy this was—compared to deciding in a future good society, for example, whether to build a new abortion clinic (that a substantial minority considers murder) or whether to make vaccinations for a new, killer disease mandatory.⁴ Social pressure may well keep anyone in a movement group from blocking what most people want. But the folks who are pushing the “Suppression of Sodomites” referendum in California, to take a grotesque example, are unlikely to go along with a consensus out of shared values.⁵

Participation

So Bookchin's rejection of consensus decision-making and endorsement of majority rule for a future good society seems well judged. But his political vision has other difficulties. Bookchin dismisses representation as inherently oppressive; we need to be active political participants—not just “taxpayers” or “constituents”—in order to reach our full human potential. Representation certainly has serious problems and participation great virtues.⁶ But I'm not at all sure his proposed political structure actually solves the participation gap experienced in modern societies. It seems that, for Bookchin, participation need not involve most of the population or even a majority of the population.

Even in completely successful revolutions, says Bookchin, “it was always a minority of the people who attended meetings of assemblies that made significant decisions about the fate of their society” (52). “A popular democracy,” he says, “is not premised on the idea that everyone can, will, or even want to attend popular assemblies” (51). No libertarian, notes Bookchin, should want to make participation compulsory, which means coercing people.

“Even after an uprising is successful, it takes time for a substantial majority of the people to fully participate in the revolutionary process, commonly as crowds in demonstrations, more rarely as participants in revolutionary institutions” (52).

Simply being a constituent or taxpayer doesn't make one an active participant, as Bookchin points out. But does being part of a crowd in a demonstration constitute meaningful participation?

Bookchin goes on:

Politically less-aware individuals may choose not to attend their neighborhood assembly, and they should not be obliged to attend. The assemblies, regardless of their size, will have problems enough without having to deal with indifferent bystanders and passersby. What counts is that the doors of the assemblies

remain open for all who wish to attend and participate, for therein lies the true democratic nature of neighborhood assemblies. (53-54)

For Bookchin, Athenian democracy was a model—obviously not for its slavery or gender oppression or xenophobia—but because it showed how the people could rule in face-to-face direct assemblies. There were indeed many fascinating and attractive features of the Athenian political system. But there were some thirty to fifty thousand adult males in Athens. How participatory would a gathering of thirty thousand be? Or even a meeting of six thousand (the Athenian quorum for some decisions)? Could even 1 percent of the attendees speak? How many people would feel comfortable replying to Pericles in an auditorium with one thousand people, let alone a stadium of thirty thousand? Is having a fifth of the eligible citizenry listening to Pericles and a few other orators and then voting really very participatory?

Under libertarian municipalism, those who don't have the interest in participating will have decisions made for them by those who are more interested, even though the two might not share political views. Under oppressive representative democracy, non-activists have political decisions made on their behalf by others (representatives), but at least the views of these others bear some relation to their constituents' views. The challenge for a democratic polity is to be able to maximize participation, and give primary authority to participatory institutions, but not to disempower people when they choose not to participate or when they are happy to have a recallable and transparent representative acting on their behalf.

Controlling the Economy

Bookchin makes a strong case against syndicalism. One problem is its excessive "workerism" (treating only those in workers councils as entitled to a political voice) (10-12). Historically worker-controlled enterprises often became a form of collective capitalism, with competition

between firms for raw materials, markets, and profits (19, 90). Bookchin's discussion, however, seems to deny a role for workers councils at all in a good society. Enterprises are to be in the custody of the community, which is "concerned primarily with the quality of its products and their production at the lowest possible cost" (58). But in fact, these are only two of the three production factors that we should be concerned about. We should also care about how the way goods are produced affects the well-being of the producers, and this can only be known if there are workers councils reflecting the views of workers as workers.

Bookchin believes that "if a community can produce the things it needs, it should probably do so" (72). This formulation suggests that Bookchin doesn't care about opportunity costs (we *can* produce pineapples in New Jersey—in greenhouses—but doing so would use resources that we could better employ elsewhere). He also seems suspicious of exchanges between communities as representing the beginnings of a market system (72), but doesn't address the basis on which non-self-sufficient communities will get goods from elsewhere. Leftists critical of both central planning and the market have proposed alternatives, some worked out in great detail, like Albert and Hahnel's participatory planning,⁷ but Bookchin leaves his alternative wholly undeveloped.

