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From the Editors

AFTER PROTESTS AND OCCUPATIONS temporarily shut down ICE offices, Donald Trump suffered a significant political defeat when he was forced to reverse himself on separating immigrant children from their parents after they were arrested at the border. By and large, people were horrified at the separation of kids from their families and at the creation of what were basically prison camps for children. Polls showed that only about a quarter of the U.S. population supported Trump on this child-hostage policy, though about half of Republicans did. Trump thought no amount of hate and slander directed at immigrants—especially racialized ones—was too much, but it turned out there was a political limit. His efforts to present this as some type of quasi-normal use of leverage to force Democrats to pay for his wall fell flat. Those who had seen photos of children confined in cages had trouble viewing the policy as a negotiating tactic.

While we are encouraged to see Trump defeated by the actions of numerous people who surrounded ICE offices, sometimes overnight, demanded #AbolishICE, and flooded airports in order to sing “Cielito Lindo” and show solidarity with children being flown across the country, the horror is not yet over. The government has lost track of many of the children it has shipped to shelters thousands of miles from where they and their parents were seized. The authorities in charge of this vicious operation did not bother to keep careful records of which children belonged with which parents, and some are too young to know important details. There is now press and popular discussion of how some children may never be reunited with their parents. In

addition, Trump’s executive order, as usual, is not what it seems. It opens the possibility of imprisoning thousands of immigrants and their children on military bases, and it attempts to weaken the *Flores v. Reno* settlement, which limits child detention.

We have had impressive examples of resistance to the Trump presidency, from the J20 inauguration arrests to the Women’s Marches, from Black athletes “taking a knee” to the #MeToo movement, and from the West Virginia and then numerous other state teachers’ strikes to the 40 days of action by a new Poor Peoples’ Movement. And while it is clear that the socialist left is growing, as witnessed by the growth and transformation of DSA, it is also clear that we do not yet have the kind of social power and political movement that will be necessary to stop Trump and the right, nor to even discipline the Democrats who, though they are once again being challenged internally and externally by sectors of the left, continue to prove their loyalty to the capitalist status quo. While we are inspired by all these efforts, we insist that there is a need for more and sharper class struggle.

Therefore, we begin this issue with two accounts of recent class struggle, one in the United States and one in Brazil. Lois Weiner shows us what we can learn from the recent militancy of the teacher walkouts in order to build new strategies for working-class struggle, and Rebecca Tarlau writes about how and why the Landless Workers Movement provides a measure of cautious optimism in post-coup Brazil.

We also look back to the radical history of 1968 for inspiration, to when up-

risings occurred across many parts of the world, including the United States, France, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, and Senegal, among other countries. These uprisings showed the unpredictability, the possibility, the power and potential of radical protest movements. To show the fire at that time, we reprint two articles from earlier issues of *New Politics*. Martin Oppenheimer's article was originally published in 1988 as a 20-year look back at 1968, while Richard Greeman's 1968 account provides a participant's view of the Columbia University rebellion, a rebellion that can now be seen as a warning of the gentrification to come and thus of the need to engage in socialist theory in order to guide effective socialist praxis.

Left social movements have historically engaged with radical critiques of society and socialist theory. In this issue we pay attention to the history of, and the need for, theoretical discussion. Kevin Anderson reviews Raya Dunayevskaya's book *Marxism and Freedom*, published sixty years ago, and assesses its significance today. Michael Hirsch tries to help contemporary socialists navigate the always challenging relationship between reform and revolution. And Bryant William Sculos uses the issue of gun violence and the opposition to it to look at the relationship between pacifism, liberalism, and socialism.

We also have two articles that continue this tradition of critique by looking at the conditions of two major American cities and why they have both been at the center of protests in the last few years. Anthropologist Nicole Fabricant interviews Dr. Lawrence Brown on how Black communities have sought to heal themselves from the violence and trauma of segregation, poverty, and policing. Meanwhile Mathieu Dubeau and Lee Fiorio describe the social-economic conditions that could lead to an increase of class struggle in Seattle.

While we know that current problems

didn't start with Trump and won't necessarily end when he leaves office, some writers in this issue look at problems that preceded the current administration. Rick Baum shows that the devastation of inequality grew during the Obama administration, and Chris Wright offers striking examples of the relationship between alienation and technology under capitalism.

No vision of socialist or transformative social change can support illusions about authoritarian leaders at home or abroad. There exists a misguided and dangerous tendency, currently being displayed concerning Syria, to excuse certain heads of state. Clay Claiborne reminds us of just what Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya, particularly in terms of racism and immigration, actually looked like so that we can build an actually effective anti-imperialism.

As always, we have our Words & Pictures feature, with Kent Worcester surveying some recent graphic novels, in particular one on the Syrian civil war by Molly Crabapple and another on the young C.L.R. James. And we have our book reviews, this time looking at four new works on American socialist history, Bernie Sanders, class, and labor in the South.

As we send this issue to the printer, our minds are on the millions of children who suffer, whether in Palestine, at the border, or in American prisons and schools, and we are saddened, we are angered, and we recommit ourselves to the fight against right-wing and racist policies and institutions and to the struggle for socialism from below. *La lucha sigue!!*

SAULO COLÓN
DAN LABOTZ
NANCY HOLMSTROM
JASON SCHULMAN
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Walkouts Teach U.S. Labor a New Grammar for Struggle

LOIS WEINER

LIKE THE ARAB SPRING, the U.S. “Education Spring” was an explosive wave of protests. Statewide teacher walkouts seemed to arise out of nowhere, organized through Facebook groups, with demands for increased school funding and political voice for teachers. Though the walkouts confounded national media outlets, which had little idea how to explain or report on the movements, for parent and teacher activists who have been organizing against reforms in public education over the past four decades, the protests were understandable, if unexpected. What was surprising was their breadth of support (statewide), their organizing strategy (Facebook), and their breathtakingly rapid spread.

For most of the far right, the West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and North Carolina walkouts showed greedy public employees exploiting their job security to get higher pay and benefits than hard-working taxpayers. However, teachers won wide popular support, even from Republicans, forcing the media-savvier elements of the right to alter their tone. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) posted a blog with a sympathetic tone: “While teachers are justly frustrated by take-home pay, their

total compensation is typically a lot higher than many teachers realize. That’s because teacher retirement and health care systems are much more expensive than those of the taxpayers who pay for them—whether those taxpayers work in the private or public sector.” Shedding crocodile tears for teachers who are underpaid and retirees without adequate pensions, AEI rejects the idea that more school funding would help. What’s needed is tweaking neoliberalism’s (failed) policy of “merit” pay. As I explain below, policies that link teacher pay to their “performance,” as judged by students’ scores on standardized tests, underlies much teacher anger. The AEI authors, who write for people in education, adopt bouncy, cheerleader-like prose to argue the real challenge is “how to pay terrific and invaluable teachers more appropriately.” Teachers now understand that these policies force them to compete against one another for elusive bonuses that replace pay based on years of experience and education.¹

From the start in West Virginia, local coverage of the state walkouts was impressively accurate. Reporters interviewed teachers, school workers, and parents, hearing from them how and why their movement had gained momentum, noting they were protesting salaries, health care, and pensions, but also the need for increased funding for school supplies and improvements to dilapidated facilities. In contrast, national media were clueless about how the walkouts had been organized, relying on interviews and press releases from union officers and politicians. Few reports explained that in these “right-

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to-work” states, the state affiliates of both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), the two national teachers unions, had a tiny number of dues-paying members, and state union officials did not speak for the protestors. Though the AFT president showed up for a few publicity opportunities, in all of

In private conversations teachers were quite explicit that their unions were “irrelevant,” “out of touch,” and “useless.”

these states the AFT affiliate is far smaller than the NEA and is essentially irrelevant politically in teacher-union politics. One singular aspect of the walkouts is that they were organized from below, outside of (and despite) attempted control by state union officials. Though teachers and other school workers who were local union activists were often leaders, they were part of the movement, not its masters. The many activists with whom I communicated in the course of the “Education Spring” all concurred that if the unions had been doing what they should have, the Facebook-based movements wouldn’t have been needed. Though participants were understandably uncomfortable expressing their dissatisfaction with the unions in public during the walkouts, in private conversations, teachers were quite explicit that their unions were “irrelevant,” “out of touch,” and “useless.” Teachers in Oklahoma and Kentucky told me they had never been approached to join a union until the Professional Organization of Teachers signed them up. Once the agitation for the walkouts began and this “union” responded with the same arguments as the far-right teacher-bashers, teachers learned that the POT was a front group for the billionaires who controlled the state legislature.

Coverage in liberal media and some left publications tried to make these walkouts fit the mold of “bread and butter” labor struggles. Accounts were accurate in noting that reduced state funding was the immediate root of low teacher pay and a unifying demand in the walkouts. However, the stories ignored other, equally important sources of teachers’ frustration and anger: profound changes in schools and teaching because of bipartisan reforms over the past ten years carried out with unions’ acquiescence. The walkouts have brought to the surface widespread frustration and anger about policies that teachers see making their jobs, and fulfillment of the reasons they chose to teach, almost impossible.

Despite the flood of stories in popular and left publications, most analysis has missed key lessons of these walkouts, including how gender and race influenced the movement, why these walkouts exemplified workers’ self-organization, and how collective bargaining both restrains and protects class struggle; I discuss these issues in more detail elsewhere.² When these elements are included, the walkouts suggest a new grammar for labor struggle that can challenge the right’s legal and political attacks on unions everywhere, the South included.

Teacher Self-organization Replaces Unions Missing in Action

West Virginia began the wave of statewide walkouts, inspiring similar campaigns in Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona. Teachers in Denver closed schools in Jefferson County for a day to converge on their state capitol, and North Carolina teachers held a one-day protest in which 25,000 people participated. While there were major similarities, the movements also differed in significant ways because of geography, history, demographics, and states’ balances of political forces.

My knowledge of the walkouts is drawn from published reports as well as my on-going involvement with activists as an adviser and

supporter, on the Facebook pages, in phone calls with organizers, and video conferences with protestors. The movements followed the same pattern: A handful of teachers and other school employees, including some union activists, frustrated about their union's (in) action, created a Facebook group limited to people who were teachers and school employees in the state. Often an auxiliary group or page was established to provide information and support, but discussions about strategy, participation in votes, and surveys were restricted to the closed Facebook pages, to those risking their jobs in taking action. No distinction was made on the Facebook page between those who were or were not union members, although many joined the unions in the course of the walkouts. Discussions became more political by the hour; remorseful, angry posts by people who had voted for the governors who subsequently ridiculed and insulted them were common. A post questioning where the money would come from to fund salary increases might be answered with a suggestion to use the lottery, followed shortly by an activist knowledgeable about the right's control of tax policy with more information about a progressive alternative, generally in the form of a link to a website. Many participants self-identified as Republicans and as conservatives. Many identified religious faith, assumed to be Christianity, as a powerful support, and in West Virginia thousands joined in prayer each day at a designated time, asking for guidance and strength.

The reason I refer to these actions as "walkouts" is that the organizers adopted a strategy that avoided the language of striking, even though the protests took a form that relied on unity and solidarity no less than in a strike. Teachers phoned in to their schools saying they would not be present, using personal days or sick days en masse to force schools and districts to close, until most or all of the state's school districts announced they would shut down. Superintendents, who are almost always former teachers, were

often sympathetic to the walkouts. In West Virginia, school workers other than teachers were included in the movement from the start, using what one activist called "wall-to-wall" organizing.

National media, including a labor reporter who represents himself as a savvy insider, consistently assumed that state union officials spoke for the movements, missing a dynamic that made the "Education Spring" so special in U.S. labor: Those whom union officials say they represent were actually in control much of the time, reversing the typical hierarchy. In West Virginia union officials tried—and failed—to broker a deal with the government without checking in with the Facebook organization. The movement was sufficiently well-organized and unified that it held strong in rejecting the settlement, forcing union officials to back down after they announced—and the *New York Times* reported—the walkout had been ended. In Oklahoma and Kentucky, the movements were more fragmented and less well-organized, and the teachers and school workers leading the Facebook groups less politically experienced. Officers of the Oklahoma and Kentucky NEA affiliates made backroom deals to end the walkouts, claiming to have polled members. But as the postings on the Facebook pages showed, the vast majority of walkout participants had no opportunity to weigh-in on the settlement, either on the Facebook page or in the union poll. The reaction to the substance of the settlements was, at best, very mixed. However the anger at union officials' usurpation of what was almost unanimously agreed was protestors' right to decide how and when to return to work was expressed quite strongly. Those who were the most active felt the most blindsided and betrayed by the unions' actions. Though deeply disappointed with the settlements, which relied on regressive taxes and provided relatively little new money, Oklahoma and Kentucky teachers lacked sufficient organization, even in the cities where they were strongest, to continue the

walkouts without union help. “How could we have missed that the union would do this?” one anguished Oklahoma activist asked me.

In Arizona, activists developed a collaborative relationship with the NEA affiliate, which “played nice,” as one leader told me. A small AFT local, on the other hand, played a “rogue” role, calling for walkouts separate from the unified “Red for Ed” movement so as to claim leadership of the movement. Activists in all the states mentored one another, and in Arizona, leaders referred to what had occurred in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) 2012 strike. They developed a consensus that the walkout was the first round in building a movement that would be an on-going struggle involving political education, electoral action, and building a stronger, responsive union by recruiting and engaging teachers who had lost their fear of standing up and being heard. Unlike in the other states, in North Carolina, the May 16 statewide protest in the capitol was planned well beforehand in a process initiated by Organize 2020, a statewide reform caucus in the NEA affiliate.

One tension in all the states was balancing direct action with the hope that electoral activity would bring solutions. As teachers massed in the state capitols in the tens of thousands, their protests suggested the possibility of re-enacting what had occurred in Madison, Wisconsin. In Madison, teachers and other public employees occupied the state capitol in response to legislation that revoked the right of public employees to bargain collectively. Their occupation ended when union officials persuaded them to leave the building and to adopt what proved to be an unsuccessful electoral strategy: recall of the governor, Scott Walker. In Kentucky, one contingent of teachers and education activists were alert to the possibility of an occupation and packed bags with clean underwear. The experience of Madison explains why national media clung to the myth that union officials spoke for teachers, and to its corollary that

workers can’t achieve their goals through direct action but must instead rely on the ballot box. In her press conference announcing that the Oklahoma Education Association had agreed to support legislation (which the movement had previously rejected), the OEA president said the union “had achieved all it could with a walkout” and would “shift their efforts to supporting candidates in the fall elections who favor increased education spending.” Yet the biggest pieces of legislation passed before the walkout, not during it, so the movement’s strength had not yet been tested. No press questioned how or why the electoral strategy would succeed in Oklahoma or Kentucky when the traditionally liberal and labor-friendly state of Wisconsin had failed to recall Walker, allowing the Republicans to destroy collective bargaining for public employees.³

The walkouts enjoyed huge popular support, from conservative Republicans to socialists. A new generation radicalized by the Sanders campaign, especially members of Democratic Socialists of America, made their presence felt by organizing support. Progress-

Most analysis has missed key lessons of these walkouts, including how gender and race influenced the movement, why these walkouts exemplified workers’ self-organization, and how collective bargaining both restrains and protects class struggle.

sive watchdog groups were also important allies in identifying legislation that needed to be stopped—or should be passed—in each state. Save Our Schools Kentucky, a

left-liberal education group that has strong connections with other progressive organizations in the state, did much of the planning that the NEA affiliate did not, serving as an auxiliary to the Facebook group of teachers and other school employees.

Liberalism's Rip-Van-Winkle Slumber and Partial Awakening

Liberals have (mostly) been awakened from their neoliberal somnolence, discovering that reforms supported enthusiastically by both parties, masked in the rhetoric of creating educational opportunity, were aimed at destroying public education. Still, an exchange in *Dissent* about what was progressive in neoliberalism reveals that even socialists are not yet clear about the real aims and meaning of the neoliberal project.⁴ Their confusion seems related to a fearfulness about confronting head-on the role of the Democratic Party and therefore aligning with popular movements, often people fighting on issues of social oppression, that are pushing for a fundamental political break from both parties and the political status quo.

There should be no doubt on the left about the need to reject all of the bipartisan reforms that have been imposed on U.S. schools. As I explain elsewhere, the project's key elements include privatizing the education sector; eliminating democratic oversight of schools; and making teaching a revolving door of low-paid, minimally educated instructors who will teach to tests over which students, parents, and teachers have no voice. In all of the states having walkouts, teachers were aghast that state legislators moved to allow anyone with a bachelor's degree to teach, removing requirements for teaching credentials, because of a "teacher shortage" artificially induced by low pay and poor working conditions. In fact, U.S. state legislatures have been carrying out policies the World Bank has demanded from the global South for decades, destroying teaching as a

career.⁵ Though teachers understood that the "shortage" could be solved by funding schools and increasing salaries, even they missed how elimination of certification requirements connects to testing and privatization, pillars of the neoliberal project.

In a lavishly funded global propaganda campaign orchestrated by powerful elites, teachers have been attacked for a huge range of social and educational problems over which they have no control. As many comments on the Facebook pages showed, frustration and anger that fueled the explosiveness of the walkouts was due in good part to policies and rhetoric that assume "teacher quality" is all that matters in student learning and can be measured accurately by students' scores on standardized tests. Oklahoma's "teacher of the year," one of the fifty teachers given this award and invited to meet privately with Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, told DeVos her "choice policies," meaning charter schools and private schools receiving vouchers, were draining traditional public schools of resources in his state. When DeVos suggested students were fleeing low-performing schools, the Oklahoma music teacher, who had voted for Trump, responded that government policies "taking all the kids that can afford to get out and leaving the kids who can't behind" is what "created the bad schools." The Montana and California teachers of the year expressed dismay after the meeting at DeVos' comments opposing teacher strikes. "She basically said that teachers should be teaching and we should be able to solve our problems not at the expense of children. ... For her to say at the 'expense of children' was a very profound moment and one I'll remember forever because that is so far from what is happening."⁶

Teacher anger at being held responsible for student learning while facing policies that undercut their ability to do their jobs is clearly not limited to the "red states." An array of conditions, not just reduced funding, created the perfect storm for direct action that spread so quickly. Some teachers were inspired by

student protests over gun violence, but for many years, courageous teachers and parents have been allies in the “opt out” of testing movement to stop standardized testing. The Bad Ass Teachers (BATs), organized on social media, banded together in “red states” and “blue” to fight the attacks on teachers’ dignity as workers because teachers unions have not adequately defended the profession. Nationally, funding of teachers’ salaries mostly comes from local districts, supplemented by state revenues, but much of teachers’ work is directly controlled by state law. Although federal mandates have squeezed the states—with little resistance from Democrats—states still have leeway in deciding who can teach, what is taught, and how. States generally fund teachers’ pensions and health benefits, either entirely or to a considerable extent. Therefore *every* state is susceptible to statewide mobilizations by teachers, though the presence or absence of collective bargaining rights is certainly a factor in explaining the walkouts.

Collective bargaining legislation that was passed in the 1960s and 1970s is a mixed bag. It gave teachers unions stability and the strength to negotiate improved wages and benefits for members, but the legal framework also created a highly circumscribed scope of bargaining, ceding to school boards and administration the right to decide most issues that affect teachers’ work and students’ learning. Even under the best of circumstances, when they have public support for increased school funding and with the best unions, teachers have a very difficult time using collective bargaining to make significant changes in their work. Improving schools is complex, as even elements of the far right that want a fully privatized public school system now acknowledge, because privatization has failed to boost students’ test scores. Teachers unions generally focus on what officials see as the most winnable, “bread and butter” demands for reasons both political and practical. In places the unions have collective bargaining, the narrowed scope of bargaining has been

worsened by the business-union model, which has encouraged member indifference and inactivity when not deepening frustration. Thus business unionism has simultaneously weakened the unions’ capacity to protect teachers’ interests and intensified the constraint of struggle.

The Walkouts and Teacher Unionism’s Transformation

The assumption that the state teachers unions in the “red states” spoke for the movement obscured an extremely important political aspect of the walkouts: They were round two in the struggle to transform teacher unionism. Whether knowingly or not, these grassroots movements challenged the premises on which teachers unions have operated for four decades, a fact missing in most reportage and analysis. Even stories correctly noting links between the walkouts and the CTU’s path-breaking 2012 strike omitted references to how the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) won CTU leadership by mobilizing union members to fight for a different kind of union, altering the CTU’s priorities, narrative, and operation and in so doing presenting a challenge to the business unionism of both AFT and NEA.⁷

CORE’s successful struggle launched a wave of reform caucuses, which are challenging leadership in urban and statewide locals and are supported by a network associated with *Labor Notes*. In Los Angeles and Boston (AFT locals), as well as in the state of Massachusetts (an NEA affiliate), union activists who identify with CORE’s “social justice” orientation and organizing model have been elected union president. In other cities, reform caucuses sometimes share leadership with the older guard. Key “red state” activists have now joined this reform network. They are new, vibrant allies for the CTU and like-minded reformers.⁸

Gender wasn’t discussed much in coverage of the walkouts, but it should be, because

the actions showed the powerful potential of women leaders to reinvigorate and democratize teachers unions. While CORE was able to win the votes of teachers in elementary schools, has organized in those schools, and has had a remarkable program of political education, its leaders and base were mostly white, male high school teachers; among the crucial exceptions is Karen Lewis, CTU's beloved African American president. What has been game-changing in the "red state" walkouts is the participation and politicization of women, especially female elementary school teachers. The movement's power was "women power." Female teachers didn't discuss gender on the Facebook pages, with the exception of a few postings about paternalistic (my word, not theirs) male principals, and most answered that gender wasn't a factor in their participation when the question was first posed. But after some reflection they identified a range of gender-related issues, from who did housework and shopping for the family while they were protesting in the state capitol, to the ways their work and intelligence were devalued in the society. They were ferociously protective of "their kids" (the term elementary school teachers especially use for their students), making sure they had meals when schools were closed. This speaks to their view of teaching as nurturing, traditionally the mother's role. Their participation is #MeToo brought to teacher unionism, a response to the deterioration and devaluation of teachers' work. One of the best analyses of any of the walkouts, which captured the union's attempt to "domesticate" the struggle, explained how gender configured the West Virginia protest. "If the vast majority of women strikers did not regard themselves to be feminists, feminism, to paraphrase a revolutionary, certainly was not disregarding the strike. The strike, the conditions that led to the strike, the way the strike unfolded were all deeply gendered."⁹

Perhaps the most dangerous omission in the walkout narrative and subsequent analyses is the salience of race and racism, and teacher

unionism's historic failure to engage with systemic racism in education and the society. Pyrrhic strikes in the 1960s and 1970s that pitted teachers against civil rights activists, perhaps most violently in New York City and Newark, New Jersey, accelerated the unions' demise as democratic, militant organizations capable of winning substantial victories for

This movement of people who do "women's work," most of who are women, has confirmed — once again — Marx's dictum "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself."

members.¹⁰ That pattern was interrupted when CORE, which had organized against school closings in the Black community, foregrounded the gross inequities the city perpetuated against students of color in its 2012 strike, with its program for the schools "Chicago children deserve."

The strategic and moral importance of teachers unions fusing a commitment to anti-racism work with their narratives about what's wrong with public education can't be overstated. Tulsa and Oklahoma City were strongholds of the walkouts in Oklahoma, yet in both places the local union was unwilling or unable to articulate demands that would speak directly to the aspirations and apprehensions of Black residents, parents, and students, who are educated in intensely segregated neighborhoods and schools. In Kentucky, the deal the state union brokered allowed the governor to potentially take over the Louisville schools. In being "race blind," the movements failed to connect with one of their most powerful potential allies. As a co-thinker involved in

supporting the Kentucky teachers astutely observed in our conversation about racism's invisibility even among socialists, we have a chance "to get race right this time, and if we don't, it's over."