A Commune of Communes

Bookchin compellingly and strongly rejects the glamorization of poverty, denial, and scarcity prevalent in some segments of the left. He acknowledges that communities cannot produce all they need and that "notions of decentralization that emphasize localist isolation and a degree of self-sufficiency may lead to cultural parochialism and chauvinism" (71). To get beyond extreme decentralization, he calls for a commune of communes—a confederation.

Bookchin repeatedly states that the confederation is to consist of delegates from the local

communes who are recallable and mandated (that is, given strictly binding, prior instructions). The delegates are only to engage in administration, not policymaking; policymaking is to be the exclusive responsibility of the local communes. But at one point Bookchin says that the confederal councils would have as their “sole function” to “adjudicate differences and undertake strictly administrative tasks” (40). But what does “adjudicate differences” mean? Local community X wants to do something that will negatively impact community Y. How could adjudicating this disagreement be considered an administrative task? And what would it mean for a delegate from community Z—or even communities X or Y—to be mandated in this situation? How could one have instructions before hearing the nature of the disagreement?

Mandated delegates are problematic more generally. If a local commune sends a delegate who is required to vote a certain way in the confederal council, then there is no need for the confederal council to meet at all. No delegate will be swayed by the arguments of another (they’re not allowed to be); no delegates can work out a compromise on the basis of deliberation and cooperation (they are bound to their position). So the council seems to serve no function other than tallying votes, which means votes could just be called in to a clerk or a computer. But in any case, there’s nothing to vote on because the confederation is responsible just for administrative tasks. This sounds rather like the nominal role of executives in the American political system (legislators make the laws and executives carry them out)—though of course we know that *in practice* administrative agencies play a tremendous policymaking role.

Elsewhere, though not in this book, Bookchin has indicated that there are not just two layers of councils (the face-to-face assemblies and the confederation), but essentially confederations of confederations.⁸ I think this makes good sense, and it would allow Bookchin to avoid the problem of the excessive size of the

face-to-face assemblies. But with his insistence on mandates, the situation becomes confused. At each level there is vote tallying but no deliberation. People are in a cooperative society, but actual cooperation—that is, modifying one’s

Bookchin properly insists that we need more than “a politics of mere protest”; we need “programmatic content” and “a proposed alternative.”

positions to take account of the positions of others—is extremely difficult.

What is needed instead of mandates is upper-level councils that can deliberate, but whose decisions can be ratified from below when necessary, whose members are subject to recall, and whose deliberations are all transparent.

Getting From Here to There

Bookchin properly insists that we need more than “a politics of mere protest”; we need “programmatic content” and “a proposed alternative” (171). His argument here is something that Occupy activists might have paid more attention to.

But Bookchin’s strategy for getting to his proposed alternative raises many questions. He is strongly opposed to Greens and other leftists participating in state or national elections. Doing so, he claims, legitimizes the state. He is also very skeptical of efforts to create alternative workplaces, coops, and the like as merely reinforcing capitalist relations. On the other hand, he favors “communalists” running for local office, from which they can support the establishment of local popular assemblies. He assails his critics for not seeing the difference between running for governor (which the U.S. Greens have “nightmarishly” proposed (78)) and running for mayor (“the powers of a mayor

are far more controlled and under closer public purview than those of” state office holders (80)). This is generally true, but, even setting aside the megacities like New York and Los Angeles, more than two dozen U.S. cities have populations larger than that of Wyoming. In any event, municipal officials are not elected at face-to-face meetings; they are representatives elected by voters at the polls.

To be sure, local elections are generally smaller scale, and because this increases the likelihood of a local, left plurality, there will be more opportunities for the left to succeed in local elections than in state or national ones. But it’s hard to see the difference *in principle* between participating in the former compared to the latter. If one takes the view that only votes by participatory bodies are legitimate, then mayoral contests ought to be just as unacceptable as state-wide elections. If running in local elections is permissible because it can lead to reforms that will further a participatory agenda or because of its educational value, it would seem that the same should hold for state or national elections.