The movements created in the "Education Spring" face the challenge of how to discuss and act on systemic racism, reflected in every aspect of school life I can think of, while maintaining unity among teachers. Almost one-quarter of AFT members nationally voted for Trump; one-third did so in the NEA. The national statistics about teachers union members voting for Trump don't even reflect how teachers in the South, not members of unions, voted. A color-blindness that obscures racism is not only a problem for teachers and teachers unions, but for the left, including socialists, as shown by omission of analysis of race in reports about the walkouts and an article about the "progressive potential" of the Scholastic Aptitude Tests that ignored the origins of standardized testing in Eugenics.¹¹

Stating the need for "quality education for all," as do the unions at their best, avoids confronting the legacy of labor's and the education establishment's complicity in accepting government policies that created and sustained racial segregation in housing, schools, and the labor market.¹² Expecting support in economic struggles without supporting communities of color and immigrants in social battles is a dangerous illusion for teachers unions. When workers mobilize and see the need for allies, they become open to topics that are otherwise not welcomed. In conversations with teachers in Oklahoma and Kentucky, I asked if they had support among parents. The White teachers all thought their locals (in large cities) had done a solid job in getting support. But when I asked the African American teachers to comment, they dissented, saying they had heard community members and other teachers express ambivalence about supporting the walkout because the local hadn't been there for the community. For teachers organizations, with collective

bargaining or without it, winning the trust of parents who feel estranged from schools and often teachers personally, especially White teachers of students of color, requires being physically present in community struggles against racist policies, fighting school closures, but also police brutality and deportations.

Organize 2020 is an important model in this and other regards. This statewide caucus used social media and the excitement of the previous walkouts to build a one-day protest in the North Carolina state capitol, and in so doing greatly expanded its on-the-ground presence statewide. Its leadership understands the caucus' purpose as long-term, building a democratic union based on socially progressive ideals, including an explicit rejection of racism. It has developed alliances with community groups, and when the North Carolina Association of Educators, the lethargic, passive state union, refuses to take action members need, the caucus steps in as best it can, given its scarce resources, and carries out the plan. Though the North Carolina walkout was just one day, Organize 2020 mobilized teachers on the basis of demands that were race-conscious and that addressed tax breaks for the corporations and wealthy.¹³ The caucus sees a role for the state's teachers in rebuilding North Carolina labor. It brings CORE's ideas to its work, but looks for strategies that fit its situation.

Teacher Unionism in a Trump Administration

Since the "excellence reforms" in education in the 1990s, when the neoliberal project in the United States was begun with the warning that the country was a "nation at risk" of falling behind in a global economy, liberals have joined conservatives in embracing a view of education as "the one true path out of poverty." That was the phrase with which Arne Duncan, Obama's Secretary of Education, described the ideological assumption driving that administration's education policy.

Despite overwhelming evidence that poverty and unemployment are endemic to a global economy in which workers everywhere are forced to compete for low-wage jobs requiring relatively little education, liberals and the labor establishment have embraced an exclusively economic rationale for public education that has subverted its other social purposes. While the left has rightly emphasized education's limited potential to ameliorate poverty and its inability to create jobs, socialists have been less willing to grapple with the complicating reality that schooling can make a difference in terms of individuals' life prospects. So while "teacher quality" is one of the many factors that affect what students learn and we should be concerned about having well-prepared teachers in our schools, good teaching cannot be accurately measured by students' standardized test scores, nor created or sustained in environments that undercut teachers' exercise of their judgement, the hallmarks of the last decade's reforms.¹⁴ We need only look at how wealthy elites educate their children—in schools with small classes, with teachers who are paid well and given considerable autonomy working in properly maintained buildings, and courses of study that include the arts—to see that education counts. The policies that have created "choice," that is, privatized schooling, have resonated with low-income parents and communities of color because they want their children to have the same opportunity that affluent parents demand for their kids: to attend college so as to compete for the diminishing number of good jobs.

However, during the 2016 primaries and election, bipartisan consensus about education being the best way to end poverty and improve the nation's economy was shattered. Both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, campaigning on diametrically opposed premises about capitalism, argued for economic policies to alleviate inequality. In so doing, they implicitly rejected education as the "one true path out of poverty." Education reform as a

jobs policy was jettisoned. Moreover, Trump's and the GOP's embrace of policies supporting White supremacy, misogyny, anti-immigrant sentiment, and pseudo-Darwinian ideas about "natural ability" has completely undercut the Democratic Party's claims to support education reforms as a viable way to make U.S. society more equal. The rhetoric masking privatization and "choice" as a method of increasing opportunity for racial minorities has been ditched by the GOP, stripping the Democrats of their cover.

Trump and the GOP have been met with outrage and opposition in the streets,

The walkouts suggest a new grammar for labor struggle that can challenge the right's legal and political attacks on unions everywhere, the South included.

and though the resistance has not been able to turn protest into political victories, these movements present an opportunity for teachers unions and a dilemma for existing national leadership. Teachers unions feel pressures from social justice movements to confront the Trump administration, not "sit at the table" as they have in collaborating with previous administrations. The political tightrope NEA and AFT walk was illustrated by an episode shortly after DeVos was approved as Secretary of Education. AFT and NEA mobilized with petitions and phone calls to Congress to block her appointment, raising expectations that the unions would wage an all-out fight against the GOP and Trump. But when parent and community activists blocked DeVos from entering a Washington DC school, AFT President Randi Weingarten tweeted a reprimand to the protestors, and she invited DeVos to visit schools with her to engage in dialogue.

Weingarten also met with Steve Bannon before he was ousted, telling *The Intercept* that it was an opportunity for understanding.¹⁵ So while the AFT and NEA endorse the ideas of social justice unionism and financially support Journey for Justice, an alliance of communities of color that addresses education policy, Weingarten's meeting with Bannon suggests the AFT leadership is willing to desert allies in communities of color should union officials find that expedient.¹⁶ And where the AFT goes, the NEA follows shortly, regardless of policies its convention endorses.

Though most activists in the “red states” don't see this—yet—the teachers movements are laying the ground work for a new labor movement in the South. What they need to do now is develop a truly progressive program for tax reform and provision of public services, and figure out an electoral strategy that uses mobilization and controls the politicians it elects. In West Virginia and in Jersey City, where the teachers union conducted a one-day strike, health care was a key issue. To undercut the argument that unions, especially those representing public employees, are no different from other special-interest groups, out for their own good, teachers have to use their political muscle to win single-payer health care. Fighting for economic demands without embedding them in a social vision for improving working people's lives is a losing strategy that may win an occasional strike but depletes the reservoir of support that is needed to win the big battles.

One of the greatest contributions of this movement has been to redefine what it means to be a worker. Even the left has had trouble understanding that teachers' work, though it is “women's work,” is real work—that teachers are real workers. In the “turn to the working class” in the 1970s, socialists abandoned their activity in public employee unions with robust reform caucuses in order to influence industrial workers in steel, auto, communications, transportation. In doing so, they decimated the radical presence in the AFT

and the NEA. The walkouts have shown the left its mistake in defining work, workers, and class in ways that ignored a huge swath, even then, of the workforce. Teachers are fighting for the dignity of their work and the right to voice about their working conditions. They are defending education as a public good and their students' rights to have what the wealthy take for granted. This strike wave has demonstrated an intensity and scale of self-activity and organization among workers that we have not seen in the United States in decades. This movement of people who do “women's work,” most of whom are women, has confirmed—once again—Marx's dictum: “The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself.”

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What's Left of the Brazilian Left?¹

Reasons for Cautious Optimism from the Landless Workers Movement

REBECCA TARLAU

IN MAY 2017, LEFT POLITICS in Brazil were pretty bleak. It was almost a year after the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), whose ousting from power brought along with it an onslaught of austerity policies.² Many of these policies had originated during the PT's administration but were now moving forward at an accelerated pace. These reforms included a twenty-year freeze on government spending for public education and health, a change in labor legislation to allow contracts to trump workers' rights laws, the elimination of automatic union dues, a law that makes the outsourcing of work easier for employers, and a major overhaul of the public pension system. Although ex-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (henceforth Lula) still led in the polls for the October 2018 election, he was also facing corruption charges (undoubtedly politically motivated) and his imprisonment appeared imminent.³ The violence in the countryside against rural social movements was also at a peak.⁴ A year later, the murder of Marielle Franco, a Black, feminist, queer, and socialist City Council member in Rio de Janeiro, would illustrate the same impunity in urban

areas. In Brazil, the moment for socialist organizing appeared a remnant of the past.

Yet, also in May 2017, the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), a movement of farmers fighting for agrarian reform since the early 1980s, organized a seminar on "The Historical Construction of Socialist Pedagogies: The Legacy of the 1917 Russian Revolution." More than 350 activists and teachers from across the country travelled to the MST's Florestan Fernandes National School, a political training school founded in São Paulo in 2005, to take part in the event. The MST leadership invited intellectuals from outside and inside the movement to talk about the organizational and political construction of the Bolshevik revolution; the historical development of socialist education under Soviet leadership; the transformation in the systems and processes of work, peasant agriculture, and agro-ecology; the participation of women and youth in socialism; and the path for implementing socialist pedagogies in the Brazilian public school system. This combining of discussions on politics, economics, and pedagogy exemplified the integration of the MST's agrarian and educational struggles.

Moreover, the organization of the seminar prefigured the type of socialist society the movement hopes to create, with all participants organized into collectives responsible for the cleaning and cooking at the school and the facilitation of the seminar over its three days. On May 26, the last evening of the seminar, the event turned from analysis to celebration, with an elaborate MST *mística*, a

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cultural performance typical of the movement that draws on dance, theater, poetry, song, and music to embody the struggle for social transformation. The *mística* was a 40-minute enactment of the February and October revolutions, with gripping performances of the murder of Bolshevik leaders and Lenin's galvanizing of the troops, bringing alive in the Brazilian countryside the heroines and heroes of 1917.

Although the past two years have seen a series of setbacks for workers' rights in Brazil, this brief vignette illustrates that concrete struggles for socialist alternatives continue to advance throughout the country. The MST, one of the longest-standing social movements in Brazil, born out of the return to democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is a reason for cautious optimism. For over three and a half decades, the movement has occupied important spheres of state power, from public schools to agricultural services, and has prefigured within these spheres socialist ideals. I use the term "prefigured" consciously, not to refer to attempts to construct an alternative society outside the current economic and political system, but rather, attempts to implement socialist practices with, in, through, and outside of state institutions. The MST has engaged in what Vergara-Camus (2014) refers to as a "pragmatic relationship" with the state, attempting to win concessions at every government level to build their political, economic, and educational program in the Brazilian countryside. This is in contrast, for example, to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico, which has rejected all state support.

Of course, the MST's relationship to the Brazilian state is fraught and full of contradictions. The movement is often critiqued by left activists as selling out, trading in their capacity to mobilize large land occupations for a cozy relationship to the government, and in particular, the PT establishment. I am sympathetic to most critiques of the PT itself, and I support my many friends who

have chosen to leave the PT over the past two-and-a-half decades (since the first major expulsion of activists from the party in 1992⁵) to develop other parties and political tendencies with revolutionary potential. However, the argument that the MST has sold out to the PT is simplistic at best, and at worst, this characterization is politically harmful, as it does not acknowledge the real gains this movement has made for socialist struggles. In this article, I will briefly talk about this history, through the particular case of the MST's educational program, which I define as the movement's attempt to build in the Brazilian public school system a pedagogical approach that embodies socialist ideals.⁶

First, I describe how the MST initially built its pedagogical proposal in the 1980s and 1990s, emphasizing that the MST has always had a politics of engaging the state

The MST's National School
"Florestan Fernandes" continues
to be an international hub of
political education and socialist
organizing, with hundreds of
social movement leaders from
around the world studying at
the school each year...

regardless of the government's political allegiance, well before the PT took national power. The movement's goal has been to use state resources, wherever and whenever possible, to further its economic, political, and pedagogical goals. Second, I analyze the period since Lula's ascendancy to the presidency in 2003, highlighting some of the contradictions that indeed emerged in MST-PT relations. Even in the context of

these relations, the movement maintained an important distance from the party, allowing it to engage in contentious actions while also using state resources to continue expanding its educational program and other institutional initiatives. Finally, I analyze the current political moment and the real threats that this regime poses to the movement's institutional gains. I argue that the MST's form of engagement with the Brazilian state over the past three decades has produced enough inroads into a diversity of institutions that the federal government will not be able to simply end the MST's initiatives. The MST's extensive social-movement infrastructure, developed through the movement's strategic and pragmatic engagement with the state, continues to position the movement as a critical node of socialist organizing in Brazil and globally.

Engaging the State

The MST's initial engagement with the Brazilian state and its public schools took place over what we could call three broad conjunctural periods: dictatorship and political opening (1978-1984); democratic consolidation (1985-1989); neoliberalism and state-society conflict (1990-2002). The initial land occupations that eventually led to the founding of the MST took place in this first period, during a military regime. The Catholic Church had an important role in these initial occupations, as priests following liberation theology created the Pastoral Commission on Land (CPT) in 1975 to help defend the rights of rural workers. The first of the land occupations that led to the founding of the MST took place four years later, on September 7, 1979, when 110 families in the southern region of Brazil occupied the unproductive plantation (*fazenda*) Macali. After a year of resisting police eviction and an outpouring of public support, the families were given the rights to this land by the state government. Following this initial occupation, the CPT helped to organize dozens of

other land occupations that took place across the southern region of Brazil, with different degrees of success.⁷

Meanwhile, other important political developments were taking place across the country.

In 1979, a new military president continued the process of political opening (*abertura*). The most important reforms were the granting of amnesty to exiles and more tolerance of protest. In December 1979, the military regime also passed the Party Reform Bill, which dissolved Brazil's two-party system and enabled the organizing of new political parties. In 1980, the oppositional labor movement, Catholic Church activists, progressive intellectuals, and leaders of the emerging social movements, including the landless movement, came together to form the PT. Many of the landless activists who were involved in regional occupations in the south participated in the PT's founding congress. Two years later, the same grassroots leaders that founded the PT came together to create the Central Union of Workers (CUT), a new, combative labor union confederation.

Even before the MST's formal founding in 1984, local landless activists began to organize educational activities as a response to the demands of parents living in the occupied encampments—primarily the mothers who were overwhelmingly in charge of childcare. Sometimes these were isolated activities, but in many camps the women came together to establish camp-wide childcare offerings, with educational activities for the children about the landless movement and the struggle for agrarian reform. Many of these activists already had experience with Paulo Freire's writings on critical pedagogy through their participation in church study groups.⁸

Salete Campigotto was one of those educational activists, inspired by Freirean theory through her local church study group in the late 1970s, who went on to occupy a large plantation in 1981. In 1983, Salete and the other families in her camp won the legal

rights to the land, and after more contentious protest, they also won the right to a public school in their community—the first public school located in an MST settlement. Lacking any teachers willing to teach in the settlement, the government agreed to hire Salete to work at the school, thus beginning the MST's thirty-five-year engagement with the Brazilian state. Salete immediately began incorporating Freirean pedagogies into the classroom. As she explained, "In a small school where you are the teacher and the principal ... you have a lot of space to work. I worked during the dictatorship, and our school was watched because it was on a settlement, but I never had to stop helping students critically analyze their reality." This was the MST's first attempt to prefigure its political goals within a state institution, occurring while the dictatorship was still in place.

When the official return to democracy came in 1985, activism and political organizing in Brazil was already at a peak. The MST was among an array of grassroots groups seeking to transform the state by bringing these organizations' participatory ethos inside state institutions. This was a period in which citizenship was being redefined beyond formal rights, as a more active citizenship, which included engagement in social struggles and direct participation in state decision-making (Dagnino, 1998). The constitutional assembly of 1988 was an opportunity for mobilized groups to institutionalize their calls for women's rights, racial justice, agrarian reform, housing, and so on. However, conservative sectors of Brazilian society also began to organize and were able to block many of these social-movement demands. Consequently, although the 1988 "Citizen's Constitution" brought more rights than ever before, it was a far cry from what the movements had initially hoped.

The MST's first five years as an established organization were during this vibrant moment of civil-society mobilization. As more families received land, there continued

to be a demand from the movement's base to construct schools in new settlement communities. The redundant decentralization of the Brazilian education system, which allows state and municipal governments to administer schools in the same geographical location with relative autonomy, created opportunities for these activists. If a municipal government was antagonistic, the movement could circumvent that government level and pressure the state government to build a school—and appoint sympathetic teacher-allies to teach in the schools. Freire continued to be an important reference for the movement; however, the MST leadership also began to seek out other pedagogical inspirations. As Salete told me, "We were looking for a new educational proposal for our schools, and we thought, where in the world have they attempted to create a school system for a socialist society?" One answer was the Soviet Union, and in particular, the schools organized by Soviet educators such as Nadezhda Krupskaya, Anton Makarenko, and Moisey Pistrak.⁹ Local

The argument that the MST has sold out to the PT is simplistic at best, and at worst, this characterization is politically harmful, as it does not acknowledge the real gains this movement has made...

activists began reading these Soviet texts and attempted to implement similar practices in their schools. In July 1987, the MST leadership formalized these already widespread grassroots educational initiatives by officially founding a National MST Education Sector.

The vibrant social movements of the 1980s, and the hope they brought for pro-

moting an alternative economic and political model in Brazil, faced a huge disappointment in the 1989 elections, when Fernando Collor de Mello narrowly defeated PT candidate Lula. This led to a period of neoliberalism and intensive state-society conflict. The 1989 election also redefined the internal dynamics of the left itself. A group of leaders who vied for power within the PT and who advocated for a more “pragmatic” party structure for winning elections eventually achieved hegemony within the party in the mid-1990s. Over the next decade, the candidates who ran on the PT’s tickets were not ideologically homogenous, but rather, had differing relationships to grassroots movements and varying levels of support for participatory democracy and socialist politics.

It was during this period of neoliberalism and state-society conflict that the MST’s first state-sponsored educational initiatives emerged, as activists found diverse allies within different federal agencies and sub-national governments. The establishment of formal educational institutions increased the movement’s knowledge and expertise about how to participate in and co-govern the public education system. The educational programs also integrated new activists into the movement, especially women, equipping them with formal degrees that helped them negotiate with public officials and obtain jobs in other institutional spheres that the movement wanted to occupy. Often, it was the MST’s own capacity to implement programs that convinced governments to support these initiatives. For example, in 1990 the MST organized a two-year-long high-school degree and teaching-certificate program in Rio Grande do Sul for MST activists working in schools and lacking a high-school degree (a common occurrence, although officially illegal). Many conservative mayors agreed to co-sponsor the program, as they also had teachers in their schools without high-school degrees. The MST’s organizational capacity to deliver something useful eclipsed local

governments’ concerns about partnering with a socialist movement. The MST led dozens of Freirean-based literacy campaigns and other adult education programs through these types of partnerships. In 1995, the MST opened its first independent educational institution, the Josué do Castro Educational Institute (IEJC, also known as ITERRA), with the approval of the state government of Rio Grande do Sul.

Then, in 1998, the movement won its most important educational victory: the National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform (PRONERA). This program, created by neoliberal President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party, was a product of the violence of that period. On April 17, 1996, police massacred 19 MST activists in the state of Pará. The massacre was caught on camera, sparking international outrage and national sympathy for the movement. In February 1997, the MST organized a national march on Brasília for agrarian reform, culminating on April 17 with 100,000 people. Then, in July 1997, the MST organized a National Meeting for Educators in Areas of Agrarian Reform, demanding a national educational program. In April 1998, the two-year anniversary of the massacre, Cardoso created PRONERA. Over the past two decades, PRONERA has allowed thousands of MST leaders access to higher education, transforming the MST from a movement of, at most, high-school graduates, to a movement of activists with university and graduate degrees.

The PT Era

When President Lula took office in 2003, his administration represented a complex compromise between the movements that were the base of his party and the economic and political elites with whom he had allied to be elected. One of his first initiatives was to cut back the public pension system for civil servants, which resulted in an exodus of left-leaning political groups from the PT and

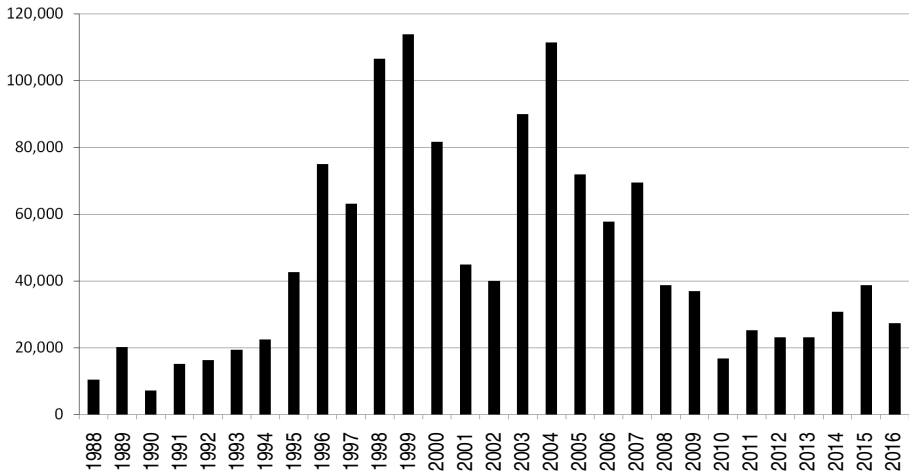


Figure 1: Number of Families Participating in New Land Occupations, 1988–2016 (NERA, 2016)¹¹

the founding of a new left party in 2004, the Socialist and Liberty Party (PSOL). Then, in 2005, the *mensalão* (big monthly payment) scandal broke, revealing that PT leaders had been making payments to congressional representatives in exchange for political loyalty. The scandal led to additional prominent congressional representatives leaving the PT and joining the PSOL.

Thus, the PT that ascended to power in 2003 was a different PT than the one that had consolidated in the 1980s. Nonetheless, despite this conservative shift, Lula implemented many important social programs, including the largest cash-transfer program in the world, *Bolsa Família*. Between 2002 and 2005, this program reached more than 11 million families and helped in reducing poverty by 15 percent (Ondetti, 2008, p. 204). The PT also institutionalized much more social-movement participation at the federal level. For example, Lula created a Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality, inviting leaders of the Black movement to administer the office (Paschel, 2016). During Lula's first term, his administration organized 29 national conferences and

hundreds of state and municipal conferences to promote civil-society debate on a variety of topics. Nevertheless, many activists criticized these efforts as having little effect on policy (Goldfrank, 2011, p. 173). As for the administration's agricultural policies, although Lula publicly supported agrarian reform, in practice he continued many of Cardoso's market-based agrarian initiatives (Pereira & Sauer, 2006). Due to strong international prices, favorable exchange rates, and the PT's support, agribusiness boomed during Lula's first term (Ondetti, 2008, p. 205).

These are the developments that have generally led to the claim that the PT era represented a "regulating" of social-movement and union activism, what Brazilian political scientist and former PT leader Andre Singer called (2009) *lulismo*, or what more critical scholars have described as "reverse hegemony" (Braga, 2012; Oliveira, 2007). There is much truth to these arguments, especially in the case of the main oppositional union confederation, the CUT, which certainly organized fewer strikes during this period. Many CUT leaders defended this demobilization as a strategic exchange for direct negotiation of

their demands with the Ministry of Work. Similarly, the MST leadership had much more access to the Ministry of Agrarian Development during the PT administration, and the amount of resources available for the development of agrarian reform settlements increased significantly.

However, in the case of the MST, although the movement's national leadership supported the PT in four consecutive presidential elections, contestation never ceased. For example, in 2005 the movement organized one of the largest and longest marches in its history, with 1,200 people marching for two weeks to the capital city of Brasília (Carter, 2015). As Figure 1 illustrates, the number of new land occupations during President Cardoso's administration (1995–2002) and Lula's (2003–2010) had comparable highs and lows. Notably, there was a significant decrease in new land occupations after 2009, mostly during Dilma Rousseff's first two terms (2011–2016). This was a consequence of multiple factors, most significantly the economic prosperity in the country in 2010 and 2011 and social programs such as *Bolsa*

Família that made convincing people to occupy land more difficult. Although the MST's goal is for the redistribution of the means of production, the majority of people occupy land due to immediate economic hardship. It is only through the process of political formation in the camps and courses that new participants begin to embrace socialist ideals. Thus, for better or worse, *Bolsa Família* removed one of the most common entry ways into the movement: extreme hunger. In addition, as illustrated in Figure 2, the government radically decreased the redistribution of land after 2006. The PT's alliance with large agribusiness (which accelerated during Dilma Rousseff's two terms) blocked the party's ability to implement wide-scale land redistribution. Although the PT continued to invest resources in MST settlements, which still included more than 350,000 families, there were also tens of thousands of families living in MST-occupied encampments for more than a decade without receiving land rights.¹⁰ Poor rural families were even more hesitant to participate in new land occupations with these future prospects.

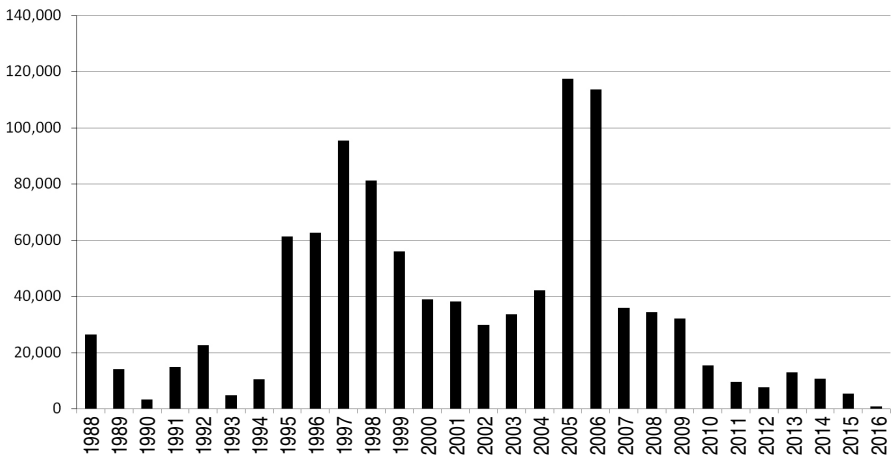


Figure 2: Number of New Families Issued Land Rights in Settlements, 1988–2016 (NERA, 2015)

In summary, although there have been fewer land occupations over the past decade than in previous historical moments, this downward trend did not start immediately after the PT took power; furthermore, even the recent lows are still higher than the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cooptation is too simplistic an explanation for these trends.

In terms of the MST's educational program during the PT era, activists continued engaging in the contentious co-governance of public education within different subnational governments and federal institutions. For example, Lula's administration opened up much more space for participation in the Ministry of Education (Tarlau, 2015a). Among other programs, the Ministry of Education funded a baccalaureate-level teacher certification program for rural teachers, which provided resources to hire hundreds of new professors at forty universities in what was essentially a geographically based affirmative action program. PRONERA also received much more funding during this period.

Again, it is important to emphasize that there were internal critiques of many of these funding relationships. Most significantly, a group of MST activists left the movement in 2011, criticizing the leadership's emphasis on the development of agrarian reform settlements over the organization of new land occupations. Nonetheless, during my 15 months living in MST settlements and camps during the 2010-2011 period, I observed activists engaging in countless contentious actions, including large land occupations, while also strategically using government funding to invest in their schools, cooperatives, health posts, and other internal movement infrastructure. I also heard MST activists at all leadership levels openly critiquing the PT's agricultural policies. In fact, *Jacobin* recently published an interview from 2010 with MST national leader Gilmar Mauro (2017), who states that "my honest opinion is that the PT is a party of the established order, and it's bound to be this more and more." Any claims

that the MST is simply an uncritical follower of the PT are clearly false.¹²

The argument that I make here is not that there is no tension between an institutional strategy and social-movement building. However, there is ample evidence that

The MST's extensive social-movement infrastructure, developed through the movement's strategic and pragmatic engagement with the state, continues to position the movement as a critical node of socialist organizing in Brazil and globally.

the MST has been able to negotiate these tensions by strategically using all forms of state power to build its social-movement infrastructure. Thus, the PT era, while certainly representing a class compromise at the macroeconomic level, also represented a continuity with the past in terms of the MST's pragmatic engagement with the complex and contradictory Brazilian state.

Mobilizing Under Conservative Resurgence

Finally, I want to touch briefly on the challenges of the current political moment, which we can broadly call a period of austerity and neoliberal fundamentalism. There has been an outpouring of insightful political analysis of the developments that led to the PT's ousting from power in 2016 (e.g., Braga, 2016), which I will not elaborate in this article. My focus is on the implications of this political moment for social movements in Brazil. Since Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, the MST leader-

ship has been one of the most vocal voices defending the PT and decrying what the movement refers to as an institutional coup. The MST is an active participant in one of the two national fronts leading the anti-coup efforts, the Brazilian Popular Front. The other national coalition, the People Without Fear Front, consists of organizations that identify as more critical of the PT, including many left-leaning tendencies within the PSOL and the powerful Homeless Workers' Movement. Nonetheless, these two fronts have collaborated in most major political actions over the past two years, critiquing the coup as an advance of the right and a direct attack on workers. The only major left group that analyzes the PT's impeachment as an advance for workers is the PSTU (Unified Workers'

When President Lula took office in 2003, his administration represented a complex compromise between the movements that were the base of his party and the economic and political elites with whom he had allied to be elected.

Socialist Party), a party founded in 1994 after the expulsion of their members from the PT; notably, the PSTU's controversial position led to a major split in that party.

After Lula was arrested in April 2018, both national fronts critiqued this action and called for his release. The MST has set up a permanent camp outside the prison where Lula is being held. Despite the PT's questionable support in the past, the MST leadership believes that Lula offers the best possibility for workers movements to continue consoli-

dating their political and economic goals. It is unlikely, however, that these mobilizations will lead to Lula's freedom. Although Lula is still leading in the polls, with 32 percent of the vote, the second in the running is the fascist politician Jair Bolsonaro, with 17 percent. The rest of the dozen or so center-right and center-left candidates have fewer supporters than the total number of predicated null votes. The PSOL candidate, the charismatic leader of the homeless movement, Guilherme Boulos, has less than 1 percent.¹³

Looking at electoral politics, the prospects for the Brazilian left are grim; nonetheless, there is still some hope that the social movements that have emerged over the past three decades will continue mobilizing even in this increasingly conservative context. The MST, as one of the most important contemporary social movements, is a good thermometer of the overall state of the left under these new political developments. Let me be clear: It is important not to be overly optimistic about the prospects for this grassroots movement. In addition to legislation that cuts back workers' rights, government spending, and public services, the current President Michel Temer has also implemented a series of strategies to weaken the MST. Some of these strategies have been attempts to repress the movement, including spying, disbanding land occupations, and arresting MST leaders (under a law enacted during Rousseff's administration). Another government strategy has been to cut the funding that supported the MST's alternative economic initiatives, including the termination of the entire Ministry of Agrarian Development. However, the most detrimental action Temer has taken is to push for policies that "regularize" families living in settlements, issuing them land titles so they no longer qualify for loans or other special programs designated for areas of agrarian reform. By transitioning families from the status of "settled" to "landowners," the state effectively rids itself of any social obligations to this sector of the Brazilian population.

MST leaders also fear that land speculators will take advantage of the privatization of settlements and buy up large swaths of these areas. Even in the unlikely scenario that a left-leaning president wins in 2018, more than two years of a well-orchestrated, frontal attack on the MST, through a diverse set of strategies, will undoubtedly serve to weaken the movement.

Yet, there are also reasons for some cautious optimism. First, the spike in violence and repression against the movement, along with the increase in economic inequality that the current policy regime is likely to produce,¹⁴ has the potential of generating a surge of support for the MST and willingness to participate in MST-led occupations and protests. After all, it was in the era of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002), when there was an escalation of violent repression, that the MST had its broadest support and won the most land redistribution. The youth involved in agrarian reform is the second reason for optimism. Today's MST is a movement of young people who grew up in settlements and camps, obtained education through the movement's programs, and participated in MST activities and events. Through these experiences and the *prefiguration* of direct, popular democracy within their schools and settlements, these youth have become "political subjects" (Paschel, 2016) who defend their right to participate in the political process. Third and finally, the MST is now engaging in this contentious political struggle with a new arsenal of material, ideological, and socio-political resources, what I have referred to as the MST's social-movement infrastructure.

The MST's educational struggle offers one of the best examples of why the movement's institutional gains cannot easily be reversed. Over thirty years, the MST has been able to win access to 2,000 schools with over 8,000 teachers attending to 250,000 students. State and municipal governments administer almost all of these schools, and many of these

subnational governments allow the MST to participate in educational co-governance. While 2016 and 2017 marked the ousting of Rousseff and the passage of many of Temer's conservative economic proposals, these years also marked the opening of four new high schools on MST settlements in the northeastern state of Ceará. In addition, the MST leadership has helped to develop programs for adult literacy, primary and secondary schooling, high school, and bachelor's and graduate degrees with more than eighty different educational institutions. Although government support was initially critical for funding these programs, many university professors who became committed activists through their involvement will continue to work with the MST, independently of the federal government. And perhaps most importantly, the MST's National School Florestan Fernandes continues to be an international hub of political education and socialist organizing, with hundreds of social-movement leaders from around the world studying at the school each year, prefiguring socialist pedagogy and practice.

In conclusion, the MST's struggle has always moved forward under contradictory and conflictive relations with the Brazilian state. However, the movement's relationship to the state has never been primarily about electoral politics. Throughout the 1990s, MST leaders found countless allies and state configurations to institutionalize their political, economic, and educational goals—partly because the mobilizations of the 1980s had transformed Brazilian society. Lula's victory in 2002 shifted the terrain by creating more openings at the national level, but it did not ultimately change the MST's strategy of finding different access points within the state for promoting institutional change and social-movement co-governance in different forms and varying levels of intensity across the country. Now, in the context of a conservative, anti-participatory, and old-school-neoliberal federal government, MST leaders have to

defend their previous gains through mobilizations and protests, find new institutional arrangements at subnational levels to support their political project, and perhaps most importantly, use the accumulated fruits of their thirty-year war of position to sustain the many movement activities that do not require a formal political-institutional expression. Now is the test: We are going to see the true strength and limits of the MST's "long march through the institutions."

NOTES

1. I am borrowing this phrase from sociologist Tianna Paschel's keynote address to the Brazilian Studies Association in April 2006, entitled, "What is Left of the Latin American Left."
2. I summarize some of the major developments after the first year following Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, including the multiple national mobilizations and the April 2017 general strike, in this blog post: clasberkeley.wordpress.com/2017/06/12/one-year-post-temer-a-conservative-shift-the-left-response-and-an-uncertain-brazilian-future/
3. Lula was convicted and jailed in April 2018.
4. See Gregory Duff Morton's gripping account of this violence against rural social-movement leaders: www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/03/05/blood-on-the-land-in-brazil/.
5. This was the expulsion of the Trotskyist tendency Socialist Convergence, whose activists founded the Unified Socialist Workers Party in 1994. For more on internal dynamics of the PT, see Dan La Botz's (2015) previous *New Politics* article, Francisco de Oliveria's (2006) *New Left Review* article, João Machado's reflections on building a Trotskyist tendency within the PT at www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article25353, among many other sources.
6. The following analysis is based directly on my forthcoming book, *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (Oxford University Press).
7. For more information on this history, see: Branford & Rocha, 2002; Carter, 2015; Fernandes, 1996; Fernandes & Stédile, 2002; Poletto, 2015; Wright & Wolford, 2003.
8. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* became a reference for clergy following liberation theology and, in particular, was used in the Basic Ecclesial Communities (*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*).
9. Krupskaya was Lenin's wife and the Soviet

Union's Deputy Minister of Education from 1929 to 1939; Pistrak worked in the Ministry of Education in the 1920s and 1930s; Makarenko was a Ukrainian educator who set up a school for war orphans after the 1917 revolution. I have written extensively about the MST's use of these Soviet pedagogies in the other venues (Tarlau, 2012, 2015b).

10. The total number of families living in occupied encampments and settlements is not captured in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, as these graphs only show the number of *new* land occupations and *new* families issued land rights in settlements each year.

11. These numbers represent all land occupations, not only MST-led land occupations, as there are dozens of organizations in Brazil that occupy land. Researchers at NERA (the Nucleus of Research on Agrarian Reform) only began recording the organization leading the occupations in 2000. Between 2000 and 2016, the MST led 63 percent of all land occupations.

12. Interestingly, Mauro (2017) critiques the Brazilian left's *pinça* (tweezer) strategy of "compet[ing] in the institutional realm with the goal of strengthening social movements," claiming that the institutional dispute became the strong arm and social movements the weak arm. Nonetheless, Mauro also defends the MST's attempt to combine these political and social struggles, emphasizing the movement's investment in the political-ideological formation of its base, which has made the MST a "worldwide reference for political formation." Juarez Guimarães elaborated the "estratégia da pinça" (tweezer strategy) in 1990.

13. especiais.gazetadopovo.com.br/eleicoes/2018/pesquisas-eleitorais/cnt-mds/pesquisa-cntmda-para-presidente-maio-2018/ (accessed 5/29/18).

14. As I am writing this article in May 2018, Brazil is in political economic chaos as truck drivers are striking throughout the country over gasoline prices.

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1968: The Year of Dangerous Living

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

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INTRODUCTION

By Martin Oppenheimer

THE YEAR OF DANGEROUS LIVING” was written for the twentieth anniversary of 1968. The “68ers” were still young in 1988, in the prime of their lives, and memories were fresh. There was an explosion of protests against campus racism, gay-bashing, and increasing corporatization of universities (including union-busting). These baby-boomers, then hitting the big 4-0, were nostalgic. There was a sense that despite a Republican president, the moment was ripe for new efforts that required a serious appraisal of past campaigns.

This year, at the fiftieth anniversary, the “68ers” are on Medicare, those who are still alive, and what was still news thirty years ago is now history. Again we have a Republican president. We still have campus (and society-wide) racism, perhaps even more virulent than back then. The corporatization of the university is virtually complete. Instead of one war against which we were able (well, more or less) to unite, there are many wars. A nation-wide, large-scale peace movement to oppose U.S. imperialism, in vivid contrast to 1968, does not exist.

There has been dramatic growth in politi-

cal activity in reaction to the Trump regime's efforts to return the nation to the 1920s. That growth has taken many forms: Black Lives Matter is the main component of the continuing civil rights movement. #MeToo spearheads feminism at the moment. Democratic Socialists of America's growth among young people has been impressive. However, DSA's day-to-day activities, scattered among a dozen different reform issues, are but a shadow of the sixties' New Left that promised to create an entirely new world. Other issues have drawn the attention of millions: Medicare for all; gun control; gender rights in their many dimensions; the eternal issues of inequality, poverty and the oppression of people of color here and abroad; and many more, each issue evoking intense emotions and demanding priority attention. Which issues directly challenge capitalism and which are achievable reforms within the existing system? Does it even matter? This is a discussion that has barely begun.

The largest political phenomenon that has developed in reaction to Trump, however, has been on the electoral front, led by an upsurge of women entering politics, often for the first time, mostly within the confines of the Democratic Party. The last paragraph of this 1988 essay poses questions that haunt us once again: Will all this energy be squandered, will those reforms be diluted? Or can these campaigns be widened into a broader struggle against a rising tide of ethno-nationalism and

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proto-fascism and for social transformation?

In 1968 many on the left seriously believed that revolution was around the corner. Not only some revolutionaries, but even many guardians of order were surprised when, at the end of the American War in Southeast Asia, it all seemed to fizzle out. But that dismal view overlooked the complexity of history. The student New Left, the civil rights and the feminist movements had placed on the political agenda issues that would see advances and retreats, victories and backlashes over the years ever since. Organizations on the left would come and go, split and merge. The structure of the economy would generate many changes in working conditions and these changes would be reflected in the continuing decline of some sectors of the labor movement while others would rise, as we see today in the field of

public education.

It is a myth that the veterans of the sixties sold out and just faded away to suburbia and plush jobs in the academy or on Wall Street. Many civil rights veterans, both Black and white, continued the campaign for equal rights and protections, a good number from hard-won electoral positions. Veterans of the student movement in the academy in fact succeeded to a considerable degree in their war on hegemonic ideologies that served the status quo. Many, perhaps most, sixties veterans, then joined the workforce as teachers, social workers, journalists, union organizers. One sees in today's activists the influence of their own parents and even grandparents. And their children, in turn, are visible on the frontlines, wearing pussy hats and singing the old songs: "We Shall Overcome!"

THE 1960S HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED. Within the past year more than a dozen trade books on the sixties have been published, five on the year 1968 alone.¹ Nearly that many films are either in production or already on screen. College courses on the decade are proliferating, and crowded. Reunions of 1960s veterans, from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and from Columbia strikers to alternative newspaper staffers, are being held.

This explosion of interest has many sources: a curiosity among some students now involved in the birthpangs of a new New Left; a frontlash against campus racism, gay-bashing, and administrative conservatism (including union-busting); the nostalgia of the baby-boomers, now hitting the big 4-0; the sense that despite a Bush victory (or perhaps because of it), the moment is ripe for new efforts that require serious appraisals of past campaigns.

Journalistic retrospectives have under-

lined the sentimental, the sensational, the violent—and the sellouts by movement "stars." The less sensational, longer-term positive political and cultural effects, mostly due to the mundane day-to-day work of rank-and-filers outside the camera's eye, are lost to public view. If we define the New Left very broadly to include all the radicals of the baby-boomer generation outside the old sects, both black and white, then James Miller's verdict seems just: "For all its failings, the New Left briefly affected the whole tone of political life in America, raising fundamental questions about the nature and limits of democracy in a modern industrial society."² It redefined the political map, moved political culture onto new battlegrounds where the contests still rage today: racism, sexism, the environment, and (closer to traditional socialist concerns) participation (including its corollary, the questioning of authority).

The prevailing wisdom is that the movements of the sixties wound down after 1968 or thereabouts, and ultimately failed.

This one-sided interpretation can easily be exploited to rationalize inaction or indeed reaction. Yes, the New Left failed as a revolutionary enterprise. As Hal Draper wrote, paraphrasing Rosa Luxemburg, in the pages of this journal (Vol. IV # 3, Summer 1965), "it is inevitable that all generations of radicals will fail—except the last, of course, which is not yet."

Not only some revolutionaries but even many guardians of order were surprised that the revolution failed to arrive on schedule. Instead, revolutionary organizations (self-defined or defined by others) were almost completely crushed in the years 1967-1972. But that misses a lot. Most immediately, the war did end, although the contribution of the peace movement will probably be debated for a long time. Other movements grew in numbers and political significance, placing on the political agenda a range of issues which otherwise would not even be in contest today. The women's movement perhaps raised more of them than any other (among them: rights to and on the job, reproductive rights, family violence, and even adoption law). The political struggle today over AIDS policy would not exist had it not been for the gay and lesbian movements of the late sixties. The intellectual guerrilla war against hegemonic ideologies serving the status quo continues today within academic disciplines. Its troops are mainly SDS grads. Campus labor unionism, one of the few flourishing fields of progressive activity today, would be unthinkable without the feminist movement (an essential component of clerical organizing) and its faculty counterparts (mainly male, frequently ex-New Left).

Another legacy of the sixties movements is the considerable number of Americans currently involved in grassroots activities ranging from the environment to anti-interventionism, the Sanctuary movement, civil liberties, human rights (East and West), housing the homeless, health issues, schools, and just plain local clean government. The '68ers, as they have been labelled by some historians, do not deserve the obituaries written for them

by cynics and turncoats.

THE YEAR 1968 HAS BECOME a symbol for the entire decade of sixties activism in the various debates about the successes and failures of the New Left. These debates focus particularly on the anti-war movement (in an attempt to rewrite history and thereby sustain a super Cold War interventionist foreign policy) and the student movement (in an allied attempt by educational conservatives to maintain their entente cordiale with the corporate world). Many movement activists believed that the worldwide convulsions they were witnessing, and participating in, marked the beginning of the end of capitalism (and perhaps of Moscow's version of Communism as well). It was the 1812 of the New Left: Napoleon cutting down monarchy after monarchy to the very gates of Tsarism. And then the great retreat. As Kasiakas tells us, "At first, the highest circles of power could do little but watch with horror. ... As subsequent events made clear, however, the enemies of the New Left were far from defeated. ... Counter-revolutionary violence became prevalent in 1968. ... The hopes of the New Left were dashed against the hard rocks of reality."³

But 1968 is a distorted stand-in for the sixties. High tides help in understanding the motion of the ocean, but are not synonymous with it. Therefore 1968 should be approached as a symptom rather than as a symbol. The events of that year radicalized hundreds of thousands throughout the world, even though their forces were frequently defeated and their organizations left in shambles. The cruel resistance of the status quo was itself part of the radicalization process. Romanticizing those heady times, however, can be as dangerous as an overly defeatist interpretation for those seeking guidance to future strategies.

The year opened in late January with what has been interpreted by many on the left as a great defeat for the American military: the South Vietnamese National Liberation

Front's (NLF's) Tet Offensive, lasting from January 29 to March 31, in which Saigon was penetrated and more than 3,000 American soldiers died. It became clear to the U.S. command that the NLF had not been exhausted and that a continuation of the war would be extremely costly in both troops and funds. More troops would have to be sent and/or aerial bombardment stepped up. The political costs were no less high. Witness that President Johnson felt compelled, in the face of a rising tide of anti-war sentiment and Eugene McCarthy's unexpected strength in the New Hampshire Democratic primary, to announce that he would not stand for re-election.

By the end of 1968 the U.S. had dropped more munitions on Vietnam in the course of that war than it had dropped in all of World War II. After Tet "the full force of U.S. power was launched against the defenseless population of South Vietnam," Chomsky and Herman assert.⁴ Bombardment, including of the North, continued for four more years. Vietnam has not yet recovered. The fiscal, political, and military costs of the war led eventually to its phasing out and conclusion during Nixon's second term, but that was more years later than all of either World War I or II.

The impression that Tet was a victory for the NLF (and indirectly for the U.S. peace movement because it demonstrated that the war could not be won on the ground) is oversimplified at best. Many in the U.S. military (and millions of Americans at home) reacted by calling for the application of still greater force, believing that unlimited firepower was

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bound to bring victory and that it was only the political cowardice of politicians at home that stood in the way. That attitude is still with us. It takes the form of a need to rationalize the loss of the war, project it onto someone else, and avenge the nation's honor in some other place on the globe.

BY THE END OF 1967, according to Todd Gitlin, nearly a half-million American troops were in Vietnam; 15,000 of them had been killed, 60 percent in the single year of 1967.⁵ On November 30, 1967, Eugene McCarthy declared his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination on what amounted to an anti-war platform. This

seemed to be the political culmination of the rapid growth of the anti-war movement, which had shown its strength in ever-larger demonstrations and mobilizations, the best-known at the Pentagon that October. New third parties such as California's Peace and Freedom Party also played a role in moving some Democratic candidates in a doveish direction.

Yet 1967 had also provided significant clues to the continuing strength and repressive potential of the power structure. Some of its weight would be felt by the anti-war movement, as with the indictments of such peace activists as Benjamin Spock and a number of draft resisters. More decisively, the government soon made it abundantly clear that radical black protest, whether in the form of urban riots or armed self-defense, would not be tolerated.

By 1967 systematic police repression had clearly become the order of the day. Riots in urban ghettos across America, began in 1964 (Harlem) continued in 1965 (Watts) and grew each year afterward. As the riots spread, local, state, and national governments responded with overwhelming force. In the Newark riot of July 12-17, 1967, the National Guard was called out; 23 people were killed.

The Black Panther Party, which had gone national in 1964, staged its march onto the floor of the California State Legislature, guns in hand, in May, 1967; Bobby Seale, a Panther founder, and five others were sentenced to six months in prison. "For the next four years," Dick Cluster tells us, "one or both of the party's founders was in prison at all times."⁶ The FBI engaged in a national campaign to disrupt the party by every conceivable means. (It also engaged in a campaign of harassing Martin Luther King Jr.) From March 1968 to December 1969, 19 Panthers or fellow-travelers were killed. In April 1968, Panther Bobby Hutton was shot by Oakland police as he was surrendering with his hands in the air. In perhaps the best-known of these incidents, the Chicago police killed Panthers Fred

Hampton (asleep and apparently drugged at the time) and Mark Clark during a raid on December 4, 1969. Seale was constantly on trial: as part of the famous "Chicago Eight" in 1969, and as late as 1970 as one of the "New Haven 14," charged with the murder of an alleged police informer. The civil rights movement had by this time discovered that urban issues such as poverty, jobs, housing, education, and police brutality were not as amenable to nonviolent tactics as the integration of lunch counters or even the right to register to vote. Moreover, its urban constituency of working-class and "underclass" blacks, especially youth, was more sympathetic to the rhetoric of black nationalism and even violence than to the language of reconciliation and prayer. Martin Luther King Jr.'s attempt to revive that movement by infusing it with a more radical content came to an abrupt end with his assassination on April 4, 1968.