IN THE CURRENT REACTIONARY TIMES, theorizing about possible futures or wondering how we might get there might seem hopelessly beside the point. But in fact Bookchin’s ideas have had considerable influence in Kurdistan, and, according to some reports, are actually being incorporated there to some degree.⁹

More generally, the conversation about what we consider a good society is important for inspiring and informing the political work of libertarian socialists. Even where I think Murray Bookchin has got it wrong, there is no doubt that he has contributed to our common project.

NOTES

1. See pp. 14n7, 24n17, 160–62. For details of his transition, see the essay by his collaborator and companion,

Janet Biehl, “Bookchin Breaks with Anarchism,” *Communalism*, 2007, theanarchistlibrary.org/library/janet-biehl-bookchin-breaks-with-anarchism. The problem with the term “communalism” is noted by Damian White, *Bookchin: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 185.

2. Bookchin, “Thoughts on Libertarian Municipalism,” *Left Green Perspectives* (Number 41, January 2000), available at www.social-ecology.org/1999/08/thoughts-on-libertarian-municipalism/. Bookchin briefly mentions the (non-) right of secession in the current volume on p. 15n8.

3. E.g., Judith Malina, “Anarchists and the Pro-Hierarchical Left,” *Anarchos*, June 1972, cited in Biehl, 12.

4. Marianne Maeckelbergh, *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalization Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy* (New York: Pluto, 2009), 147–51.

5. Adam Nagourney, “Gays Targeted in a California Initiative,” *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/03/25/us/california-initiative-would-kill-gay-people.html.

6. I have made this argument here: “Parpolity: Political Vision for a Good Society,” Nov. 2005, available at zcomm.org/znetarticle/parpolity-political-vision-for-a-good-society-by-stephen1-shalom-1/.

7. See Michael Albert, *Parecon: Life after Capitalism* (Verso: 2004), available online at zcomm.org/life-after-capitalism/; Robin Hahnel, *Of the People, By the People: The case for a participatory economy* (Soapbox Press, 2012, distributed by AK Press). For an extensive debate between Albert and supporters of libertarian municipalism, see zcomm.org/debates-parecon-social-ecology/.

8. “The Left: Past, Present, and Future,” interview by Doug Morris [1996?] in Murray Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1999), 313.

9. See, for example, Janet Biehl, “Bookchin, Öcalan, and the Dialectics of Democracy,” *New Compass*, Feb. 16, 2012, new-compass.net/articles/bookchin-%C3%B6calan-and-dialectics-democracy; TATORT Kurdistan, *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan: The Council Movement, Gender Liberation, and Ecology* (Porsgrunn, Norway: New Compass Press, 2013); Alexander Kolokotronis, “The No State Solution: Institutionalizing Libertarian Socialism in Kurdistan,” *New Politics online*, Nov. 2, 2014, newpol.org/content/no-state-solution-institutionalizing-libertarian-socialism-kurdistan.

The Anti-Nationalist Legacy of Rudolf Rocker

NATHAN J. ROBINSON

"On the banner of the International was not written 'Proletarians of all lands, kill each other!' but 'Proletarians of all lands, unite!'"

— RUDOLF ROCKER, "WAR: A STUDY IN FACT"

WHEN RUDOLF ROCKER'S *Nationalism and Culture* was released in 1937, it was hailed by no less an assemblage of luminaries than Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, and Thomas Mann. The historian Will Durant called it "magnificent" and "profound," and even the *New Republic* gave it a positive notice. It was an unusual level of mainstream acclaim for a book of political philosophy by a German anarchist refugee, especially one published by a group called the "Rocker Publication Committee," a Los Angeles-based venture set up for the sole purpose of releasing *Nationalism and Culture*.

Yet in the years since, Rocker's work has settled into the obscurity for which it was perhaps always destined. Unlike *The Decline of the West* (1926), Oswald Spengler's meditation on the destiny of civilizations, to which it was compared at the time, *Nationalism and Culture* is rarely cited. Though it proposes and defends a comprehensive theory of nationalism, Benedict Anderson does not even acknowledge it in *Imagined Communities* (1982). Contemporary mentions of the book are largely confined to

anarchist circles, and even there it is an awkward outsider, its humanistic cultural analysis and rich love of history out-of-step with the contemporary anarchist inclination to immolate all sacred things.