In instantaneous response, riots broke out in 138 cities. About 60,000 soldiers were called out to suppress them. As Jerome H. Skolnick put it, "Never before in this country [had] such a massive military response been mounted against racial disorder."⁷

Although the Panthers were able to continue to recruit despite increasing repression, managing to organize chapters in 45 cities by 1969, police violence, surveillance, and infiltration began to take their toll. Eldridge Cleaver split the Party and left for Algeria in 1971, and shortly thereafter an apparently chastened Huey P. Newton (who had spent three years in prison) called for less revolution and more emphasis on local service programs.

YET IT WAS STUDENTS, not militant minorities or radical workers, who made 1968 famous. "From Peking to Prague and Paris to Berkeley," Katsiaficas tells us, "students sparked the movements which marked 1968, and ... it was their international practice ... which made the New Left a global movement."⁸ *Le Monde* reported student protest activities (ranging in their

targets from simple solidarity with students in another country to university reform, to “external” matters such as the Vietnam War, military dictatorship, repression of strikes, and/or police brutality) in some 50 countries between April 1 and June 30 alone.

The “causes” of this spontaneous international uprising are still being debated, but some seem clear enough: the gathering of large numbers of students on huge campuses as the universities expanded; the increasingly central role of universities in the “global system of production” (research, the production of a technically trained labor force, and the indoctrination of young people with the values of class-oppressive cultures), and the friction between the rhetoric of critical thinking and the reality of ideologies of domination. These factors were part of the underpinning, a necessary if not sufficient condition for protest.

But specific grievances were required to trigger particular movements in different countries, and the contagion factor, promoted by modern media, contributed heavily as a subculture of youth protest swept from country to country.

The specifics varied widely. Antiquated university practices and outdated facilities, combined with conservative if not reactionary faculties, suddenly confronted the requirements of rapid modernization and integration into advanced capitalism. The creaking remnants of feudalism, as in West Germany or Italy, suddenly had to deal with twin enemies: modernization and rationalization, and masses of students. When rationalization then arrived in authoritarian clothing, explosions were inevitable.

In West Germany many on the left, especially students, felt that the Social-Democratic party had degenerated into a stodgy, bureaucratic handmaiden of the German “economic miracle.” Superimposed on this was the educational establishment’s selective amnesia about the war, and the continuing presence on many campuses, well into the sixties, of professors who had served the Nazis.

It wasn’t difficult for a German student in the late sixties to be utterly revolted by the entire culture, including the other gray bureaucrats East of the “iron curtain.”

By 1967 the German new left was well-entrenched in West Germany’s rapidly expanding university system. In June 1967, a student was shot to death by police in West Berlin during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran. Thousands poured into the streets. By that time the Easter Marches for disarmament had been going on for some years in Britain and West Germany. On March 11, 1968, just days after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, Rudi Dutschke, a leader of the German SDS, was shot down by a loner apparently under the sway of anti-radical hysteria fostered by the gutter press. (Dutschke would die several years later of complications caused by the bullet.) Large demonstrations, including occupations of university facilities, took place with some unions’ support. However, the mass movement phase quickly passed. The West German legislature enacted a series of repressive laws and sections of the student left responded by going underground.

The German radicals’ sense that their movement was part of a world historical moment (with Paris but an overnight train ride away) certainly helped it to grow, but also contributed to an illusion that the state was more vulnerable, the revolutionary moment nearer at hand, than was really the case. The stage was set for self-defeating romantic adventurism (an adventurism aided and abetted, perhaps more in Germany than elsewhere, by police agents).

Italian events closely paralleled those in West Germany. University reform and student power were the central issues, but later on the student movement also addressed itself to working-class issues. Encouraged by the general strike in France, Italian new leftists hoped the revolt would spread to workers in Italy. Indeed, there was a massive wave of strikes in the fall of 1969, but as in France,

the official leadership of the left negotiated settlements with capital that served to cool the situation.

In Czechoslovakia, students acted as important auxiliaries in a much broader movement of reform and independence from Stalinism. However, the mass movement that arose in response to the reforms instituted by the new party leadership under Dubcek in early 1968 fell victim to massive repression from outside, as Soviet troops invaded the country on August 20. There was resistance, and even as late as November students struck the university system. Nevertheless, despite an accord with workers organizations, the movement could not overcome arrests and other forms of repression backed by the "temporary" stationing of Soviet troops in the country.

Of all the events of '68 abroad, the May events in France were perhaps the most spectacular and, as many see it, came closest to revolution. In less than a month, what began as protests around student issues had spread from campus to workplace, as militant workers seized control of their factories. Even some municipal governments were taken over. At one point in late May, half the labor force was on strike.

What might be termed the multiple crises of a modern capitalist state were uniquely joined in France: the legacy of protest against colonial wars in Algeria and Indo-China meant that there were large numbers of experienced activists. The continuation of the Vietnam War by France's NATO ally, the United States, contributed a stark reminder that the colonial issue was not yet settled. The French educational system was more antiquated (both in its facilities and attitudes) than perhaps any other in the industrialized world.

The idea of socialism, and indeed revolution, enjoyed much more support among French workers than among those of most other Western European countries well into the sixties. What is more, by 1968 French workers were under severe economic pressure. Their white-collar working-class colleagues,

especially in the technical-professional stratum, were more attuned to the radical notion of workers' control and self-management than in other countries.⁹ The slender fuse lit by the students led, therefore, to a far greater explosion than anyone had anticipated.

The French establishment reacted by seeking to buy off the workers, holding the threat of force in reserve. De Gaulle was apparently prepared to move in the military should other measures fail. Instead, huge wage increases and other benefits were offered. When workers turned them down, the French Communist Party and its union federation, the CGT, went into action to cool off and coopt the movement. By June the students had been isolated from the workers. The revolutionary moment had passed.

IN THE UNITED STATES, mass protest against the increasingly brutal war grew rapidly in the fall of 1967 and throughout most of '68. There were bloody police attacks on a series of anti-draft demonstrations in October 1967, in Oakland. Student unrest, demonstrations, and strikes were not only aimed at the war; there were protests, frequently culminating in building takeovers, on a range of other issues. At Columbia the motivation was complicity with the war machine plus expansion into and destruction of surrounding neighborhoods. At San Francisco State and Cornell it was demands raised by black students. At the University of Connecticut it was recruitment by Dow Chemical. Repression, sometimes bloody, became the order of the day, with the April 23-30 Columbia University strike foreshadowing the violence at the Democratic Party convention the following August. This period may indeed have been the "high-water mark of SDS and the student left," as Irwin Unger argues,¹⁰ but the fact is that the immediate goals of both the white student New Left and the black student movement were defeated.

Outside the university as well, activists in the anti-war and anti-racist movements

suffered intense repression. Even when the media depicted police brutality in full force (as in Chicago), the general public remained hostile to “hippie draft-dodgers” and condoned police actions. The strategy of direct confrontation adopted by the New Left to the virtual exclusion of other tactics antagonized many Americans. Seemingly endless and expensive trials and appeals drained the movement of resources, despite the frequent acquittals and reversals of convictions. A movement is inevitably equated with its most violent component by the mainstream media, and quickly isolated in the absence of wider support for “extremist” tactics. A significant portion of the SDS leadership had by now succumbed to the myth that repression was a symptom of the imminent collapse of the system. They wrote off the public as pitifully brainwashed and considered the working class hopelessly bourgeoisified. Some saw themselves as the agents of Third World revolution, operating within the belly of the beast. These notions further isolated SDS and paved the way to a futile underground existence.

There were, of course, other factions within SDS and other New Left organizations, several of which gave at least lip service to a “student-worker alliance.” Within the New University Conference (NUC), a quasi-SDS graduate society consisting mainly of academics, there was a “Sleeping Giant Caucus,” which was quite clear on the need for outreach to working-class constituencies. However, most of this “workerist” attitude was more rhetoric than reality, and even when it represented an attempt at a serious reappraisal of strategy, it was too little and too late. NUC, founded in March 1968, voted itself out of existence in June 1972 and turned over its records to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The strategy of repression, well-established by 1967, continued to wreak havoc on militants during 1968-1970. The hot summer following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. resulted in some 50 deaths, 11 of them

(including three policemen) in a shootout in Cleveland, Ohio. On April 6, Bobby Hutton was killed after a gun battle with Oakland police, and Eldridge Cleaver and other top Panthers arrested. In September, Oakland police shot up the offices of the Black Panther Party, apparently in retaliation for what they thought was an overly mild sentence for Huey P. Newton, convicted on manslaughter charges (even that was later overturned). This event was part of the background to the San Francisco State strike, which ended with 453 arrests on January 23, 1969, making college president S.I. Hayakawa’s day, and reputation.

In April 1969, Berkeley students, hippies, and assorted hangers-on seized a building lot that had been leveled by the University of California, and declared it to be a “People’s Park.” On May 15, police sealed the area off, fenced it in, and when a large crowd advanced to retake the park, opened fire with shotguns. That night, Governor Reagan sent in the National Guard. Later the Guard dropped teargas from the air onto a campus rally. The fence remained for some time.

THE GENERALLY ACCEPTED DIAGNOSIS of the SDS convention in Chicago that June was “implosion.” The organization could not survive the factionalism that had by that time developed; to say the convention was acrimonious is an understatement. The “Stalinist” faction (Maoists led by the Progressive Labor Party) was expelled in a bureaucratic fashion often associated with Stalinism. Then the expellers left the floor, creating a situation in which, technically, the expelled continued to be the official SDS! SDS collapsed as a national organization soon thereafter. Its most famous surviving faction developed into the Weather Underground.

Paradoxically, May 1970 marked the peak of the student movement almost a year after SDS had disappeared from the scene. U.S. troops invaded Cambodia on April 30. In the first week of May, 30 ROTC buildings were burned or bombed and many others occupied.

Besides the four students killed at Kent State by Guardsmen and two more at Jackson State by police a week later, nearly a hundred were killed in other incidents, and almost 2,000 were arrested in that period. Washington DC came to a standstill the weekend of May 9, as more than 100,000 people demonstrated, a number of them violently. By the end of May, Katsiaficas reports, more than 900 colleges and universities were or had been on strike.

Although students and anti-war activists received sporadic support from some unions during this period, the kind of outreach to the working class that took place in France and Italy was lacking in the United States. Many trade union leaders even at that late date supported U.S. foreign policy, including the war, and collaborated with the CIA. Much of the student movement therefore thought it futile to attempt an alliance with unions. Although there were exceptions (outreach to anti-war GI's was one of them), the student anti-war movement, despite its strength in May 1970, failed to connect with wider constituencies that might have enabled it to move beyond the particular events of that moment. After that, to use Gitlin's expression, it was "fadeout" for the student movement and for the more radical sectors of other movements as well.

Yet, as Gitlin also reminds us, anti-war sentiment was on the rise, and "initiative passed into new hands." GI protest ranging from filing as conscientious objectors to "fragging" officers in Vietnam, conventional lobbying of Washington, the McGovern campaign, and ultimately the defection of significant sectors of the establishment that became convinced that the war had become too great a burden all contributed to ending the war. Undoubtedly, the New Left played a significant role in forcing the U.S. to withdraw from Vietnam. But by the time the war ended, the left was in disarray as an organized force and there was little cause for cheer over the prospects for radicalizing and restructuring society.

COULD THE COLLAPSE OF SDS and the subsequent fadeout of other radical elements have been avoided? Could their isolation have been overcome? In the United States of the late sixties and early seventies, probably not.

Clearly a major problem plaguing SDS and other New Left groups was an antagonism to the serious study of history and theory. Such concerns, it was felt, would only interfere with everyday "revolutionary" action and were associated with the presumed sectarianism and alleged inactivity of the old left. This anti-theoretical posturing only served to blind many New Leftists to the realities of post-revolutionary dictatorial societies such as Cuba and North Vietnam and to iconize such authoritarian figures as Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao. Given this theoretical near-vacuum, factional victories within New Left organizations usually went to those with the most powerful revolutionary rhetoric. It became next to impossible to maintain a critical stance, much less point out certain embarrassing historical facts. The problem of rhetorical excesses was exacerbated by the guilt-mongering of some blacks making it difficult for "white-skin-privileged" New Left students to deny any demand, no matter how unrealistic and self-defeating, without risking the charge of racism.

The admiration of authoritarian societies and personalities by vocal segments of the New Left, their frequent rhetorical excesses, precluded the possibility of the New Left as a whole from successfully reaching out to the working class, an indispensable component in any struggle for basic revolutionary change. It injected an unhealthy elitist element into the movement. It was not only *épater les bourgeois* but *épater* all those, including workers—the victims of capitalism—who did not share their super-revolutionism.

The other horn of the dilemma was that with few exceptions the leadership of the labor movement as well as most of the rank and file (at least the white part of it)

supported the war until quite late, and much of what passed for social democracy in the United States was far more eager to connect to labor bureaucrats than to relate to students. Even more-independent elements of the old left managed to erect political, psychological, and generational barriers to communication with most of the student left, especially SDS, as Maurice Isserman demonstrates.¹¹ The antagonism between the old and New Left fed itself; only a handful of old leftists (mostly independent socialists) had both the intelligence and the style to be able to talk to a few (usually older) New Leftists.

So the New Left, biased against careful reflection to begin with, had almost nowhere to turn for theoretical guidance even if they had been open to it. The handful of independent old leftists who tried to bridge this chasm could not prevent SDS' 1969 fiasco, and were incapable of diverting Custerist elements into more fruitful political avenues, assuming they had been clearly available. Although in the bleak months and years following the collapse of SDS an occasional glimpse of hope could be found (as in the mass demonstrations of 1970 and again in 1972), the white New Left, as well as radical blacks such as the Panthers, confronted a crisis stemming from mounting repression and their own internal disarray. As a result, many leftists simply lapsed into apathy, moving either into cultural "revolt" (music, drugs) or conventional careers, a retreat from commitment popularized and trivialized by such films as "The Big Chill" and "The Return of the Secaucus Seven."

Even more self-destructive was the road to the underground, an adventurist policy necessarily restricted to tiny numbers. How many Americans were ready to face a sentence at Attica where 43 people, including guards, were killed in 1971?

Most activists opted for the politics of reform and moderation. In a capitalist society flexible enough to permit reforms when pressured, yet strong enough to repress "extrem-

ism," the gradualist approach appeared to them to be the most effective one. But there is a thin line between reform and cooption, and between reforms that seriously challenge the structure of society and those designed to stabilize the system. While the three major movements of the sixties, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, and the black movement, had radical wings, none was a revolutionary movement. To speak of betrayal as some do, therefore misses the point.

By the time the Saigon regime collapsed in April 1975, the steam had gone out of the anti-war movement. Nixon and Kissinger's diplomatic dealings seemed to make mass demonstrations irrelevant, and the Weather Underground superfluous.

"ALL THE LESSONS OF CHICAGO are bad," Carl Oglesby, a former SDS president was quoted as saying.¹² Were all the lessons of 1968 bad? Focusing on the headline events, as we have seen, misses much of the essence of the movements of the sixties, including the impact of participation on the consciousness of hundreds of thousands of people. There is, as we glean from current reminiscences, the pride of having participated in history: Those days gave meaning to life. There is, more importantly, the profound awareness that individuals can make a difference, something the New Left called "empowerment." That is an important component of today's campaigns, whether they involve organizing shelters for battered women, closing nuclear plants, publishing radical journals, sheltering Salvadorian refugees, or fighting plant closings.

The tragedy of the New Left was that, confronted by massive political repression, it came to the conclusion that it was witnessing the system's last gasp and engaged in a kind of romantic revolutionism that isolated it. The glory of the New Left was that it raised the possibility of a humanist revolution in an era when revolution in the "post-industrial" world had presumably been ruled out by

material well-being and the cooption of every rebellious symbol. Socialists knew full well that “the end of ideology” was a myth, but it took the student New Left to shatter the myth in practice.

Not all the survivors of those glorious and tragic days have simply gone on to lead yuppie lives. Tens of thousands are active on behalf of worthwhile reforms. Insofar as they connect these reforms to the electoral structure of the Democratic Party their energy will be squandered and the reforms diluted, a lesson made more explicit than ever by the 1988 presidential campaign. The problem remains that we lack a nationwide party of the left to widen the campaigns for social amelioration into a broader struggle for social transformation. Without such a party, we are doomed to live out our political lives chipping away at this or that social ill, but incapable of altering the basic nature of this system.

NOTES

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2. Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 320.

3. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*, 73.

4. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (South End Press, 1979), 313.

5. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 242.

6. Dick Cluster (ed.), *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee* (South End Press, 1979), 43.

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The 1968 Columbia Rebellion

RICHARD GREEMAN

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AT 4 AM ON APRIL 30 [1968], my wife and I stood with tears streaming down our faces on the corner of Amsterdam Avenue and 117th Street, watching the last of the Fayerweather Hall sit-ins being tossed into waiting police vans. We were not the only ones crying, nor were the tears merely those of pity or self-pity. There was also anger, frustration, and actual joy. The incredible—and inevitable—had happened; the “Big Bust” had come. Seven hundred and twenty student and faculty protesters were under arrest; more than 130 had been beaten up, some quite badly. The last illusions about what was happening were shed.

The students’ spirit was magnificent. They were singing “We Shall Overcome,” loud and off key, as they waited to be thrown—not carried—into the vans. In the pre-dawn light, a procession of plainclothes cops with beards, long hair, and “student” clothes filed past us toward a police bus, making a weird contrast with the genuine article across the street. Inside the vans, the students continued to demonstrate. While the doors were left open, they sang. When doors were closed, the students banged on the steel walls and rocked the vans chanting, “Strike! Strike!” “V for victory” signs appeared inside the bars.

When we shouted across to ask if anyone was hurt, they answered, “Don’t worry about us. This is only the beginning,” and made the “V” sign. Despite all the cracked heads, the prevalence of police everywhere, and our evident powerlessness, we sensed that this was profoundly true. That is what brought tears to our eyes. Never, since the civil rights demonstrations of the mid-60s, had we felt such solidarity, such dedication and seriousness of purpose, such reasoned optimism in the face of mere force.

April 30 was in fact a beginning. The end has not yet been written. By 10:00 that morning, the Columbia University Student Council and dozens of student leaders representing a huge majority had come out in favor of a new general student strike, and by noon more than 300 faculty members including many Columbia “stars” had signed a statement condemning the administration and endorsing the new strike. Within 21 hours, a new strike committee had been formed, on the basis of seventy constituents to a delegate, representing everyone from SDS and the members of the five “communes” [groups who occupied five campus buildings] to graduate English students, anthropology majors, and conservatives. On a campus literally saturated by police, where at times even faculty members were refused access, dozens of meetings were taking place to elect delegates, frame demands, devise plans for administrative and curriculum reforms, and set up “liberated” classes. Amid chaos, a new kind of order was taking shape. As the wounded returned from

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jails and hospitals, the place took on the aura of a veterans hospital. The cracked heads, closed eyes, and bruised ribs were back on the job, organizing. At this writing, the new strike committee represents upwards of 5,000 students, and the strike, now in its 11th day, appears to be easily 85 percent successful in the college, graduate faculties, and School of General Studies. Moreover, the movement is reaching out in many directions: toward the community, the Poor Peoples March, the underpaid university workers; toward similar movements in the United States, Japan, Western and Eastern Europe; and toward a fresh approach to educational, philosophical, and political problems. Clearly, the strike marks a new beginning.

The Background

Julie Greeman and I attended the regular SDS meeting on April 22, the Monday night before it all began. (SDS has no membership requirements; even people around or over thirty are welcome.) Attendance was poor; the group was divided. A demonstration had been announced for the next day, in response to the administration's attack on the SDS leadership, but no one knew quite what to do. Many felt the group was isolated from the rest of the campus and that a militant action would fall flat and make SDS look ridiculous; they were for holding an educational rally with speeches. An optimistic handful felt Columbia was ripe for "another Berkeley" and presented a detailed scenario of increasingly militant actions for the week to come. None of these suggestions was ever put into practice, though the mood had been correctly gauged. The chairman, Mark Rudd, vacillated between the two positions, and the meeting slowly disintegrated as the members drifted off to crank the mimeo machines. All in all, the meeting was typical, and people who view SDS and the Columbia strike as part of a carefully worked-out conspiracy would do well to sit through such a meeting. Despite

the confusion over tactics, however, the three issues were already clear: the Jim Crow Gym, the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), and the discipline against student political demonstrators; that is to say, racism, the war, and the right to struggle.

The idea of taking over Morningside Park, the DMZ¹ between Columbia and West Harlem, for a college gym is clearly a case of institutional hubris, followed inevitably by blindness and ultimate catastrophe. The university's concession to community protest—add on a smaller, segregated gym with a separate entrance in the basement for the little black children—was a token gesture perfectly calculated to provoke greater anger. Even when Harlem's elected leaders, the parks commissioner, and the faculty of the School of Architecture protested, University President Grayson Kirk remained adamant. Since the groundbreaking this February, ministers, community leaders, and 26 students have been arrested in a series of non-violent protests—to no avail. As one Professor put it, "Columbia should thank the students, not punish them: they saved us 17 million. If the damn thing had gone up, Harlem would have burned it down anyway."

If the administration was blatant in its de facto racism, it at least tried to hide its complicity in the war machine. On March 23, 1967, Graduate Dean Halford told the troubled faculty, "Columbia has no institutional connection with IDA." A week later, the *Columbia Spectator* gave him the lie by revealing that Columbia had been a member since 1960 and that Dr. Kirk and Trustee Burden were on the IDA Executive Committee. IDA soon replaced NROTC², CIA, and Dow as the symbol of the Vietnam War. On campus there was a three day fast, a petition with 1,000 names, and countless teach-ins and demonstrations. To the indignation of faculty and students over secret napalm, riot-control, and counter-insurgency research going on in their midst, the administration could only reply, "These things are not in the

purview of faculty or students,” and “Columbia is definitely not a democratic institution.”

The issue of “student discipline” (to be distinguished from “student power”³³) arose out of the issues of war and racism. University President Kirk greeted his returning students last September with an arbitrary ban on indoor demonstrations aimed as a direct challenge to SDS, which had confronted recruiters from the CIA, Dow, the Marines, and Military Intelligence with great success the year before. With equal arbitrariness, the administration ignored several such indoor protests and then, when 150 students marched into Low Library with a petition of 1,700 against IDA on March 27, singled out Rudd and five other SDS leaders for punishment. Uniform punishment and an open hearing for the “IDA six” became an issue. Meanwhile, 26 others were facing serious criminal charges for attempting to block on-site construction of the gym. The demonstration planned for April 23 was an attempt to pick up the gauntlet so bluntly thrown down by the Kirk administration through a peaceful, if “illegal” mass rally inside Low. The famous Six Demands of SDS (in fact they boil down to three: the gym, IDA, fair discipline) were at once moderate and the culmination of years of more or less peaceful protest in the face of utter arrogance and indifference.

The Strike Begins

What actually happened on Tuesday, April 23, was chaotic and unplanned to say the least. The weather was fine and the SDS rally attracted a good crowd. Mark Rudd read a telegram from University Vice President Truman informing us that Low Library was locked but that he would gladly meet with us for a “dialogue” in a nearby auditorium. Rudd, who had evidently just received the message, seemed genuinely nonplussed. In good old SDS “participatory democracy” fashion, he put the thing to a vote before the somewhat motley assemblage. It was decided that it was

STUDENT REBELS WON'T GIVE UP



Richard Greenman shows what he claims was blood

Original photo and text appeared in the New York Post

a little too late for “dialogue” after so many rebuffs and punishments and, rather futilely, that we should march on Low anyway.