The eclipse of Rocker's magnum opus is hardly mysterious. It is a book that fits with few of our conceptions of how such books ought to be written, a book that deliberately scorns almost all prior wisdom, and a book whose very existence is difficult to square with common understandings about its time. Rocker is a German who mocks both Hegel and Hitler in equal measure, and who writes in the uncompromising and eclectic voice of the autodidact, shunning the toothless evenhandedness demanded of academics. And writing as an atheistic Berlin anarchist in 1933, Rocker offers living proof of his own contention that individuals must not be made prisoners of stereotypes about national spirit.

Nationalism and Culture is, primarily, a 600-page exploration of the origins and development of nationalism, and a scathing denunciation of the corrosive effect of national feeling on the human spirit. Yet it is one of those works, like *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Robert Burton, 1621), that springboard from their stated purpose to discourse on everything under the sun. Architecture is analyzed, socialism is defended, and Rembrandt's paintings are scrutinized at

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length. It is at once a treatise on the state's relationship with culture and a manifesto for an enlightened leftism. Most of all, it is a clear-eyed plea for sanity at a moment when nationalist and religious irrationalism threatened to swallow the globe. It could not be more relevant.

THE HUMANISTIC STANDPOINT of *Nationalism and Culture* is reflected in the author's cosmopolitan life. Born in Mainz in 1873, Rocker was not Jewish but spent almost his entire life in Jewish communities as an agitator and educator. During his twenty years in the East End of London, he edited a Yiddish paper, gave lectures in Yiddish, and was given the honorary title of "rabbi" by his devoted students. Rocker even recounts being chased through the streets by children shouting anti-Semitic slurs at him.

Rocker found nothing remarkable about the ease of his assimilation and believed he could have operated among the working class of any origin. But he felt a special kinship among the working-class Jews of London, whose combination of revolutionary ardor and love for education were in tune with his temperament. Even Emma Goldman pronounced herself puzzled at his affinity.

Like most radicals of any era, Rocker spent time on the receiving end of harassment by the state. Imprisoned by the British government

Rocker's thesis is straight forward:
Nations are the products of states,
rather than vice versa.

during World War I, Rocker gave his fellow inmates lectures with titles like "The General Conditions and the Various Intellectual Movements in Europe After 1848-1849." He also spent time composing his only novel, *The Six*

(1938), in which the moral failings of six characters from world literature, from Hamlet to Don Quixote, reveal why unity among disparate peoples is the only path to the new society.

The premise of *The Six* exemplified Rocker's humanist bent, which involved drawing from the best practices of each culture to create a new, universal one. He remained influenced by the Yiddish novelists whose books he had taught to workers, and the libertarian inclinations he witnessed on lecture tours through the United States led him to write *Pioneers of American Freedom* (1949), a book that attempted to claim Lincoln for the anarchists.

It was *Nationalism and Culture*, however, into which he poured each ounce of his conviction and wide learning. Rocker penned the book in Berlin, during the Nazis' rise to power, and its original German publication was scheduled for 1933. After the Reichstag was burned, Rocker fled the country, taking with him only one possession: the just-completed manuscript of *Nationalism and Culture*.

ROCKER'S THESIS IS STRAIGHTFORWARD: Nations are the products of states, rather than vice versa. They are manufactured to serve the goals of the powerful, to divide human beings and keep them from recognizing their common interests. Rocker argues this point with a litany of historical examples, from the Renaissance to "the stupid and stumbling provisions of the Versailles treaty."

But en route to this thesis, Rocker finds himself addressing the entire history of Western political philosophy; with a lawyerly precision, he takes a score of celebrated thinkers to pieces. Plato and Aristotle are witheringly castigated for defending slavery. He takes turns with Calvin ("a unique monstrosity"), Kant ("He knew nothing else but the stark, implacable 'Thou shalt!'"), and Hegel ("reactionary from top to bottom"). St. Augustine receives a brutal lashing for his efforts to extend the reach of the church, and Rousseau is singled out as the philosopher

who most laid the groundwork for totalitarian perversities.