When the head of the march of about 300 reached Low, it was discovered that the doors were, in fact, locked and Rudd stood poised indecisively on a window ledge. Then someone shouted “on to the gym site” and Rudd, after a moment, took up the call.

In fact, only the head of the march ever reached the place, as no one in the back could hear Rudd. A section of the fence was torn down, and a few yards of enemy turf were held for about fifteen minutes in a seesaw pushing match with some precinct cops. One boy got pushed through the police line and was arrested. Then both sides called it a draw, and we marched back to the campus for another mass meeting.

By this time the crowd, the confusion, and the desire for confrontation had all grown,

as had our indecision. Since Dr. Truman could no longer be found for “dialogue” and Low was still locked, someone suggested going to Hamilton to confront Columbia College Dean Coleman, and we did. Coleman, however, was not in. He arrived from lunch shortly thereafter, refused to talk, and went into his office while three or four hundred students held a rally in the lobby. (At this point I absented myself for fifty minutes to hold a discussion on Spinoza upstairs, but little had changed when I returned.)

The idea of holding Dean Coleman hostage until the administration agreed to negotiate was never explicitly formulated but seemed to grow out of the situation. I am morally certain that Dean Coleman could have left during the early afternoon without physical harm, though with considerable discomfort and embarrassment. In any case, he himself has never stated that he was actually threatened. He was released without explanation after 25 hours.

As the afternoon drew on, more demonstrators arrived, although classes continued as usual in the occupied building. The black students from the Student Afro-American Society (SAS), who had hitherto just been part of the crowd, took up a station in front of the dean’s door while the SDS steering committee went upstairs to try to find out what they were doing. At one point, someone stuck a microphone in my hand, and I gave a short talk on student movements in Japan, Italy, and Eastern Europe and pointed out that it would be impossible to make a campus revolution while the whole world remained un-free. When I mentioned Czechoslovakia, there was loud applause. By 3 am, most of the white students were asleep, studying, or playing guitars upstairs while SAS held the fort in the lobby. I was not present when, at 5 am, it was decided that SAS alone would stay to occupy the building and that whites should find their own building to sit in.

The SAS decision to go it alone apparently resulted from two causes: the influ-

ence of certain Harlem leaders, including nationalists, who visited the building during the night, and the feeling that many of the whites were just along for a lark and would prove fearful, disunited, and undisciplined if a serious attempt were made to hold the building through the next day. (SAS is a very tightly knit group, more like a fraternity than a political society). With considerable bitterness, the whites left and moved to occupy President Kirk’s offices in Low. Later that morning, many of them left Low at the rumor of police, thus confirming some of SAS’s doubts. The real and magnificent solidarity among the non-SAS students developed only later in the day.

Since this issue of “separatism” is likely to be a sore point, let me at least mention a few circumstantial facts. 1) There were black students in all of the five buildings eventually occupied. 2) Although the administration repeatedly offered amnesty and a separate peace to the SASers in Hamilton (real racism-in-reverse), SAS always refused. 3) When Low was blockaded by counter-demonstrators, it was the blacks in Hamilton who ran in the food. 4) All groups had the same demands. 5) It was the unbeatable offensive-defensive combination of blacks in Hamilton, non-violent white students and faculty standing on the steps as a buffer between them and counter-demonstrators or police, plus the threat of Harlem raging a few blocks to the east that made the first stage of the strike possible.

The Mass Sit-In

Within a day, three more buildings were occupied. Avery, the architecture building, was taken over by graduate architecture students and faculty, who held a marathon “design-in” to a plan a new gym and a better Harlem. Avery was never locked or barricaded, and the occupants were totally non-violent. Significantly, it was at Avery that the worst police atrocities, including the deliberate beating of

the *Times* reporter, took place a week later. Fayerweather was taken over by a rather heterodox group of graduate and undergraduate students, many sporting McCarthy⁴ buttons. Mathematics, the last building to be occupied, was seized by colonists from Low when the latter building became too crowded. There were easily 1,000 sit-in strikers by the end, and more than 720 were actually arrested while many escaped the police raid. The administration deliberately minimized the strikers' numbers, calling them a "handful." This hypocritical mendacity led to much of the brutality of "Bloody Tuesday," since the police claim they were not prepared for such numbers. They panicked, lost control, and threw in detachments, including the notorious plainclothes squads, who were not properly commanded or briefed for the mission.

Since I was present in the occupied buildings only briefly and as an observer, I will not presume to describe the life in the "communes" that week. I can, however, clarify a few points from my personal knowledge. 1) *Vandalism*: Most of it was perpetrated by the police, both during and after the evacuation of the buildings, as has been documented by films taken on the spot and the testimony of members of the volunteer medical teams and by Dr. Kenneth Clark. The students broke a lamp and pilfered sherry and cigars in Dr. Kirk's office during the early hours of the occupation. They created considerable disorder in his files when they xeroxed private documents on Columbia expansion, corporate relations, and military work. Later, they cleaned up and even vacuumed. They also used furniture in four buildings for barricades, and littered the buildings with sleeping bags, cameras, tape recorders, radios, and so on, most of which disappeared unaccountably after the police raid. There was little or no deliberate damage done. 2) *Coercion*: The sit-in strike, traditional in labor and civil rights movements, is a form of moral and physical coercion. Aside from the ambiguous captivity of Dean Coleman, wisely abandoned after

25 hours, this was the only coercion used. Any assertions to the effect that half-hearted students were bullied into remaining by hop-headed super-revolutionary students or outsiders (sic) are pure fabrications. The comings, goings, and shift in population among buildings were free and collective decisions arrived at through the most lengthy and parliamentary political discussions imaginable.

HERE IS HOW IT LOOKED from the inside:

During the week in Low I had a strong sense of being part of an historic experience in group living. The self-organization of the 100 people crowded into three rooms was magnificently spontaneous and democratic. Since we lived in relatively crowded quarters, it was impossible to escape the political discussions, which occupied most of our time. The Low communards included experienced radicals of many diverse political tendencies—SDSers, PLers, Trotskyites, Marxist-Humanists, and vanguardists of the Mao/Castro/Che bent—as well as younger students who had little political experience other than in anti-war marches. Yet everyone in Low shared the same basic commitment against the Columbia administration, and everyone eagerly discussed and debated politics and tactics, sharing political experience and forging a political line out of their diverse backgrounds.

Discussion was long, sometimes heated, yet, at the same time, open and democratic. We discussed the significance of amnesty at every meeting, reaffirming our "hard line" to keep up our spirit and to solidify the political position of the other buildings. We discussed the question of access to our windows (we were on the second floor)—a vital point for our survival and for our lines of communication to other buildings—and arrived at the conclusion that the faculty cordon below us represented a threat to our sit-in that stemmed from the

faculty's lack of understanding of our political commitment. Discussion on each question lasted about an hour and was followed by a straw vote. If the vote was close, discussion continued longer until a consensus was reached. This process, often maligned as nondemocratic, seems to me to have been completely democratic in that decisions were arrived at by everyone agreeing and sticking to a position that came out of lengthy debates in which parliamentary procedure was less important than political and tactical correctness.

In between debates, the Low communards continued talking, playing cards, singing, and getting to know each other. Our openness and spontaneity of debate carried over into the mundane tasks of eating and cleaning up. We ate twice a day and cleaned up our living quarters before each meal. Everyone pitched in to these tasks, and no leaders were needed to tell people to work. Far from being vandals, the Low communards were careful not to destroy Dr. Kirk's office. Furniture was moved to barricade doors, a vase was accidentally broken, Dr. Kirk's cigars and tobacco were sampled, but great care was taken not to destroy property wantonly. In fact, one of our excellent technicians fixed Dr. Kirk's Xerox machine and repaired the telephone switchboard, which the Campus Security Police had ripped out on the first day of occupation. Any broken furniture or torn books did not result from vandalism on the part of demonstrators in Low; the damage done to Dr. Kirk's offices was caused by police axes in their attempt to discredit our protest.

The freeness, spontaneity, sense of political commitment, camaraderie, and democratic atmosphere among the 100 demonstrators in Low was the most beautiful part of my experience. There are thousands of incidents which come to mind now which might make my description of what went on clearer: the fact that 100 shared one bathroom and

cheerfully waited on long lines to use it; or the fact that each day a new rumor about cops sent us into short-lived panic until we all realized that worrying about these rumors did no good, whereas joking about them did pass the time. But the spirit and sense of disciplined political commitment shared by the Low communards is best shown by the actions just before, during, and immediately after the Big Bust.

We heard the bust was coming at about 12:30 Tuesday morning. Our reaction was not to panic but to sit down and have a last political discussion about how to face the cops. We affirmed our earlier agreement to resist by barricading the windows and doors and by standing together with arms linked—all of us together in one room. Several comrades wanted to resist more actively in another room. We affirmed our guiding principle that all must act as one or not at all; thus our more militant friends were asked to leave. After they reaffirmed their solidarity with us and our commitment, and after each of us personally shook each of their hands or embraced them, the few militant comrades went out a window to join the crowd below to try to fight the cops. The rest of us linked arms and began singing, "We Shall Overcome," "Solidarity Forever," and, finally, "We Shall Not Be Moved." We sang verses of this last song for a half hour while the cops used axes on the barricaded doors.

The TPF [Tactical Police Force or "riot squad"] entered the room and for 15 minutes stood dazed watching us swaying in our circle of linked arms singing, "Cops don't scare us. We shall not be moved. ... We're black and white together. ... We'll be back tomorrow" and so on. Then Sid Davidoff, Mayor Lindsay's peace-maker cop-tamer, asked us over a bull-horn to leave without arrests. We drowned his voice with our singing, and the TPF went to work. The cops ripped us one by one from our circle. They pulled hair, arms, heads, or clubbed people down then

kicked, clubbed, or punched us along a meticulously arranged gauntlet of cops. The gauntlet was about 100 yards long, with each cop getting his shot at each of us. Once past the line, we re-formed our circle, and although we were weary, injured, and bloody, we faced the TPF again and began singing, "Cops don't scare us ... We'll be back tomorrow ... We shall not be moved." After a night in jail in which we agitated the cops about our political moral principles, we were all back on campus pushing to broaden and deepen our struggle at Columbia, which had now become a general strike.

Amnesty

Many people cannot understand why the students were adamant on this question. I, myself, had doubts until the political implications came clear. Most of the faculty, although sympathetic to the students' objectives, balked both at their tactics and insistence on amnesty; hence the ambiguous role of the ad hoc faculty group as mediators. In time, however, the implications became clear. 1) The students had, for years, exhausted legal means of protest and been rebuffed. The administration had taught them that only these "illegal" means would work. Hence, if one accepted the goals, one had to accept the tactics and the demand for amnesty. 2) The rules broken were arbitrarily made and unilaterally applied by the administration, a party to the dispute. Hence, the legitimacy of the proposed punishment was questionable. 3) Practically, there were only two alternatives: amnesty or the cops. By the weekend the vast majority of previously uncommitted students had seen this and chosen amnesty (signified by a green armband). The failure of the ad hoc faculty group to face this basic choice was its fundamental weakness, despite the sincerity, personal bravery, and genuine concern of its members.

At this writing, the original IDA six, the 26 gym protesters, and seven hundred oth-

ers still face criminal charges and university discipline for their political role. Amnesty is still an issue.

The Big Bust

Since I had the dubious privilege of being the first victim of "excessive" police force (four stitches) at Columbia during the first, and abortive, police raid during the early hours of Friday, April 26, I may speak with some authority. I was clubbed by a plainclothes cop for the "crime" of asking his identity and business in front of Low Library while I was part of a non-violent faculty peace-keeping contingent that included many department chairs and full professors. Vice President Truman personally witnessed the results of this attack and expressed regret and amazement at what had happened. Although he expressed similar regret and amazement at the 130 hospitalized students, faculty, and clergy brutalized five days later under his and Dr. Kirk's orders, his credibility is somewhat less forceful the second time around.

While the clearing of Hamilton was done without any brutality (thanks to the threat of Harlem over the hill), the indiscriminate beatings, stomping, and clubbing of non-resisters, passive resisters, and spectators elsewhere was appalling. I will not tell my horror stories; the National Lawyers' Guild has hundreds on file for those interested and there are films and photos as well. A few remarks will suffice. The university and its health service made absolutely no provision for any eventuality. Volunteer medical teams were denied access to the wounded by the police, as were clergy (the Rabbi was beaten worst of all), and a medical station in South Field was overrun. The worst injuries were sustained by spectators, including pro-police counter-demonstrators, when South Field, an open space 100 yards from the occupied buildings, was "cleared" (actually, the people were herded into a closed corner and then beaten). Many uniformed police covered their

shields; the plainclothes cops wore no identifying marks (some were disguised as hippies) and were the most vicious. Neither our “cool” mayor, nor our “humanist” chief inspector, nor Drs. Kirk and Truman should be allowed to forget or live down the spectacle of all those bloody headed youngsters.

Yet brutality is not the issue at Columbia. The students, even those who never believed in police brutality before they experienced it, now understand it as integral to the society of war, racism, and administrative rule they live in. Even the demand for Kirk and Truman’s resignation was dropped after 21 hours. The issues remain: restructuring the university to provide for student and faculty voice in decisions, amnesty, the gym, IDA, no criminal charges, and the creation of a judicial committee on student discipline. They are hardly revolutionary; most progressive colleges have most or all. Yet the strike goes on and the administration remains basically inflexible, refusing to recognize the strike committee and proclaiming “business as usual.”

The students have changed, though. I can feel it when I meet my “liberated” classes. I, too, have been liberated—freed from the vile position of being a policeman to take attendance, give letter grades, push students through a required curriculum, demand conformity. I feel more like a scholar reading good books with younger scholars—which is what I hope I am. Students have also changed politi-

cally and philosophically. They are struggling to overcome the split between theory and practice, as well as the split between intellectual and manual worker. They are feeling and understanding the events in Poland, Mississippi, West Berlin, Paris, Harlem, and Czechoslovakia in a new way—from the inside. At last the world has come to Columbia. And the ripples coming out from Columbia into the world are yet to be felt.

NOTES

1. DMZ: Demilitarized Zone. An ironic reference to the supposedly neutral territory that separated North and South Vietnam just as Morningside Park separated the races and classes of Manhattan’s West Side.
2. NROTC: The Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps conducted on-campus training of Columbia students, who often attended their non-military classes in uniform.
3. “Student power,” the demand for student participation in curriculum and institutional planning, was not an issue in the strike. It came up later, as a liberal sop to the newly radicalized. Our issue was students’ right to political expression on campus without facing expulsion.
4. In 1968 anti-war Senator Eugene McCarthy was seeking the Democratic presidential nomination and was the “white hope” of the liberals. Radical students were encouraged to go “clean for Gene” by shaving their beards and campaigning in the primaries. McCarthy was pushed aside by the pro-war Democrats, and disillusioned youth rioted at the Democratic Convention in Chicago that August.

Marxism and Freedom after Sixty Years, for Yesterday and Today

KEVIN B. ANDERSON

IT IS THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*, a work both of its time and ahead of its time.

First published in 1958, at the height of the Cold War but not long after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, it was one of a number of writings in the period that put forth a democratic, humanist, and revolutionary Marxism, both against the Russian Stalinist system and against the "liberal democratic" capitalism of the United States and Western Europe. This was the same period when E. P. Thompson broke away from the British Communist Party over Hungary, and when Edgar Morin and others formed the Arguments Group in France, both of them reacting against the brutal Russian intervention in Hungary.

However, Dunayevskaya had broken with Stalinism some thirty years earlier and gone on in the 1940s to write economic analyses of the USSR as a totalitarian state-capitalist society. For her, therefore, the newness of Hungary 1956 lay not so much in any proof of the reactionary, anti-worker character of the Russian and East European Stalinist regimes as in the proof it offered that (1) contra Orwell and Arendt, totalitarianism could never extinguish the struggle for human liberation,

and (2) contra the Hungarian Revolution's liberal supporters, the emergence of workers councils and of the Marxist intellectuals of the Petoфи circle showed that a third way was possible—a socialist humanism that was entirely different from both Stalinism and Western liberalism. As she wrote with respect to the workers councils, "When all said that everything was over, the Hungarian Workers Councils sprung up. ... They began to fight in the factories, which they were using as their places of refuge. ... The workers evolved new ways of fighting, both on the job and when they walked out on strike" (256).

Another mass movement of the period, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956 in Alabama, also figured prominently in *Marxism and Freedom*. In her treatment of what is now seen as an epochal event that launched the civil rights movement, Dunayevskaya stressed its grassroots character, rather than the leadership of the newly prominent Martin Luther King Jr. She noted that the movement had no visible hierarchy, but was governed by mass meetings held as often as three times per week. She also singled out the fact that in boycotting the buses for over a year, the Black working class had to arrange its own informal transportation networks in the face of threats and repression from the state and the Ku Klux Klan.

In declaring, "Clearly, the greatest thing of all in this ... spontaneous organization was its own working existence," she was pointing to its revolutionary potential (281). For that phrase, "its own working existence," was the

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same one that Marx had employed in *The Civil War in France*, his seminal analysis of the Paris Commune: “The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence” (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm). So too for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the movement that launched over a decade of revolutionary activity on the part of Afri-

This “movement from practice to theory” was the underlying theme of *Marxism and Freedom*. It captured the spirit of an era that was to see mass social movements, many of them marked by spontaneity, in the 1960s and since.

can Americans and their allies, much of it based upon grassroots political activism and organizing rather than hierarchical forms of organization.

Dunayevskaya also singled out the new stage reached by the U.S. labor movement in the period just before the book appeared. On the one hand, workers were increasingly distancing themselves from the newly powerful labor bureaucracy, which stifled union democracy and had tied labor to the state ever since World War II. On the other hand, at a time of Fordist high wages in some major industries, the new stage of production represented by automation became a dividing line between rank-and-file workers and the political and economic establishment. And as she saw it, that establishment included not only the corporations, the government, and the liberal social scientists who advised capital and the state from the universities, but also the labor bureaucracy itself. For their part, rank-and-

file workers feared and opposed automation both because it was creating mass unemployment and because it was heightening the alienated labor in their workplaces. Workers, Dunayevskaya held, were demanding nothing less than the end of the division between mental and manual labor. She summed this up with a reference to the young Marx: “Thus, the workers, the American workers, made concrete and thereby extended Marx’s most abstract theories of alienated labor and the quest for universality” (276).

To Dunayevskaya, these three movements, the Hungarian workers councils, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the stirrings of rank-and-file labor against both automation and the labor bureaucracy, revealed a new stage of opposition to the rule of capital. This new opposition was emerging not from organized parties of the left or from inspiration from leftist intellectuals, but from the grassroots participants’ own life experience, from practice. Implicitly referring not only to Stalinism, social democracy, and liberalism, but also to orthodox Trotskyism, Dunayevskaya concluded with regard to these kinds of new social movements, “In truth, while the intellectual void today is so great that the movement from theory to practice has nearly come to a standstill, *the movement from practice to theory, and with it, a new unity of manual and mental labor in the worker, are in evidence everywhere*” (276; here and below, emphasis in original).

This “movement from practice to theory” was the underlying theme of *Marxism and Freedom*. It captured the spirit of an era that was to see mass social movements, many of them marked by spontaneity, in the 1960s and since. It was obviously a repudiation of the top-down politics of both social democracy and what is usually termed the Leninist vanguard party. In this sense, it anticipated not only the 1960s, but also events like the wave of revolutions and protests that have impacted so many countries since the Arab revolutions of 2011, from the Indignados in

Spain to Occupy Wall Street in the United States, and from Gezi Park in Turkey to Nuit Debout in Paris.

However, while Dunayevskaya believed firmly in the creativity of spontaneous, sometimes leaderless movements, she did not, either in *Marxism and Freedom* or in her writings afterwards, ever argue that the Marxist theoretician was therefore irrelevant or a mere bystander. It was, she held, a movement from practice to theory, not a spontaneous movement that had no need for Marxist theory. What she did argue was that the greatest revolutionary thinkers had absorbed into their philosophical perspectives the creativity of the movements from below of their times, while at the same time offering those movements some theoretical and political direction. And this had organizational implications as well. It differentiated Dunayevskaya from her erstwhile U.S. colleague, the great Afro-Caribbean Marxist C.L.R. James. Despite many commonalities with Dunayevskaya, James hewed to a more spontaneist position, as did other contemporary groups with positions similar to Dunayevskaya's, like *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, and later, the Italian *operaïstes*. As Frédéric Monferrand notes in his well-researched new preface to the 2016 French edition, "Thus, where C.L.R. James called after 1955 for the abolition of 'the distinction between party and mass,' the author of *Marxism and Freedom* never seems to have really renounced the need to form a revolutionary organization relatively autonomous from the social movements" (22).

With those kinds of questions in mind, let us look briefly at some of the key theoretical junctures in *Marxism and Freedom*.

The chapter on Hegel and the French revolution that begins the book is heavily indebted to the anarchist thinker Daniel Guérin for its account of the *sans-culottes* as part of a creative movement from below, to the left of the Jacobins, that conceptualized and fought for a popular democracy:



Raya Dunayevskaya

Democracy, thus, was not invented by philosophic theory nor by the bourgeois leadership. It was discovered by the masses in their method of action. There is a double rhythm in destroying the old and creating the new which bears the unmistakable stamp of the *self-activity which is the truly working class way of knowing*. This, in fact, was the greatest of all the achievements of the great French Revolution—the workers' discovery of their own way of knowing. (30-31)

In her brief account of Hegel, a real gem of compression that illuminates the truly revolutionary aspects of Hegel's philosophy, Dunayevskaya stresses the impact of the French Revolution—and its aftermath—on the German inventor of the modern form of dialectics. She also notes how the young Hegel singled out the alienated condition of the modern factory worker but could not yet discern—because it was too early—the yearning for a creative and non-exploitative form of labor that was to imbue the modern working-class movement in its most revolutionary moments. That would have to wait for Marx. What Hegel did discern in his

published work—and here the influence of the French Revolution was obvious—was that the quest for freedom and emancipation marked the entire course of human history. Additionally, in seeing the social world not only as substance, but also as subject, Hegel paved the way for the Marxian concept of the collective revolutionary subject.

According to Dunayevskaya, Hegel also elaborated, above all in his Absolute Idea, which he saw as the unity of theory and practice, the dialectical relationship between the social and the individual:

For in Hegel's Absolute there is embedded, though in abstract form, the full development of the *social* individual, or what Hegel would call individuality "purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e., freedom itself." Here are the objective and subjective means whereby a new society is going to be born. That new society, struggling to be born, is the concern of our age. (39)

For Dunayevskaya, the key here was not so much the rather banal notion that individuals must become social to fully realize themselves as individuals. Her point centered on something slightly different: how the quest for individual self-development and freedom could link up with broader epochal movements for human emancipation in such a way that both were deepened, in a truly dialectical relationship. Thus, when Rosa Parks sat down on that bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and defied the system of racial segregation, her quest for individual emancipation managed to link up with the universal in such a way that it helped touch off a whole era of revolutionary radicalism.

Dunayevskaya noted as well that Marx drew his concept of the negation of the negation from Hegel, whom he praised in 1844 for having uncovered "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creative principle" (34). At the same time, Dunayevskaya critiques the retrogression into statism in the later Hegel, while also maintaining the enduring influence

of the German idealist on Marx. Finally, the discussion of Hegel turns toward the Stalinist rejection of Hegel, especially his concept of negativity.

With Marx, Dunayevskaya stresses the fundamental continuity of the young Marx of 1844 with *Capital*, not only in Volume 1, but also in Volumes 2 and 3. I know of no other serious analyst of Marx who swam so easily in both the humanist/dialectical aspect—alienation, fetishism, dialectic, and so on—and in concepts like the tendential decline in the rate of profit as the foundation of Marx's theory of crises and depressions.

In its original 1958 edition, *Marxism and Freedom* contained as an appendix the

Marx not only differed with Engels on the potentially revolutionary character of the Civil War, but he also strongly attacked the non-revolutionary Lincoln's reluctance to issue an emancipation proclamation.

first published English translations of two of the most important of Marx's 1844 *Essays*, "Private Property and Communism" and "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic." The theme of Marx's revolutionary humanism continues through one of Dunayevskaya's four chapters devoted to his magnum opus, "The Humanism and Dialectic of *Capital*, Vol. I." In the 1844 *Essays*, Dunayevskaya sees Marx as having put forth his own version of the dialectic, as having not only "stood [Hegel] on his feet," but also as having separated himself from "vulgar communism" (85), which Dunayevskaya traces back to some of the communist sects of Marx's own time, albeit with a clear contemporary target, the vulgate of Soviet Marxist-Leninism. Here she con-

nects philosophy and economics, in the sense that vulgar communism sought to change property relations but not production relations, not the actual daily life of the worker: Marx was strongly “opposed to anyone who thinks that the ills of capitalism can be overcome by changes in the sphere of distribution” (59). As for the Russian Stalinist ideologists, they focused on the merits of state property and they “spend incredible time and energy and vigilance to imprison Marx within the bounds of the private property versus state property concept” (63). This was also an implicit critique of classical Trotskyism, with its focus on nationalized property as the dividing line between capitalism and a workers’ state.

Throughout, Marx is presented as a revolutionary activist as well as a thinker, even during his supposedly cloistered British Museum years when he immersed himself in political economy. Not only was he an activist as well as a thinker, but world events and his engagement with them decisively shaped his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. Here the kinds of themes alluded to at the beginning of this essay—the new forms of emancipatory struggle found during the 1950s in the Hungarian revolutionaries, Alabama Black activists, and rank-and-file workers—emerge as central to the book’s underlying theoretical premises.

Thus, the decisive impact of the U.S. Civil War on *Capital* Volume 1 is elaborated not just as political background, but as having had a decisive theoretical importance. Dunayevskaya’s chapter covering these issues begins with Marx’s applauding from afar the incipient slave insurrection he was hoping for in the wake of John Brown’s attack on Harper’s Ferry. Marx not only differed with Engels on the potentially revolutionary character of the Civil War, but he also strongly attacked the non-revolutionary Lincoln’s reluctance to issue an emancipation proclamation. In addition, Dunayevskaya stresses Marx’s strong support, in his letters and journalism, for the British workers who sided with the North even as

the British establishment took the opposite position. In a remarkable display of proletarian internationalism, those workers kept up their support even when told that a British intervention on the side of the South might quickly end the war and the cotton blockade that had led to mass layoffs in the textile industry. She also notes how language about race, class, and the fight for the eight-hour day found its way into Marx’s text, as in this often-overlooked passage from *Capital*:

In the United States of America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed as long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black it is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new life again arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New York to California. (84)

Thus, the dialectics of race and class was no mere sideshow, but a crucial aspect of the struggle for the emancipation of labor.

But there were other theoretical stakes here as well. Dunayevskaya also makes the argument that the very structure of *Capital* changed as a result of Marx’s engagement with the U.S. Civil War. Based upon a study of the early drafts of *Capital*, she concludes that it was only after he became engaged with the Civil War that Marx added an entire chapter on “The Working Day,” apparently completed as late as 1866. This chapter is one of the book’s most crucial, not because it exposes the oppression of the worker, which many had done before, but because it shows how the lengthening of the working day constituted the breaking point that produced the modern labor movement. *Capital*’s chapter on the working day contains the most detailed treatment of working-class resistance to capital of the entire book, as it chronicles the struggle for a shorter working day, first in Britain, and then in France, and then in the

United States, where it became intertwined with the dialectics of race and class.

But Marx is not only describing, but also prescribing. For he is suggesting in this chapter that, short of actual proletarian revolution, the fight for a reduced working day challenges capital in a fundamental way, more than that for higher wages. Moreover, this was something that Marx put forward in the First International, helping to place it on the agenda of the working class across Western Europe and North America. Turning to our own times, I would like to note that in recent decades, the French working classes have been carrying out the fight for a shorter working day, but in isolation from other highly developed economies like Britain or the United States, where the issue has lain dormant, or worse. As a result, French workers have been sometimes forced to retreat.

Dunayevskaya conceptualizes a similar process concerning the relationship of the Paris Commune to *Capital*. Following the framework of Marx's *Civil War in France*, she outlines what he saw as the Commune's revolutionary features: its grassroots democratic character, its destruction of a modern bureaucratic state, its development of worker self-rule in some of the factories. Dunayevskaya added a point not stated explicitly by Marx concerning the leading role of female workers, milkmaids, in touching off the insurrection early in the morning of March 18, 1871: "As in every real people's revolution, new strata of the population were awakened" (95).

Next, Dunayevskaya argues that several important formulations in *Capital* were added only after the Commune. The last version of *Capital* Volume 1 that Marx personally vetted before it was published was the French edition, issued in serial form from 1872 to 1875. Although it was translated by Joseph Roy, Marx's correspondence shows that he went over every page and reworked many parts of the text. Few except specialist scholars are aware that the 1867 version of *Capital* was quite different from the text we know today.

Most importantly, the first chapter did not exist in its present form. Only after the Paris Commune did Marx reorganize the book, creating for the first time a separate first chapter ending with a discussion of commodity fetishism. Some of the material on fetishism was already there in 1867, but some was added after the Paris Commune. This was because the Commune had illustrated in concrete form what Marx for years had been referring to as free and associated labor. Dunayevskaya argues that after 1867 Marx moves the focus in the discussion of commodity fetishism from "the fantastic form of appearance," wherein human relations took the form of relations between things, toward "the necessity of that form of appearance," given that the reification of human relations was "in truth," the form taken under capitalism of "what relations between people are at the point of production" (100).

This is not only an example of revolutionary events influencing and deepening Marx's theorization of capitalism, but it is also an example of Marx carrying out some of his most original theoretical labor under the impact of the Commune. In carrying out this work, he developed further a book that aimed not only to reflect, but also to shape the consciousness of the working class, in order for it to carry out the struggle for its self-emancipation more effectively. And it was not Marx's fault that post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels, virtually ignored the crucial section on commodity fetishism until the 1920s.

Dunayevskaya's discussion of V.I. Lenin as thinker and as revolutionary takes a similar form. The early Lenin's notion of the vanguard party as elaborated in 1902, in *What Is to Be Done?*, is seen as undergoing modifications under the impact of the creativity and self-organization displayed by the working class in 1905 and 1917. Moreover, in anticipation of many recent discussions by Lars T. Lih and others, that early form of vanguardism is shown to have been not that different from the prevailing concept of organization

in the Second International. Thus, Lenin in 1902 “merely brought to its logical conclusion Karl Kautsky’s formulation” to the effect that workers on their own could achieve trade union but not socialist consciousness, with the latter having to be brought to them by radical intellectuals (179).

World War I undermines Lenin’s support for Kautsky and the other chief theoreticians of the Second International, leading him to embark upon, for the first time, the elaboration of general and global, rather than only Russian, Marxist perspectives. Was this a result of a steadfast adherence to earlier revolutionary principles or a new departure for Lenin? Dunayevskaya holds more to the second possibility, underlining Lenin’s in-depth study of issues he had largely avoided up until then: Hegel and dialectics, imperialism, and the state and revolution.

One major departure, still controversial even today, is Dunayevskaya’s elaboration of a philosophical break in Lenin’s thought as a result of his 1914–1915 notebooks on Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. This meant an implicit repudiation of his crudely materialist and reductionist 1908 treatise on Marxist philosophy, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Singling out revolutionary Hegelian concepts like self-movement and contradiction, Lenin also embraces aspects of Hegel’s philosophical idealism as superior to crude materialism, writing, “Intelligent idealism is nearer to intelligent materialism than is stupid materialism” (207). Moreover, in an implicit self-critique, Lenin holds that one cannot understand *Capital* without having studied Hegel’s *Logic* and that “consequently, none of the Marxists for the past half-century have understood Marx!” (171). Henri Lefebvre translated Lenin’s notebooks on Hegel and introduced them to the French public over two decades earlier, but he did not, until 1959, acknowledge a break in Lenin’s philosophical thought after 1914. Dunayevskaya, on the other hand, had developed her concept of such a break in a dialogue with C.L.R. James

in the 1940s. (I discuss Lefebvre, Althusser, James, Dunayevskaya, Lukács, and other commentators on Lenin’s relation to Hegel in my 1995 book, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*.)

As Dunayevskaya saw it, Lenin took up the development of the capitalist economy into its monopoly stage, and the concomitant emergence of imperialism, soon after his

Dunayevskaya also makes
the argument that the very
structure of *Capital* changed as
a result of Marx’s engagement
with the U.S. Civil War

study of Hegel, in part on the basis of the new dialectical insights he gained there. At this point, Lenin became dissatisfied with Rudolf Hilferding’s non-dialectical presentation of monopoly capital, first because it underplayed how competitive capitalism was transformed. Dunayevskaya writes that for Lenin, it was the result of a “development through contradiction, through *transformation into opposite*” (208).

Second, Lenin taxed Hilferding, and even some of his Bolshevik comrades like Nikolai Bukharin, for not addressing changes brought about by imperialism at the subjective level, that of the working people in both the imperialist lands and the colonies. In terms of the working class at home, imperialism led to a deep internal contradiction, with a small part transforming into an aristocracy of labor that benefited from colonial exploitation. As Lenin saw it, that stratum also formed the core of those elements of the working class that supported World War I. It is a concept that Dunayevskaya connected to racial segmentation within the U.S. working class.

In terms of the colonies, imperialism

unleashed modern, progressive nationalist movements. Here Lenin singled out the Easter Uprising in Ireland of 1916, in the middle of the war and up to that point the most serious blow against imperialism and the war anywhere in the world. Ireland was the harbinger of a new form of consciousness and struggle that came to be called national liberation movements. In supporting the Irish uprising, and in polemicizing with less supportive or even hostile class-reductionist perspectives from Karl Radek and Leon Trotsky, Lenin underlined the dialectical underpinnings of his position, referring to the Irish events as part of the “dialectics of history,” wherein colonized nations fighting for their national emancipation can take the lead, moving ahead of the international working class in the struggle against imperialism, and ultimately, capitalism itself.

Here again, Lenin’s originality lay not only in grasping new subjective developments like the development of the labor aristocracy and of the national liberation movements, but also in conceptualizing the relationship of those forces to the overall working-class movement. He incorporated the peasantry as well, especially in his discussions of major countries in the Global South like colonial India and semi-colonial China.

Whatever his flaws as a Marxist thinker and revolutionary leader, which have been pointed out by other revolutionary thinkers ever since Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin’s two major insights—on Hegel and dialectics, and on imperialism and national liberation—are still fruitful theoretical resources today. For Dunayevskaya, Lenin’s Hegelian Marxism was more attractive than that of Lukács or Marcuse because he reached political and economic conclusions on the basis of his dialectical investigations. He was therefore able to elaborate a dialectical theory of the emergence of imperialism and of the contradictions within it, most prominently its giving the impetus to national liberation movements

across the colonial and semi-colonial world. Lenin’s great sensitivity, as well, to national and ethnic oppression inside large countries like Russia was an important and related insight that he was to develop in terms of groups like African Americans in the years following his Hegel notebooks and his book on imperialism.

Dunayevskaya took from Hegel, Marx, and Lenin two conceptual threads: on the one hand, a certain type of dialectics of revolution, and on the other hand, a sensitivity to new social forces and movements with revolutionary potential. These two threads of analysis enabled her to conceptualize a new form of capitalism, automated state capitalism, in which workers faced the state, capital, and their own union bureaucracy, and where new social movements like the Black movement in the United States were emerging. At the same time, events like Hungary 1956 showed not only the bankruptcy of the Stalinist regimes, but also that the working people and youth under those regimes shared similar aspirations with those in radical social movements across the world.

While *Marxism and Freedom* was published six decades ago, it still speaks to us today, when grassroots social movements for radical change have covered the globe in a way not seen since the 1960s, and yet at the same time, the economic and political contradictions of capitalism are more glaring—and ominous—than at any time since the 1930s. This unprecedented situation compels Marxists of the twenty-first century to rethink our old categories, especially those inherited from either social democracy or Stalinism.

This article is based on a presentation given in Paris on the occasion of the reissue of Raya Dunayevskaya’s *Marxism and Freedom* by Éditions Syllepse; it was published in French, in *Entre les lignes entre les mots*, on January 19, 2018, entreleslignesentrelesmots.wordpress.com/2018/01/19/marxisme-et-liberte-60-ans-apres-pour-hier-et-aujourd'hui/.

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE



"Anyone who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without feminine upheaval."

"Capital is reckless of the health or length of life of the laborer, unless under compulsion from society."

"The development of civilization and industry in general has always shown itself so active in the destruction of forests that everything that has been done for their conservation and production is completely insignificant in comparison."

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."

"The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."

— Karl Marx, *German revolutionary socialist*

Reconnecting Reform and Revolution: Socialists in the Mist

MICHAEL HIRSCH

IF ONE THING WAS CLEAR COMING out of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America's May 5 convention, it was that most delegates uniformly consider themselves socialists and aspire to build an anti-corporate resistance movement nationwide. So far, so good.

It was also clear a solid majority—including this writer—think some range of electoral activity in support of left-leaning Democratic Party electeds and aspirants is called for, though too few offer even a dollop of sympathy for insurgent independent and third-party efforts, which are no less tactical interventions that should never be proscribed. Yet when it comes to propounding a socialist program, those reds among us who have ever worked in Democratic clubs or in independent electoral efforts rarely if ever push the kinds of demands that challenge the capitalist system at its root. We hesitate at our peril.

Our reticence is explained in part because the range of the permissible is so circumscribed it becomes self-censorship. We want to appear practical and not alienate allies who agree with us on shorter-term issues. We want to avoid being caricatured as dreamers and vocal dilettantes or being called “resolutionary” socialists or worse.

Add to the fact that the leadership of

most unions has no perspective beyond the next election cycle—witness their near total prostration in New York state before the vindictive, corporate-bought Andrew Cuomo and the studied indifference toward the excellent Gayle McLaughlin's uphill fight for Golden State lieutenant governor—or even beyond a potential internal union challenge, and swimming against the current comes with a price. In fact, despite our socialist coloration, we lefties add precious little in actual mass work to programmatic arguments that could spur movements and legislation in an anti-capitalist and genuinely “social” direction.

Despite the brave words espoused by two insurgent Democrats addressing the concluding session of the DSA conference, nothing they said was radical in rooting out corporate domination of everyday life. No systemic challenge to property or social relations was even hinted at. The fault was not theirs, in my opinion. They were framing in militant terms the short-term bounds of the electorally possible when not playing to the expectations of the crowd. DSA has a higher purpose, but sadly they and we are not meeting it.

Note that everything does not depend on us. Mass movements often are sparked by rank and file leaders with only the most casual relationships to socialist groups or even theory. The old joke that spontaneity means somebody else did the organizing—a good riposte to stage-managed orthodox Leninist preaching—is true enough, but it doesn't deny the crying need for anti-capitalist theorizing and for political programs whose winning

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would transcend capitalism. The much vaunted “base building” won’t come from electoral activity alone, nor will “activism” writ large without confronting the question of activism for what ends. We can’t just be the best builders of the movements, as worthy a goal as that is. We need a turn toward theory and socialist—read anti-capitalist—program.

Neither is a blanket demand for “democracy” of much utility, even in the age of a demented Trump and a regressive neoliberalism. Of course the mass of people should choose, but choose what? What are the choices? What is the left offering in the way of choice?

A turn toward theory—actually a course correction, and not initially a major one, I believe—points to the necessity of doing what contemporary mass movements miss.

Take the demand for free education from pre-K through college. It’s a good demand—who but a right-wing elitist would oppose it?—but it doesn’t in itself begin a critique of capitalist education, whether in furthering its democratic nature or in challenging curricula. What is gained if business school pedagogy remains unchanged, if economics remains the terrain of free-market ideology, if the social sciences remain compartmentalized, if vocational education is widely available but limited to business’ quotidian needs, and if schooling is largely hermetically sealed from creative work in all but the arts and experimental colleges?

Or take the crisis in housing. Sure, we can rightly abrade electeds for not vigorously supporting rent control, and we can get outraged at the rise of luxury housing treated as a trading commodity that leads to hundreds of thousands of vacant lux apartments in cities waiting for high income buyers even as homelessness swells. But at a mass statewide housing rally in New York in mid-June demanding rent-stabilization and just-cause eviction laws, and lambasting the state’s laggard governor as a witting tool of his real-estate funders, just one speaker made the sage intersectional connection between the housing crisis and related

social ills, noting how precarious housing is a health care issue, too.

In New York City, we can and should blast the City Council for limiting its oversight to housing authority headaches after the fact and for favoring land use, zoning, and public-private development schemes as the sharp edges of housing policy, but we leave buried the old socialist chestnut of nationalizing large private holdings. Our housing crisis stems from corporate control. Who if not us will address that programmatically?

Then there are the depredations of the financial sectors. Who among lefties in Democratic Party spheres is raising nationalization of the banks, with or without workers’ control, as a viable, rational, necessary, and winnable program? Who is militating against crimes of the finance, insurance, and real estate sector that will cause the next financial bubble’s bursting? Not yet at least are comrades itching to do Democratic Party electoral work ostensibly as socialists.

The same weakness persists in the righteous demand of Medicare for All, a policy that is itself a vast improvement over single-payer, but only the beginning of wisdom. Of course Medicare for All would be a body blow to the insurance industry and bring accessible, quality care to many more millions. That’s reason enough to support it, not to mention its capacity to engage millions more in a struggle to win it. But in itself it will do nothing to democratize medicine or collapse the insane specializations that plague the disabled and older, retired Americans for whom primary care physicians are only traffic cops on the road to a plethora of specialists. Much of leisure time is barely leisurely for many seniors, who are on a first-name basis with as many as a dozen of their widely scattered healers. Without de-emphasizing the demand of Medicare for All, a vital and winnable reform, socialized medicine and reducing private practices to the bare minimum should be part of our radical credo, too.

Here’s the problem: It’s as if our social-

ist politics is religiously understood but inapplicable to politics except as the most moderate of ethical reforms. It's as though we self-described socialists are Marxists in faith but not so much in fact. At our best we are radicals capable in many admirable cases of critiquing the system sharply enough in thought and on the page but moving against it only hesitantly and under heavy restraint, explained as *realpolitik* and excused in some extreme cases as transactional politics, or what is in reality "too little, too late."

We say among ourselves—at least those of us honest enough to say it and not afraid of being branding as sectarians—that Bernie Sanders is barely a socialist. We know that although his domestic politics are a breath of fresh air in a fetid clime (though his foreign policy planks are not much removed from the Clintonesque), they are at best rehashed New Deal liberalism, yet some sections of the left are already thinking of how to integrate their work with a possible Bernie boomlet in 2020. That preparatory move may even be tactically wise, facilitating outreach, and so on, but it also abrogates any possibility of these Bernie-entranced boosters acting as articulators of an anti-capitalist point of view, except over coffee. We indeed have things in common with Our Revolution, the staff-dominated Sanders operation, but our many differences can't be submerged.

Note that in my calling for a course correction toward theorizing our politics to develop a rigorous socialist program for the twenty-first century, I'm not advocating taking the exit ramp to terminal program mongering, the disease of small sects. I am suggesting that if we socialists don't look at how a systemic critique of capital can be hammered into a popular political program encompassing what Occupy and Podemos did so well—at least symbolically—as one that offers a real-action critique of the depredations of vampire capitalism and that instrumentally connects reform to revolution—Andre Gorz's radical reform, if you will—then all our work,

whether as inside or outside of the Democratic Party or a mix of both—will be just window dressing.

This means putting more of an emphasis on developing program, both to complement organizing work and to spur basic education. I'm talking about an internal education effort by DSA and other left organizations that goes beyond trainings to developing critical theory. A lot of discussion at the aforementioned New York DSA convention seemed to be battling shadows. Some comrades chastised others for being insufficiently Marxist by tamping down class-struggle ideas and mistakenly heralding reform as of prime value in and of itself. Others treated Marxist categories as so much empty rhetoric that got in the way of real organizing and was blind to the needs of reform, something eminently winnable and capable of a mass following.

In a less confrontational moment, I believe comrades would agree—or should agree—that "reform" and "revolution" are not counterpoised, and that the revolutionary pantheon from Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Luxemburg, Gramsci, Lukacs, Alexandra Kollontai, Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and Michael Harrington (at least the young Michael Harrington) would all agree. Like the arc of the universe, the list is long, but it bends toward justice.

We can even learn from the ventures of Britain's Jeremy Corbyn, who, while no revolutionary either in theory or inclination, can be credited with contributing to the objective conditions for a nationwide upsurge by building a mass extra-parliamentary movement as a catalyst for, and an adjunct to, a future left Labour government.

Where to begin? We needn't reinvent the wheel. Reintegrating Rosa Luxemburg's pioneering work is no stretch, either. Her writing is largely in print, and the second volume of her projected multi-volume collected works has just been realized, which is fortuitous, given that January 2019 will mark the hundredth anniversary of her murder by

the proto-fascist Freikorps under the direction of the governing right Social Democrats.

The sublime socialist makes clear that the two concepts “reform” and “revolution” are joined at the hip, something all wings of the socialist left tend to forget. The tragedy of social democracy for Luxemburg was the Second International’s disengaging of reform from revolution in practice if not in theory, resulting in the horror of all but three member parties supporting their own national bourgeoisies’ murderous land grab efforts in the catastrophic World War I. If “revolution” absent reform is fools’ gold, which it is, “re-

form” absent an anti-capitalist end is species extinction.

As Marx and Engels put it in the *Communist Manifesto*, the outcome of class struggle was “either a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or the common ruin of the contending classes.” Pick one!

Luxemburg put it another way: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.”

True that! We twenty-first century reds must do better.

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BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS MATTER

An Interview with Lawrence Brown on Community Trauma and Healing

NICOLE FABRICANT

LAURENCE BROWN IS AN associate professor of public health in the School of Community Health and Policy at Morgan State University. He is the grandson of sharecroppers who lived in the Mississippi Delta and a native of West Memphis, Arkansas. He is a historian, critical geographer, and political economist who sees public health from a critical, interdisciplinary perspective and advocates for holistic approaches to healing the Black communities of Baltimore. His book *The Black Butterfly: Why We Must Make Black Neighborhoods Matter* (Johns Hopkins Press) is forthcoming.

This interview took place at the Maryland Historical Society on March 15, 2018.

Nicole Fabricant: Let's start with The Black Butterfly: Why We Must Make Black Neighborhoods Matter. What was the main argument of the book, or what inspired you to write this book? What was that burning question that you wanted to understand?

Lawrence Brown: Well, it's actually really funny. ... It was the editor who actually approached me to write the book—I wasn't thinking about writing this book until Robin Coleman from Johns Hopkins University Press was like, "I think you should write a book about what's happening in Baltimore—the systems that you often talk about, and you know, the solutions as you see them." And I

was like, "Wow. That's a fantastic idea." You know, to write a book around these multiple systems that play such a role in people's lives. So I thought about what it would be—or what would be needed to do that. Which included—I thought—giving this historical backdrop ... How Baltimore became the city that it is.

Fabricant: The historical ...

Brown: I opened with Trump and this moment, of the Electoral College being the means by which he was able to ascend to the presidency with a minority of the vote. And I talk about one of the reasons he was able to do that was that America is so highly segregated, such that we have 3200 counties in America [and] people of color are disproportionately concentrated in 700 or so of those counties—and highly urbanized. And many of [the other] counties are like 80 percent White or more—a thousand or so are like 90 percent White or more—there's a few hundred that are like 98 percent White or more. So these counties, which overwhelmingly went towards Trump, and then the sort of slaveholding legacy of the Electoral College, and the sort of framework by which those electors are selected—which is connected to the Senate. Basically we elect two senators for every state, so that leaves a small state like South Dakota [with] the same representation in the Senate as a large state like California. So this sort of disproportionality and the sort of undemocratic way that our system is set up—a lot of it relies on racial segregation,

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and having these majority White areas in so many rural areas [ensures] that they have this electoral dominance.