Rocker also elaborates his objections to Marxism and to materialist philosophies that overemphasize the role of economic motivations in determining the course of history. So much, says Rocker, depends on the will to power; even capitalism does not operate according to the pure pursuit of profit, which is only one manifestation of the desire for domination. The emergence of Amazon.com, a profitless behemoth whose *modus operandi* is simply to devour all things, would not have surprised Rocker a whit.

Rocker spends a great deal of time attending to scientific racism arguments, an understandable focus considering the conditions under which he wrote. Albert Jay Nock, a favorite of libertarians from Ayn Rand to William F. Buckley, has his essentialist theories of Jewish Oriental origin demolished. Rocker elaborates the theories of various “race astrologers,” and gives arguments against them that could have been reprinted almost word-for-word upon the release of *The Bell Curve* (Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, 1994) or Nicholas Wade’s *Troublesome Inheritance* (2014). “The essential error of every race theory, the reason for their inevitably false conclusions,” Rocker states, is that they simply cannot prove the genetic determinism they claim; nor will they ever, for it is *ideas* like the nation that determine so much of human life, and “external race-marks have nothing to do with the intellectual and moral qualities of” humans.

Rocker does get around, in *Nationalism and Culture*, to discussing both nationalism and culture. Nations, for him, are ever unnatural and imposed from above. They do not spontaneously emerge from the people, but are put in place in order to serve political or economic ends; counterintuitively, nations appear only among *dissimilar* peoples, not similar ones. Rocker examines their rhetoric to show how leaders from Robespierre to Mussolini gave the state a religious character, and tracks the

arbitrary processes by which nations combine and dissolve. It is only by historical accident that Californians are not a nation and Chileans are. He also points out the cynicism with which nationalist sentiment is exploited by the owning

Art does not follow national trends, Rocker insists, and succeeds only when it opposes them.

class, despite the fact that “the love of his own nation has never yet prevented the entrepreneur from using foreign labor if it was cheaper and made more profit for him.”

To buttress his theory, Rocker undertakes a sweeping analysis of art, intending to show that the more a work of art reflects the soul of the nation, the less it reflects the soul of the artist, and thus the more compromised it is. He offers a compare-and-contrast study of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, including a warm tribute to the Mona Lisa, where “in this profoundest emotion of the man and the artist there breathes no breath of national feeling.” He loves the Italian Renaissance, but aims to reclaim it from those who would dare to see it as Italian. Art *does not* follow national trends, Rocker insists, and succeeds only when it opposes them. We can appreciate art because it awakens our human feeling; thus great art could have no national limitations, for if it is great it can be appreciated universally.

Rocker’s remedy for national divisions is international socialism. But he fears factionalism among the left, and critiques those who march under its banner without fighting for its values. Rocker’s description of the capitulation of socialist parties reminds one of the modern Democratic Party or of New Labour, who “have everywhere shown themselves incapable of

guarding the political legacy of the bourgeois democracy, for they have everywhere yielded up long-won rights and liberties without a struggle.”

Its disparate lines of inquiry make *Na-*

Rocker's remedy for national
divisions is international
socialism.

nationalism and Culture shaggy and occasionally exasperating. Rocker's mind meanders here and there, though its prose and ideas are always clear. Further, despite Rocker's mountain of evidence, his lack of nuance and too-easy conflation of God, king, and nation, weaken his case. (One might grant the occasional overstatement to a man who saw Brownshirts out his window as he wrote.)

But for all that Rocker might blur or get wrong, it is also astonishing what he gets right. He condemns Hitler, the Soviet Union, religion, and capitalism with equal vigor; he distrusts all ideologies that ask us to place something above our shared humanity. If he is mistaken in his theory, he is perfect in his temperament. He imbues one with an outlook that can be turned toward all earthly affairs. One can anticipate precisely what this honorary “rabbi” would feel about the present-day Palestinian situation: a firm rejection of nationalistic sentiment on all sides, aghast at both militant Zionism and the brutal authoritarianism of Hamas. It is a lesson that might well be absorbed by a left that occa-

sionally lets support for the Palestinian political cause drift into a romantic nationalism.