I think I'm able to say, just like Douglas Massey said with his colleague Nancy Denton, that in fact, we're still dealing with American Apartheid. From there, I zoomed in the lens to Baltimore, to talk about Baltimore Apartheid, so that you know, this system—these interlocking systems that segregate and separate communities—the exclusivity of policies, practices, and systems—that plays a huge role in explaining who has opportunity, access to resources in America today and in Baltimore specifically. So I talk about not just Baltimore, but I talk about many cities that are hyper-segregated—which includes cities like Baltimore, Chicago, Flint, Detroit, Birmingham, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Cleveland—the top eight hyper-segregated cities in America. New York is in that category. Many of our large urban areas are highly racially stratified, and so I wanted to be able to talk about what are the implications with it. Particularly as a person who comes out of public health and community health, I'm interested in these systems of racial segregation—and really I think, in a broader lens, historical trauma, which includes racial segregation but also includes forced displacement, serial forced displacement, prominently discussed by Mindy Fullilove—of physical and psychological violence, hyperpolicing, police brutality, economic destruction, and ongoing redlining and subpriming of Black and Brown communities and then cultural dispossession—these components of the mass trauma experience, I try to illuminate.

Then in the second half of the book, I really try to discuss solutions. What is it that can help to heal, restore, and make Black neighborhoods matter?

Fabricant: So can you talk a little about the solutions? I've been thinking about your work and how it comes out of an activist background and commitment to grassroots. How and in what

ways do you see the book mattering and being a sort of go-to source for many organizers across the city? How will you make these really complicated ideas accessible to a range of folks who may have different educational backgrounds?

Brown: I think part of making this scholarship or approach or analysis matter is making it readable, digestible by people—especially in this age of social media and smartphones. I've been very active on platforms like Twitter and Facebook in terms of putting out information, so that's really taught me a lot about how to make something digestible. When you're confined to, well initially, 140 or so characters—now it's more of course—but Twitter sort of forces you to be concise (laughter) and be compelling in your conciseness. So that is part of the dynamic that I try to aspire to in my scholarship and a little bit in this book, which of course is more long form, but I still aim to write at a level that's hopefully readable

Baltimore becomes the first city in the nation to pass a racial zoning — comprehensive racial zoning ordinance on December 20th, 1910. That's the birth of legal residential racial segregation.

for kids in middle school. I've been invited to talk to kids at public schools here in Baltimore because their teachers have been interested in my work, and the students they've exposed it to have been interested, so I want those students to be able to digest what I'm saying as well as those folks who are a lot older. The other impulse for me is, I'm from the Deep South and I have heroes like Fannie Lou Hamer, and she had this eloquent simplicity. It wasn't about using the biggest words, or it

wasn't about using all the technical terms. It was about making it plain, and in the South that's what you want to do—make it plain. You can still have a certain erudition in your making it plain, but the value of a great speaker, orator, preacher, or person who's trying to convey a message in that context is being able to make it plain. That was the way that I was brought up, and so that remains a part of my cultural constitution to sort of say, how are the ways that I can just make this plain?

I read other scholars, and I'm always be-dazzled by, you know, these grand theoretical approaches: "... the discourse this, and the discourse that ..." That's beautiful, but you know, the people I know don't talk like that. The people I know use words that flow and that you sort of hear without thinking about it. ... I don't think that means we should be dumbing it down, as it were. ...

We really need to illustrate the word "neoliberalism," which I think is like this ubiquitous term in leftist circles that very few people define and know what the hell it means when it's used broadly. ... And so, every time I use the word on Twitter, what I try to say, particularly because we are in Baltimore—a Chocolate City—what I say is "neoliberalism: the stripping of public goods in Black neighborhoods," so that immediately you have a definition that you can relate to. "Oh, you're stripping public goods in Black neighborhoods, that's neoliberalism!"

Fabricant: Language can alienate, right? Folks working on these kinds of questions from these very communities, people talk about this all the time. They just might not use the word "neoliberalism" to describe it.

Brown: Exactly. Exactly right. So they've been talking about it all the time, they understand it, they go to schools that are permanently closed—they're the ones paying these high water bills that perversely become the rationale for privatizing their water, so they're living it. They're living in the midst of this highly racialized neoliberal system, and being

able to call attention to that and relating it to what they know, stripping public goods from Black neighborhoods—people understand that. "Yeah, we've seen our public schools close, we've seen ..."

Fabricant: transportation issues ...

Brown: cutbacks ...

Fabricant: And people can articulate it, right.

Brown: And they can understand, and if you can connect that to the academic term, then people would get it. But I think it's important first to make it plain.

Fabricant: Can you talk a little bit about housing? Specifically about Baltimore's history of housing? Thinking about redlined communities, housing covenants, and the legacy of that history in particular areas.

Brown: Yeah, I think it's important to realize that a lot of these systems we're talking about, they were constructed, they were engineered, they were built. So you really start with—coming out of the Civil War—you have Black Reconstruction, you have Black people rebuilding churches and schools, and many of our HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) are born during this time. There's the hope of America living up to its promise, but White Redemption undoes Black Reconstruction. The Klan in the Deep South, the White supremacist terrorist organizations like the Red Coats, the Klan, and these other groups—they unleash a massive wave of White supremacist violence to keep Black people in their place. And so you have over 4,000 lynchings in 12 southern states between 1877 and 1950. You have the destruction of Black economic and independent districts and cities. In 1921, Black Tulsa is destroyed; 1923, Black Rosewood, in Florida, is destroyed; 1906, Atlanta race riots; 1909, Springfield, Illinois; 1896, Wilmington, North Carolina. So there are 100 or so of these instances in which Black economic districts, independent towns, are destroyed,

are damaged severely by White supremacist violence. So it's in that context that you have also, in 1896, the Supreme Court handing down *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which makes segregation completely legal, makes it the law of the land. What you saw though, in the late 1800's, was education being segregated already, and it was so in Baltimore. When Baltimore opened its doors for Black children to enter into the public school system in 1867, Black children did not go to school with White children. So the schools opened up as racially segregated. And before then, from the 1820s until 1867, the free Black community in Baltimore had to operate their own private school system to educate Black children. So for a span of 40-50 years, the Black community is operating its own private school districts because that public good was not open to Black children. So even as early as that you see segregation entrenched.

YOU SEE THE SEGREGATION in transportation: street cars, steamboats. There was a group of Black women, sisters who attended Union Baptist Church, who filed a case in Maryland against the *Sue*, which was a steamboat that they were boarding. They bought first-class tickets and they were placed in the bottom with the pigs and the animals and the foul and the stench and the feces and everything that would've been on the bottom of the boat with lots of animals—and they were like, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not what we paid for. We paid for first-class accommodations on the first level of the boat.” So they filed a lawsuit, and I think they won, but still, transportation, railroads become segregated. So it's actually in 1896—*Plessy v. Ferguson*—*Plessy* is very light skinned—white, or nearly white—but a Black man according to America's one-drop rule—who attempts to ride a train, and the Supreme Court says, “No, if the train company says you have to ride in the back or in the separate railcar, that's legal.” And so it's in transportation that the Supreme Court

says that segregation is the law of the land. So then, when we move forward to the early 1900s, in Maryland, there are three different attempts to pass a disenfranchisement piece of legislation that would take away the right for African Americans to vote in Maryland. It was not just African Americans, other folks without a certain amount of property, I can't remember the particulars, but some of the newly arrived immigrants that felt threatened by that law, and the African American community ... defeated it. So you see this move to disenfranchise African Americans in the state of Maryland.

In 1910, there's a Black lawyer named George McMechen. He is the first graduate of the newly renamed Morgan College, which was formerly named the Centenary Biblical Institute—today it's Morgan State University where I teach. But he was the first graduate of Morgan College. He attended Yale University and became a lawyer. George McMechen moves into 1834 McCollough Street. It was an all-White block, and he was met with—steps were tarred and feathered, Whites threw bricks through his window, they attacked his home to try and scare him off. Well that didn't work. And so, the White community said, “We need a law. We need an ordinance to keep this thing from happening again.” And so Baltimore becomes the first city in the nation to pass a comprehensive racial zoning ordinance, on December 20, 1910. That's the birth of legal residential racial segregation. Like I said, there had been racial segregation in education, there had been racial segregation in transportation, but that day, in Baltimore, is when residential racial segregation began to take life.

BALTIMORE ESSENTIALLY PASSED the ordinance four times—to keep segregation alive until [the] 1917 Supreme Court decision *Buchanan v. Warley* strikes it down, strikes down racial zoning. It doesn't strike it down because it's a great civil rights victory, it strikes it down because there was a White

homeowner in Louisville who wanted to sell his home to a Black man, and the Louisville NAACP takes the case to the Supreme Court, and what the judge decided was not that “hey, Black people can buy their home from whoever they want to,” it’s “White people could sell their home to whoever they want to.” (laughter) That the homeowner had the right to sell their home to whoever they please. It had great civil rights implications, don’t get me wrong, but the rationale wasn’t necessarily to support desegregation. In 1918, 100 years ago, Baltimore annexes the area north of Cold Spring Road, which includes the Roland Park, Guilford, Homeland communities, which had been developed by the Roland Park Company. Their director was Edward Bouton, and he asked his lawyers in the late 1800s about racially restrictive covenants, and they advised him against it. But by 1912, the Roland Park Company was utilizing these racially restrictive covenants when [those communities were] annexed by Baltimore city 100 years ago in 1918. Baltimore is now practicing racial segregation in the form of racially restrictive covenants. The Roland Park Company is doing it. The Forest Park Company is doing it because they’re in competition with each other to attract these higher-class, higher-income homebuyers. Forest Park, the community which was developed by the Forest Park Company, is in West Baltimore. So they’re in a war to be the most racist and most exclusive—to “keep negroes out” in the language of the time—and then unofficially, it wasn’t written in the covenant, but they also tried to keep Jewish people out as well. They hired a private investigator—there was a woman who would go look into people’s backyard—they would exclude Italians and other White ethnic groups that they didn’t deem to be quite “White.” ...

Other cities had the same sorts of strategies for racial segregation and racial zoning, too. Places like Chicago, Philly, New York, they adopted it—very legal attempts to strengthen apartheid, to create it and to

strengthen it. And so in 1937, the Home Owners Loan Corporation—the federal government gets involved and it later becomes the Federal Housing Administration—they enforce racially restrictive covenants by creating yet another form of, or another part of, racial segregation. They create a system of *segregonomics* with the residential security map, which had the infamous redlining component. So basically the federal government says, “We will ensure the mortgages in the green communities, in the blue communities, maybe the yellow communities, but certainly not the red communities.” Read *Not in My Neighborhood* by Antero Pietila. Eugenics—the pseudo-science upon which these color-coded communities were sectioned. So Protestant Whites in the green, Jewish communities and slightly less affluent Whites were in the blue, many of the immigrant White communities were in the yellow (they weren’t quite White yet), and African Americans and urban Native Americans lived in the red communities. And so, the thinking was, these are the communities that were worthy, these are the communities we will extend lending to—and many of those green and blue communities—in order for the federal government to lend to those communities, they had to use racially restrictive covenants. So the federal government helps enforce these racially restrictive covenants until they become struck down by the Supreme Court in 1948, with the decision *Shelley v. Kraemer*.

IN THE 1940S DURING THE WAR—to defeat Hitler, as Black soldiers were fighting overseas—they needed housing. And so the Housing Authority of Baltimore city, they look at putting wartime public housing into communities like far East Baltimore, Armistead Gardens, and the White community, they come out like 700-hundred strong to oppose Black people, these soldiers having housing in those communities. The federal government and the Housing Authority of Baltimore city, they relent to the pressure, and

so the federal government says, “Alright, we will build public housing, instead of in these White communities, we’ll build it in Cherry Hill, we’ll build it in Turner Station, which is right outside of the city and the county, we’ll build it in these industrial areas, where there’s more pollution ... —where people don’t want to live—people with money, they don’t want to live in these places.”

Fast forward 100 years or 70-80 years, now we’re seeing development and displacement of some of these communities—Cherry Hill is under threat—now the waterfront is attractive again. Wealthier White communities want to live in those areas, but you can see those areas aren’t the industrial power houses they used to be. When the federal government put public housing in and around the waterfront—where the Black soldiers could live—they’re doing it when there’s a whole lot of pollution and the industrial plight of Baltimore is still very high. Even when racially restrictive covenants and racial zoning—even as these were becoming illegal—there’s still these ways that there’s segregation happening in the city. By 1950 Baltimore reaches its apex in population according to the census—about 950,000 people live in Baltimore—but then you also see this is also in the middle of the great migration. So Black people are flooding into the city from the Deep South, but mysteriously in the 1950s many urban areas begin to experience White flight.

So the Supreme Court hands down *Brown v. Board of Education*. Many White parents don’t want to send their children to school with Black children, so they evacuate and leave. And I don’t call it just “White flight,” I call it “White desegregation resistance” (laughter) because they’re trying to keep desegregation from becoming a reality. To keep integration from becoming a reality.

Fabricant: The idea of White flight is so sterilized ... the language of “just fleeing.”

Brown: And it makes it as if, you know, there’s something they were fleeing from,

and there’s no questioning of whether or not it was—what was it they were fleeing from?

Fabricant: What was it? Exactly. Let’s name it.

Brown: Desegregation. They were fleeing from it, and so Baltimore doesn’t become a majority Black city until the mid-1970s, which is an important point because many of our urban areas—I think people understand them as majority Black—they are today. Well some of them are decreasing again: DC, San Francisco, Atlanta—they’re cappuccino cities. But in the 1960s and 1970s they were

We’re still dealing with American Apartheid.

becoming Chocolate Cities precisely because so many Whites were leaving to get away from integration. And so you still don’t have integration coming out of the 1960s—out of the ’68 Fair Housing Act—because of this massive resistance to desegregation. And so then you end up with school systems and city tax bases that are decimated in many urban areas because so many of the affluent, wealthier Whiter population is leaving. A lot of that is because of 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education*) but is also because of the urban uprisings that take place. So there is an element of fear in the White flight when it is happening in the 1960s because many Black communities begin to strike out against the striking segregation and the condition of impoverishment, deep impoverishment, the over-policing—hyperpolicing of Black communities—urban renewal, which James Baldwin calls “Negro Removal.” The construction of highways through Black communities—after the Federal Highway Aid Act of 1956 under Eisenhower, the Housing Acts of 1949 and ’54—they authorized urban renewal and expanded it so that institutions like Johns

Hopkins University can expand the campus footprint and displace the Black community.

Fabricant: The last thing I want to talk about is solutions. We're told here this very long story of trauma. I know you really believe in tentative rebuilding, rejuvenating. So what would that look like? Do you have a vision in the last chapters?

Brown: A lot of it is peacebuilding.

Fabricant: Right, restorative justice—what would it look like in terms of peacebuilding?

Brown: You know the police have been such a destructive, abusive, traumatic force. They helped instigate an uprising—many officers were guilty of abusing overtime pay, doubling their salary. Eighty percent of officers don't live in Baltimore city. They're operating on this war mentality. My thought is to do what Camden, New Jersey, did and that's to fire the whole force. Rebuild it. In firing the force, you get out the Fraternal Order of Police, which is a racist—utterly racist—entity that helps protect the police. What we want and what we envision is replacing the Baltimore Police Department as the Baltimore Peacebuilding Authority, which would emphasize restorative justice, de-escalation, mental-health approaches, social-work approaches, stopping the “stop and frisk,” stopping the surveillance, stopping the war mentality, looking at people in the city as people, instead of

hostile enemy combatants. I think that that's the most traumatic system, but I think all of our systems—the school system, the transit system—they also have to become equitable entities. So education: We have activists pushing for a Black Studies and Ethnic Studies curriculum. They're pushing to hire and keep retaining more of our Black teachers because we lost 50 percent or more in only 2005. And the transit systems, they're clustered in more exclusive [areas], clustered in the White L. We need that in the Black Butterfly for racial equity. So that's what I talk about in terms of solutions: How can we look at every system? In terms of housing, especially housing, our neighbors who are homeless. Permanent housing, housing first—that's what we want, not the continuation of this abusive shelter system in which many folks who don't have homes, they will stay out in 20-, 15-degree weather and then go into an abusive shelter. So that tells you something is wrong with our shelters, and you know we haven't pursued many good housing strategies, and there's an issue there, so all the systems—food, water, housing, criminal justice, whatever—you name it. The goal is racial equity, the goal is how do you dismantle these systems and reconstitute them and restructure them so they can work and be implemented in ways that bring equity, justice, and fairness to all of our residents.

Battleground Seattle

A Clash of Classes and a Brewing Perfect Storm

MATHIEU DUBEAU AND LEE FIORIO

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IT WAS RECENTLY UNCOVERED that Amazon, like many other corporate giants, effectively paid \$0 in federal taxes in 2017.¹ The new federal tax bill and the retrenchment of the state during one of the most profitable eras in recent history is alarming. Since 2008, corporate profits across many industries have increased exponentially; yet income gains for the working class have remained sluggish. Profitability doesn't necessarily entail equitability—although it could. The present scenario of increasing profits paired with relatively small income gains for the working class creates conditions ripe for overproduction and underconsumption. Consumption since 2008 has largely been fueled by cheap money (low interest rates) and increasing private household debt. How else can the economy grow if workers aren't making any more money to fuel their consumption?

Corporations are not beneficent creatures; they are vehicles that largely absolve any

particular individual, or group of individuals, of liability as they pursue capitalism's instrumental rationality: capital accumulation for its own sake. Alternatively, surplus value, or profits, can only be produced by labor and is extracted by capitalists by paying workers a wage that is equal to less than what they produce for that corporation. Even more confounding for the labor movement is that workers themselves and the products they produce are highly diverse; the rate of return is highly differentiated between skilled and unskilled workers and is determined, partially, by class, race, gender, geography, and the political structures within which workers and corporations operate.

Thus workers, nationally and globally, are fractionalized, which makes solidarity and organizing difficult. What is also damning about this neoliberal capitalist order is that material necessities, like nutritious food, clean water, clean air, and housing, are not presupposed. There's no minimum wage in any state in the United States that, by itself, can pay for these necessities. Thus many in the working class are forced to work multiple jobs just to maintain themselves.

This is particularly true for Seattle's working class. The median home price has just surpassed \$700,000;² that's double what it was some five years ago. And the average rent

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for a one-bedroom apartment is over \$1,700 a month.³ Even if someone is making Seattle's comparatively "high" minimum wage, paying just for rent requires more than 120 hours of work a month. That is equivalent to three weeks of full-time work, before putting bread on the table. As median housing prices and rents go, Seattle is at the high end nationally.

While our intent is to focus on relieving the stress on the working class, part of that process is recognizing the brewing perfect storm caused partially by Seattle's geography and changing demographics. Unlike many other cities, Seattle is geographically constrained by the Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east. Microsoft, which is headquartered in Redmond, Washington, has already priced most of the working class out of the eastern portion of the metropolitan area. While many cities can expand and develop in all directions, Seattle can't. Seattle's working-class population has two options: either move farther north or south of the city, or compete for a largely inelastic supply of housing within the city proper. Because Seattle has limited development options, the city and state need to take on a more activist role in fostering and structuring housing development and strengthening regional transportation—which has largely been absent in the last two decades—if the working class is to have a chance at affording the cost of living.

Seattle is no stranger to the growth effects of tech companies. At times in the 1960s, nearly one in four employees in the city worked for another tech giant thought to be on the cutting edge of the economy, the Boeing Company. The lessons from that experience are instructive, particularly in what city residents must do to protect themselves from the boom and bust swings of big business.

To say the company-town experience did not go too well back then is an understatement. In 1969, Boeing's business forecasts failed spectacularly. Its investments and hiring fell out of sync with its commercial airline sales.

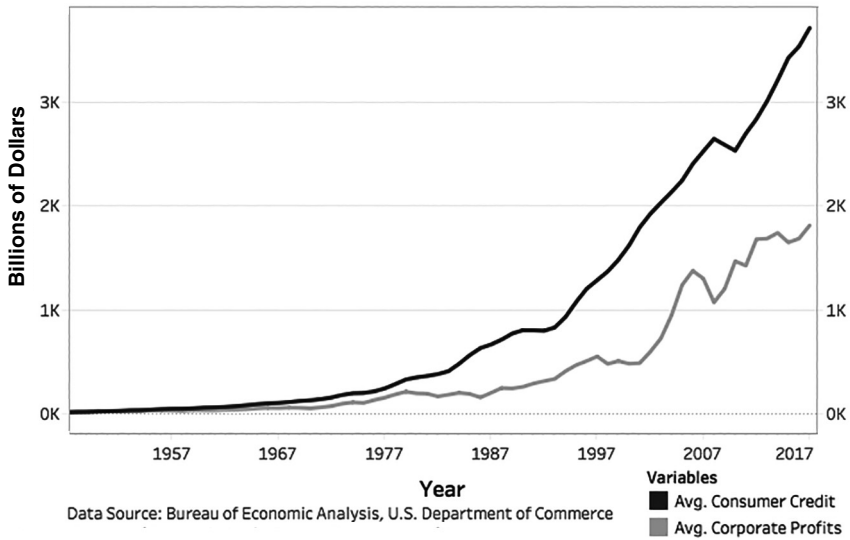
Federal contracts, the company's savior in the past, were in short supply. The result was near-bankruptcy and the elimination of 60,000 jobs, sparking what locals remember today as the "Boeing Bust": an unemployment rate peaking in 1971 at 15 percent and the starkest and most sudden economic urban crisis in the United States since the Great Depression.

Seattle's economy ultimately stabilized. How it did so is not well understood. The Bust is often summoned as an unfortunate but necessary prelude to the prosperity of the Microsoft-driven development of the 1980s—unfortunate due to its severity, but necessary to diversify Seattle's economy and reduce its dependence on Boeing. But this imagines a magic thread from Boeing to Microsoft that simply does not exist. It took the city another decade to overcome unemployment rates higher than the national average, with the area's continued dependence on Boeing heightening the severity of the Reagan-era recessions.

More significantly, accounts of the Bust overlook the economic protections—especially those traceable to organized labor—that prevented the urban economy from imploding entirely. In 1973, the RAND Corporation partnered with researchers at the University of Washington to study why Seattle's economic crisis had not hit harder than it did, with consumer spending remaining steady throughout the crisis. Nearly every reason cited by the study, from the high wages of residents to the relatively short unemployment periods of laid-off aerospace workers, could be traced to unions at Boeing, namely the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751 (one of the largest unions in the country prior to the Bust) and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace.⁴

Washington state has always been a leader in union membership rates when compared to the rest of the nation; many of these workers are government employees. Union membership rates in the mid-1960s stood at 44.5 percent, whereas today, only 16.8 percent

Corporate Profits and Consumer Credit Post-WWII



of workers are in a union. It is no surprise why today's Seattle is very different than it was forty years ago. The Seattle area has been growing its professional class—workers employed at Amazon, Starbucks, Microsoft, and Google comprise an increasing number of highly paid professional workers who are not unionized. Unlike unionized employees, these nonunionized private-sector workers have access to fluid financial capital, which gives them a competitive advantage over working-class individuals with access to little or no capital. In a housing market with short supply and high demand, capital wins every time.

Rents and housing are suffocatingly expensive and punish those who are not caught up in the industries that are growing Seattle. If Seattle wants to maintain its reputation as a progressive bastion in the West, then it must do more to insulate its working class from the inflationary effects of the incoming professional class. Housing is, at its core, a political issue, as David Madden and Peter Marcuse have recently argued: “The residen-

tial is political—which is to say that the shape of the housing system is always the outcome of struggles between different groups and classes.”⁷⁵ Indeed, Seattle has been growing in a particular way. What was once a working-class city with high union membership is now becoming more professional and nonunionized. This divergence between the working and professional classes makes Seattle one of the more predictive labor battlegrounds in the nation, pitting the working class against a growing professional class. This clash of classes also presents the city with a great opportunity, we argue: the chance to reform housing and form the foundation for a more equitable and progressive city. After all, in an ever-changing technology landscape, who is to say that Amazon will not follow Boeing's footsteps?