Yet despite the achievement of this blue-print for a humanist left, Rocker is forgotten by all except anarchists. After the initial acclaim, *Nationalism and Culture* quickly slipped out of print. (Today, AK Press sells an edition.) Rocker has been the subject of a short biography, 1997's *An Anarchist “Rabbi”* by Mina Graur, and is occasionally referred to by Noam Chomsky. But he is largely absent both from discussions of nationalism and from the pantheon of leftist heroes.

The neglect is unfortunate, for Rocker's work is both a vital contribution to the literature on nationalism and an elegant historical document. After all, here is Rocker, as chaos envelops Berlin, crying out for faith in human beings and the rejection of the state. Here is Rocker, tracing the ghastly history of Europe up until his moment and yet daring to express optimism at a moment of terrible darkness.

In our own time of rising national sentiment, of the UK Independence Party, Golden Dawn, and Marine Le Pen, *Nationalism and Culture* has much to teach the left. It is simultaneously an exposition of anarchist philosophy, a history of the world, a theory of the nation-state, and an indictment of power-worshiping sophistry and all human tyrannies. It is a declaration and an exemplar of how to think clearly, how to love language and culture and humanity, and how to approach a troubled time without falling into the snare of fatalism. Rudolf Rocker's humanist philosophy is a gift bequeathed to all; the “rabbi” that so enchanted the poor tailors of East London should continue to enchant us today.

The Frankfurt School and the Jews

MICHAEL LÖWY

JACOBS' *THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL* IS an outstanding piece of scholarship. The relationship of the Frankfurt School to Judaism has, of course, been discussed in several works, for instance by Anson Rabinbach, Martin Jay, Dan Diner, and others, as well as in some articles, for instance by Judith Marcus and Zoltan Tar, but this remarkable book by Jack Jacobs, well known for his research on Jews and socialism, is the first book-long attempt to deal with the issue. He does it in an evenhanded way, without blaming or celebrating, but trying to understand the Jewish roots of the Critical Theorists and the ways in which Jewishness and anti-Semitism impacted on their careers and thoughts. Well documented—with a hundred pages of footnotes and bibliography!—and well argued, it is certainly destined to become the main reference for any future research on the questions involved.

Gershom Scholem once defined the Frankfurt School as “a remarkable Jewish sect.” As Jacobs shows, this is a widely exaggerated claim: Although most of the members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (ISR) were of Jew-

ish origin, “Marxism was a far brighter star in their constellation than Jewishness,” particularly during the Weimar period.

The first chapter of the book deals with “Jewish Life Paths and the ISR in the Weimar Republic.” While Max Horkheimer, Theodor Wisegrund Adorno (whose Jewish father converted to Protestantism, while his mother was Catholic), Henryk Grossmann, and Friedrich Pollock

had little interest for Judaism, the same doesn't apply to two other members of the first core group of the ISR, Leo Löwenthal and Erich Fromm.

Leo Löwenthal—whom I had the chance to meet several times in the 1980s—was both a radical socialist (he had joined the leftist Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany) and an Orthodox Jew, and his early writings, such as “The Demonic. Outline of a Negative Philosophy of History” (1920), were a unique combination of Marxism and mystic Judaism. After joining the ISR in 1926, his thinking became secularized, but his interest in Jewish Messianism remained present throughout his life. The same applies to Erich Fromm, whose dissertation on the Jewish Law (1922) is an apology for Orthodox Judaism as an “anti-capitalist religion,” as opposed to the bourgeois Reform and Liberal Jewish currents. (This radical dimension of the young Fromm seems to have eluded Jacobs' discussion of his early

The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives and Antisemitism

JACK JACOBS

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work.) As did Löwenthal, Fromm, who joined the Frankfurt Institute in 1930, moved away from Orthodoxy but always remained interested in the Jewish tradition.

The second chapter deals with “The Signif-

Their first reflections on fascist
anti-Semitism reveal an
incredible blindness.

icance of Antisemitism: The Exile Years.” After Hitler’s rise to power, the ISR moved to Switzerland and, soon later, to the United States. Their first reflections on fascist anti-Semitism reveal an incredible blindness. Adorno, who didn’t consider himself as a Jew at that moment, believed he could remain in Nazi Germany and was disposed, as he wrote a friend in 1934, to do so “regardless of cost.” Soon afterward, he was forced to go into exile. Horkheimer, who had emigrated to the United States, wrote a piece in 1938, “The Jews and Europe,” which contains some valuable insights on fascism but has a vulgar economic approach to the Jewish question. According to Horkheimer—supported by Adorno—the economic basis of anti-Semitism is the dying out of the sphere of circulation and the increasing superfluity of trade in the age of monopoly capitalism! This is a double nonsense: How can capitalism exist without circulation and trade, and what has this to do with Nazi anti-Semitism? Jacobs compares Horkheimer’s piece with the crude “Marxism” of a Stalinist piece published in 1931 by a certain Otto Heller, but I would argue that it is much worse to raise such arguments in 1938, five years after Hitler’s

rise to power, than in 1931. On the matter of the early “blindness” of members of the ISR, one has to add Franz Neumann, who criticized Horkheimer’s essay for overestimating the importance of anti-Semitism for the Nazi regime!

Fortunately, Horkheimer and Adorno’s approach began to change in 1939–1940, when they began to develop a vast research project on anti-Semitism, ultimately sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. But the decisive turning point in their intellectual evolution was the arrival in their hands, in June 1941, of Walter Benjamin’s philosophical testament, the thesis “On the Concept of History.” As Anson Rabinbach very aptly summarizes, this document provided them with “a guiding star” for the constellation of themes—exile, Jewish fate, catastrophe of civilization—that ultimately make up their masterpiece *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” a chapter in the form of philosophical fragments, is one of the most important of the book, and it contains some quite radical theses, for instance, that fascism emerges from liberalism and that liberals fail to acknowledge that anti-Semitism cannot be expunged from such a society. The essential idea advanced by Horkheimer and Adorno is that fascist anti-Semitism helps to elucidate the dialectic of enlightenment itself and therefore the history of civilization. This is a very significant argument but unfortunately is not further developed by Jack Jacobs.

In parallel to their philosophical essay, Adorno and Horkheimer organized, as mentioned above, a vast research project on anti-Semitism, which resulted in several books published as a series, “Studies in Prejudice.” The best known is *The Authoritarian Personality* (1948), written, in part, by Adorno, which showed that anti-Semitism is intimately associ-

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ated with certain character structures, such as blind submission to authority, violent aggressive attitude toward the “other,” and rigid stereotypical thinking. Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman wrote the second book of the series, *Prophets of Deceit* (1949), dealing with American anti-Semitic agitators such as Father Coughlin, Gerald L. K. Smith, and a few others. Curiously enough, there is hardly a mention, in this context, of the most influential—by far!—American anti-Semite, namely Henry Ford, author of *The International Jew* (1921), who not only had a big impact in the United States, but whose book became a favorite of a German fascist named Adolf Schickelgruber.

Neumann criticized Horkheimer’s
essay for overestimating the
importance of anti-Semitism
for the Nazi regime!

As Jack Jacobs persuasively argues, there is significant interaction between these empirical studies and the philosophical reflections of Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. This does not apply to the third book of the series, *Rehearsal for Destruction*. A

Study of Political Antisemitism in Imperial Germany, by Paul Massing, who was part of the ISR but not of Critical Theory, and applies even less to the two others, by social scientists with no connection to the Frankfurt School (Nathan Ackerman, Marie Jahoda, Bruno Bettelheim, and Morris Janowitz).

The third and last chapter deals with the attitude of the Frankfurt School to Zionism and the State of Israel. Jacobs comes to the surprising conclusion that those members of the ISR who had strong religious and cultural connection to Judaism, such as Erich Fromm, were hostile to Zionism and Israel, considered to be contradictory to the teachings of the Prophets and to the Messianic promise of universal redemption. Fromm supported the movement Ichud, created by Magnes and Buber, who proposed a bi-national solution for Palestine. On the other hand, those who had little relation to Jewish tradition, such as Herbert Marcuse, were supportive of the Israeli state, even if they had strong criticisms of its policies. Löwenthal and Horkheimer fell somewhere in between these two poles.

At the end of this important and insightful book, Jack Jacobs concludes: One cannot explain Critical Theory by reference solely to Judaism, but one cannot explain the lives of the Frankfurt School’s key writers without dealing with their Jewish roots.

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