The Washington state government has been disturbingly absent when it comes to the plight of the working class. The state routinely cites its lack of tax income available to fund basic K-12 education, affordable housing, and public transit; yet, the state is also one of the

richest and most prosperous in the nation. Washington is one of only seven states in the union that doesn't tax income. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the state of Washington has the most regressive tax system in the nation, penalizing the working poor while creating an underfunded, and thus, unresponsive, state government. We argue that it is vital for the state to institute a progressive income tax to account for Washington's shifting demographics. Forgoing an income tax in favor of a sales tax will forever leave the working class worse off. Taxing consumption, not income, means that the state's growing professional class is left with a larger share of income not taxed by the state. This potential revenue could be used to reduce or eliminate the shortage of tax dollars available to fund K-12 education, while also financing an affordable housing program that insulates the working class from rising costs of living.

Second, we believe that removing the state ban on rent control could benefit the working poor. The state banned rent-control measures in 1981, and legislators have never realistically revisited the potential benefits of rent control until recently, with the introduction of HB 2583. Low- and moderate-income workers provide essential services to cities and the state, and when they are priced out of large metropolitan cities, they disproportionately bear the costs of growth. What's more, rent control has the potential to increase neighborhood diversity and stability, thereby mitigating the gentrifying effects of the rapid demographic changes detailed above. There are many opponents to rent control, but if quality of life is a political concern, then there are simply things that can't be left up to the market and, in turn, need some government intervention—otherwise, we might all be living in micro-apartments that are smaller than 350 square feet.

Lastly, a concentrated effort to revitalize the strength of democratic labor unions in the state of Washington and the nation is central

to the future success of the working class. Historically, labor unions in the state have protected workers when the inevitable busts to the booms of the business cycle rear their ugly heads. Recent events in West Virginia and Oklahoma prove that unions are vital to fighting the power of capital. Only together can we stand up and face the interests that hope to undercut our livelihoods for the sake of profits. Since the election of Donald Trump, the unionization rate in the state of Washington has climbed to 18.8 percent,⁶ making Washington the third most unionized state in the nation. Continuing this trend, while also building cross-industry solidarity, is necessary to account for the highly differentiated labor that makes cities and states prosper.

These are but a few recommendations that we hope can temporarily alleviate the strain on the working class. Corporations are currently raking in record profits while working-class wages have remained stagnant. The rapid increase in the cost of living and private household debt are creating a perfect storm just waiting to further discipline the working class. We should learn from Seattle's history; corporations think workers are disposable commodities that can be ditched at a moment's notice. It's up to the workers themselves to insulate each other from the perverse interests of capital.

NOTES

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Inequality Was Increasing Before Trump

RICK BAUM

THE FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD, the bankers' bank, has put out figures and reports showing that even before the Trump regime, the rich were acquiring a larger share of the nation's total income and wealth. The September 2017 Federal Reserve Bulletin reports that "the distribution of income and wealth has grown increasingly unequal in recent years."¹ Other government reports show that many continue to live in poverty and lack shelter and an adequate amount of food.

Government tables and findings undercut any claim that the Obama administration brought about a movement toward greater equality, as the "liberal" Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Krugman declared in a 2016 *New York Times* column. Said Krugman, "We expected good news [from newly released Census Bureau reports] but last year, it turns out ... that a government that wants to can make American society more equitable, improving the quality of life for ordinary families."²

Below is an examination of recent Federal Reserve Board information on the income and wealth distribution in the United States, followed by a look at government reports on poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity. Together, they show that the United States is not becoming a more equitable society.

The authors of the Federal Reserve Board article rely on statistics from the Survey of

Consumer Finances (SCF) that "indicate that the shares of income and wealth held by affluent families have reached historically high levels since the modern SCF began in 1989."³

Growing Wealth Inequality

What may be the most crucial measurement of inequality is the distribution of wealth—the value of one's assets minus what one owes. The table below, derived from the Federal Reserve Board, shows that the rich have been amassing a greater share of the nation's wealth since 1989.⁴

From 1989 to 2016, the share of the nation's total wealth held by the top 1 percent steadily increased by over nine percentage points, from 29.60 percent to 38.65 percent. During that time, those in the bottom 90 percent experienced a decline of more than 10 percentage points. This indicates that the growth in the share owned by the top 1 percent came at the expense of the bottom 90 percent. The poorest 50 percent experienced a decline in their share of the nation's wealth from 1989 to 2013 of almost two-thirds, to a measly 1.05 percent.⁵

Wealth inequality took off during the "recovery" from the great recession. From 2010 to 2016, the share of wealth held by the wealthiest 1 percent went up over 4 percentage points, increasing more rapidly than previously. This increase alone was more than three times the total share of wealth held by the least well-off 50 percent in 2010 (1.15 percent).

The changes in the share-of-wealth

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Wealth Shares by Wealth Percentile (percent)

	1989	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
0% -50%	3.02	3.33	3.59	3.01	2.80	2.54	2.50	1.15	1.05	N/A
50%-90%	30.18	29.74	28.81	28.39	27.43	28.01	26.05	24.30	23.65	N/A
Bottom 90%	33.20	33.07	32.40	31.40	30.23	30.55	28.55	25.45	24.70	22.82
90%-99%	37.20	36.87	33.25	34.72	37.14	36.22	37.72	39.98	39.01	38.53
Top 1%	29.60	30.07	34.35	33.88	32.64	33.23	33.73	34.57	36.30	38.65
Top 10%	66.80	66.94	67.60	68.60	69.78	69.45	71.45	74.55	75.04	77.18

percentages indicate that if the total U.S. wealth remained constant from 2010 to 2016 at \$88.1 trillion (as it was *estimated* to be in the first quarter of 2016), the wealth held by the richest 1 percent increased from \$30.46 trillion to \$34.05 trillion over that time, or by more than \$3.5 trillion in just six years—almost \$600 billion per year.⁶

With the recent rise in the stock market, wealth inequality has likely increased from where it was in 2016. It will presumably further increase as a result of the Republican tax bill.⁷

Growing Income Inequality

The Federal Reserve Board report announces, “Families at the top of the income distribution saw larger gains in income between 2013

and 2016 than other families, consistent with widening income inequality.”⁸

Below is the fed’s table on the distribution of income.⁹

The general trend from 1992 to 2016 has been one of growing income inequality. The share of total income going to the top 1 percent more than doubled, from 11.68 percent to 23.8 percent, up over 12 percentage points, while the share of the bottom 90 percent declined by even more, almost 13 percentage points. This means that the growing share of income going to those in the top 1 percent came at the expense of the bottom 90 percent of the U.S. population. This comes as no surprise, given the weakness of organized labor, hostile government policies toward workers, and the greater job insecurity many workers face.

Surprisingly, from 1989 to 1992, during the Republican Bush Sr. administration, there was a movement toward greater income equality. The share of total income going to the top 1 percent declined by almost a third, with most of that decline benefitting the 90 percent with lower incomes.

Since 1992, the trend of growing income inequality was only interrupted by a mild recession during the beginning of the Bush Jr. regime and, more dramatically, by the great recession starting in December 2007. From 2007 to 2010, the top 1 percent experienced a drop in their share of the country’s income by more than 4 percentage points.

However, as the economy “recovered”

Income Shares by Income Percentile

Year	Top 1%	Next 9%	Bottom 90%
1989	16.48	25.30	58.22
1992	11.68	25.89	62.43
1995	14.22	25.03	60.75
1998	16.79	24.48	58.73
2001	18.76	25.79	55.45
2004	17.13	25.54	57.33
2007	21.42	25.93	52.65
2010	17.25	27.06	55.69
2013	20.27	27.00	52.73
2016	23.80	26.51	49.69

from the great recession, the 1 percent of the population with the largest income saw their share go up from 17.25 percent in 2010 to 23.80 percent in 2016, an increase of more than one-third, while the bottom 90 percent's share of the total income declined. Additionally, for the first time, more than half of total income went to the top 10 percent.

Ironically, in this era, when there are recessions, there is a simultaneous movement toward income equality! And when the economy begins to grow again, income inequality increases.

In these measures of wealth and income inequality, what is absent is a presumed decline in what the bottom 90 percent can purchase with their income and wealth, and receive in social wages. The latter can be defined as the value of benefits resulting from government programs. Even if one's income increases, one can be less well-off if programs from which one benefits are cut or eliminated, or if one has to pay higher fees for government services. This decline in one's social wage can result from higher charges for public transportation, tolls, entry fees at state and national parks, and tuition to attend state colleges or to pay for after-school programs that once were free. Additionally, the reduction of government services, ranging from tax help to fixing potholes, has further contributed to an individual's costs going up, and to a decline in social wages.

The Situation of the Most Deprived

While the country's total wealth has increased, government figures on poverty indicate that eight years after the start of the great recession, more than 40 million people remain impoverished, more than at any time when Bush Jr. was in power. (In part, this is due to population growth.)

During the Obama administration, the lowest percent of those officially living in poverty came in his last year in office, when there

Population and Poverty by Year¹⁰

	U.S. Pop. (millions)	# in Poverty (millions)	% in Poverty
2016	319.911	40.616	12.7
2015	318.454	43.123	13.5
2014	315.804	46.657	14.8
2013*	313.096	46.269	14.8
2013	312.965	45.318	14.5
2012	310.648	46.496	15.0
2011	308.456	46.247	15.0
2010	306.130	46.343	15.1
2009	303.820	43.569	14.3
2008	301.041	39.829	13.2
2007	298.699	37.276	12.5
2006	296.450	36.460	12.3
2005	293.135	36.950	12.6
2004	290.617	37.040	12.7
2003	287.699	35.861	12.5
2002	285.317	34.570	12.1
2001	281.475	32.907	11.7
2000	278.944	31.581	11.3
1999	276.208	32.791	11.9

**redesigned*

was a significant decline in the rate of poverty from 14.8 percent in 2014 to 12.7 percent in 2016. Before 2016, the rate of poverty during each year of the Obama administration was higher than during any year of the Bush regime, including 2008, the first year of the great recession.

Of great concern is the number of children under 18 deemed to be living in poverty. That number was over 13 million every year during Obama's presidency. Until 2016, the percent of impoverished children was higher than for every year Bush was in office.¹¹

The poverty numbers mask other problems. In 2016, according to a Department of Housing and Urban Development report, more than 549,928 people were homeless, of which 120,819 were children under 18 years of age.¹² Most homeless children were classified as sheltered, which is defined as "people who are staying in emergency shelters, tran-

**Number of Impoverished
Children Under 18**

by year, in millions (percent)

2016	13.25 (18.0)
2015	14.51 (19.7)
2014	15.54 (21.1)
2013	15.80 (21.5)
2012	16.07 (21.8)
2011	16.13 (21.9)
2010	16.29 (22.0)
2009	15.45 (20.7)
2008	14.07 (19.0)
2007	13.32 (18.0)
2006	12.83 (17.4)
2005	12.90 (17.6)
2004	13.04 (17.8)
2003	12.87 (17.6)
2002	12.13 (16.7)
2001	11.73 (16.3)
2000	11.59 (16.2)
1999	12.28 (17.1)

sitional housing programs, or safe havens.” However, 11,953 were unsheltered, defined as “people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks).”¹³

The number of homeless people increased from 2016 to 2017 by more than 3,800, perhaps an indication of what is to come. One has to wonder what will happen when there is a downturn in the economy.

From 2010 to 2016, there was a decline in the homeless population, which fell an average of more than 14,500 a year. If a decline at that rate were to have continued, we would have to wait over 36 years for homelessness to be eliminated.

The lower size of the homeless population in 2016 does not reflect a less alarming problem: More of the homeless are unsheltered. That number rose by 3,089, from 173,268 in 2015 to 176,357 in 2016, and by an additional 16,500 in 2017.¹⁴

Number of Homeless

2017	553,742
2016	549,928
2015	564,708
2014	576,450
2013	590,364
2012	621,553
2011	623,788
2010	637,077
2009	630,277
2008	639,784

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is another serious problem. According to a Department of Agriculture report,

In 2016, 12.3 percent of U.S. households were food insecure—meaning that they had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members because of a lack of resources. That level is essentially unchanged from 2015, but down significantly from 14.0 percent in 2014.

... Food-insecure households can be separated into those with low or very low food security. In 2016, 4.9 percent of all U.S. households experienced very low food security, also unchanged from 2015. In this more severe range of food insecurity, the food intake of some household members was reduced, and normal eating patterns were disrupted, at times during the year because of limited resources.

Food insecurity and very low food security rose markedly during the 2007-09 recession. In 2007, 11.1 percent of U.S. households were food insecure, and 4.1 percent experienced very low food security. Since peaking in 2011 at 14.9 percent, food insecurity has declined but remains higher than the pre-recession level. Similarly, very low food security rose to 5.7 percent in 2008 and 2009. In 2010, very low food security declined to 5.4 percent and was essentially unchanged from 2011 through 2014. Very

low food security declined from 5.6 percent in 2014 to 5.0 percent in 2015.¹⁵

Those with a low income face worse food insecurity. In 2016, 35.7 percent of households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line were food insecure, which is almost triple the rate of food insecurity among the total population (12.3 percent).¹⁶

As of 2016, before the Trump presidency, according to another Department of Agriculture publication, the level of food insecurity among children was near the level before the start of the great recession:

Children were food insecure at times during the year [2016] in 8.0 percent of U.S. households with children (3.1 million households), essentially unchanged from 7.8 percent in 2015. These households were unable at times during the year to provide adequate, nutritious food for their children. As in 2015, the 2016 prevalence of food insecurity among children was near the pre-recession level of 8.3 percent in 2007.¹⁷

Liberal Distortions

What kind of wealthy society allows thousands of people, especially children, to go hungry and to lack the security of a home?

In his September 16, 2016, *New York Times* column, Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman wrote that, based on recent Census Bureau reports on income, poverty, and health insurance, we had “good news” in 2015 that included “a substantial decline in the poverty rate,” and median income rose “a remarkable 5.2 percent.”¹⁸

Was there really “good news”? Krugman admits that the “surge in median income comes after years of disappointment,” and that median income is still lower than it was before the great recession.

Above are Census Bureau figures upon which he presumably drew, covering average income of people in various income quintiles (each representing 20 percent of the population). This may provide a more accurate

Average Household Income

(2015 adjusted dollars¹⁹)

	2015	2014	2007	2006
Lowest quintile	12,457	11,689	13,204	13,345
Second quintile	32,631	31,123	33,656	33,829
Third quintile	56,832	54,103	57,120	56,689
Fourth quintile	92,031	87,935	90,435	89,729
Highest quintile	202,366	194,276	192,014	197,693
Top 5 percent	350,870	332,729	328,299	349,617

picture than simply median income.

These figures show that when comparing average incomes of 2006 and 2007 (before the great recession) with 2015, the average incomes of the lowest-earning 40 percent were less in 2015 than in 2006 or 2007. By contrast, those in the top 40 percent have higher average income in 2015 than 2006 and 2007, which indicates a greater degree of income inequality.

The average household income of each of the bottom three quintiles (60 percent of the population), grew in a range from 4.8 percent to 6.6 percent from 2014 to 2015, while the top 5 percent’s income grew 5.4 percent. When those with a lower income have a similar or greater rate of growth as those with a higher income, total income inequality can, nevertheless, increase. For example, the lowest quintile had a 6.6 percent growth in income, \$768, from 2014 to 2015. The top 5 percent had a lower rate of growth at 5.4 percent, but their income increased by \$18,141. That resulted in widening the income inequality between these two groups, from an average of \$321,040 in 2014 to \$338,413 in 2015.

In 2016 (using 2016 dollars) the gap increased more dramatically, as the top 5 percent experienced an average income increase of more than \$19,000 while those in the lowest quintile saw their average income increase by \$329.

Taxes Under Obama

Krugman writes that there is “a grain of truth” to the Republican “accusation” that Obama is

a “redistributionist.” The tax rates of the rich did go up. However, Krugman does not point out that this has not dampened their increasing share of wealth and income, resulting in greater inequality. Their increasing income may have more than offset their higher taxes, leaving them with far greater after-tax income than before the new tax rates.

More importantly, the increasing value of the wealthy’s assets, with few exceptions such as real estate, are not subject to any taxes unless sold at a gain, or, after they die in the form of estate taxes (assuming they have not found a shelter from this tax).

Krugman concludes that the “progressive policies [of the Obama administration] have worked.” One has to wonder what is the meaning of progressive policies since, according to the government, at the end of the Obama administration, wealth and income inequality were greater; more than 40 million people, including more than 13 million children, remained impoverished; easily more than 540,000 people were homeless; and more than 15 million households were food insecure during the year before the full and nasty effects of what Trump and the Republican gang will “accomplish.”

Krugman’s claim that the Obama administration made “American society more equitable” is baffling.

In a 2017 column entitled “The Republican War on Children,” Krugman rightfully criticizes the Republican tax plan. He points out that the actions of Republicans show “that they consider it more important to give extra millions to one already wealthy heir than to provide health care [by funding the Children’s Health Insurance Program] to a thousand children.”²⁰

Krugman goes on to write that “simple decency” is reason enough for “providing children with health care and enough to eat,” and “it’s still hard to believe that a whole political party would balk at doing the decent thing for millions of kids while rushing to further enrich a few thousand wealthy heirs.”

Wish he had said the same on behalf of the thousands of homeless and food-insecure children when Obama was president. Wasn’t that administration’s failure to forcefully speak out and fight vigorously to do “the decent thing for millions of kids” indecent?

TOO OFTEN, THERE IS A CELEBRATION of those with great fortunes, especially if they set up foundations and engage in what is characterized as philanthropic activities. One such person is Bill Gates, whose wealth was recently estimated to be as much as \$90 billion—enough money to provide each of the 553,742 homeless people in the United States in 2017 with over \$162,000.²¹

There is a contention that “behind every great fortune lies a great crime.” If true, should one characterize the increasing size of great fortunes as great crimes becoming even greater? Is the United States “free-market” system generating ongoing social criminality by allowing a large part of its population to live in poverty and lack adequate food and shelter while an increasing share of wealth and income are ending up in the pockets of the richest among us? These are trends that Trump is helping to continue, but did not initiate.

NOTES

1. *September 2017 Federal Reserve Bulletin: Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2013 to 2016: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances*, www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/scf17.pdf, 10.
2. Paul Krugman, “Obama’s Trickle-Up Economics,” *New York Times*, Sept. 16, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/opinion/obamas-trickle-up-economics.html. The title is appropriate because there was a trickle-up during Obama’s time in office.
3. *September 2017 Federal Reserve Bulletin*, 10.
4. The 0-50 percent is found at www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/95BF8144CFB24C649FAEF51B056738B9.htm. The bottom 90 percent, top 1 percent, and next 9 percent are found at www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2017-september-changes-in-us-family-finances-from-2013-to-2016-accessible.htm, Box 3.

The 50-90 percent figure is arrived at by subtracting the bottom 50 percent from the bottom 90 percent. For 2016, I have not found a figure for the bottom 50 percent. Perhaps that figure is now negative, given that the drop of the bottom 90 percent from 2013 to 2016 was almost 2 percent, much more than the holdings of the bottom 50 percent as of 2013, which were 1.05 percent of the nation's total wealth.

Note: Rounding results in totals slightly above or below 100 percent. Some totals from the first source above are slightly different than the second source.

5. Noteworthy is that wealth inequality is far greater than income inequality. For example, as of 2016, the share of the nation's wealth held by the richest 1 percent stood at over 38 percent, while the share of income of the top 1 percent is less than 24 percent.

6. Kerry Close, "Americans' Total Wealth Reaches Record High," *Money*, June 9, 2016, time.com/money/4363471/americans-total-wealth-record-high/.

According to a Federal Reserve report, the share of wealth held by the top 0.1 percent has also grown greatly. In 1989, it stood at 10.8 percent of all wealth, reaching 14.2 percent in 2013. During that time, the total holdings of the top 1 percent grew by 6.7 percent of total wealth. The increase in the share of the top 0.1 percent accounted for over half of the increase of the top 1 percent.

From 2010 to 2013, the holdings of the top 0.1 percent grew 1.4 percent, which is over 80 percent of the growth of the entire top 1 percent (1.73 percent).

See Adam Looney and Kevin B. Moor, "Changes in the Distribution of After-Tax Wealth: Has Income Tax Policy Increased Wealth Inequality?" www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/feds/2015/files/2015058pap.pdf, 2015, 24.

7. See *The Guardian*, "World's Richest 500 See Their Wealth Increase by \$1 Trillion This Year," www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/27/worlds-richest-500-see-increased-their-wealth-by-1tn-this-year

8. *The Guardian*, 1

9. See www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2017-september-changes-in-us-family-finances-from-2013-to-2016-accessible.htm, Box 3, Figure A.

10. Figures from U. S. Census Bureau, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016*, www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf, 44.

One might question the guidelines for determining who is living in poverty. Labeling one as living in poverty is based on one's income. In 2016, for single people under 65 years of age to be considered

impoverished, their income must be under \$12,486, while a household with two adults and two children is considered impoverished if total income is under \$24,339 (see page 43). In many major urban areas, the poverty threshold income does not even cover the typical cost of rent.

11. U.S. Census Bureau, 50

12. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf, 8 for homeless population, 10 for homeless children; and *The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf, 8, 10.

See also: www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/05/america-homeless-population-2017-offi

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13. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and for definitions see pages 2 and 3.

14. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 8, 9. See also *The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2015-AHAR-Part-1.pdf.

15. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Understanding the Prevalence, Severity and Distribution of Food Insecurity in the United States*, September 6, 2017, www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2017/september/understanding-the-prevalence-severity-and-distribution-of-food-insecurity-in-the-united-states/.

16. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Understanding Food Insecurity*, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2016*, Sept. 2017, www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84981/ap-077.pdf?v=42979, 2.

17. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2016*, Sept. 2017, www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err237_summary.pdf?v=42979, 1

18. Krugman, "Obama's Trickle-Up Economies." See also U. S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States:2015*, September 13, 2016, www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/

p60-256.pdf, 23.

19. All figures shown can be found on page 31 of each of: U. S. Census Bureau, *Income and Poverty in the United States 2015*, Sept. 2016, www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf; and U. S. Census Bureau, *Income and Poverty in the United States 2016*, Sept. 2017, www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf.

20. Paul Krugman, "The Republican War on Children," *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/opinion/republicans-children-health-chip.html. Krugman writes about how the Republicans are cutting taxes on the rich, including the estate tax that currently brings in about \$20 billion a year, but they can't find the money to continue financing the Children's Health Insurance Program that costs \$15 billion a year and helps create what are "likely to be healthier and more productive adults."

Note: The CHIP program was funded in the beginning of 2018 after the tax bill was enacted.

21. See Bloomberg Billionaire Index, Dec. 29, 2017, www.bloomberg.com/billionaires/. There are various estimates of Gates' wealth and how much it increased. The article at time.com/money/4913944/billionaires-bill-gates-jeff-bezos-richest-tech/ puts Gates' wealth at \$84.5 billion.

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Our Passive Society

CHRIS WRIGHT

SITTING ALONE IN MY ROOM watching videos on YouTube, hearing sounds from across the hall of my roommate watching Netflix, the obvious point occurs to me that a key element of the demonic genius of late capitalism is enforcing a crushing *passiveness* on the populace. With social atomization comes collective passiveness—and with collective passiveness comes social atomization. The product (and cause) of this vicious circle is the dying society of the present, in which despair can seem to be the prevailing condition. With an opioid epidemic raging and, more generally, mental illness affecting 50 percent of Americans at some point in their lifetime, it's clear that the late-capitalist evisceration of civil society has also eviscerated, on a broad scale, the individual's sense of self-worth. We have become atoms, windowless monads buffeted by bureaucracies, desperately seeking entertainment as a tonic for our angst and ennui.

The old formula of the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott is as relevant as it always will be: "It is creative apperception more than anything that makes the individual feel that life is worth living." If so many have come to feel alienated from life itself, that is largely because they don't feel creative, free, or active.

We don't often consider society from this perspective, but it may be of interest to adumbrate the ways in which modern capitalism tends to stifle human capacities of creativity and individuality. This stifling can

seem ironic, given that so many apologists of capitalism, or "the free market," have celebrated its liberating dynamics, its unleashing of human potential, its apotheosis of freedom and competition. In his bestseller *The Reactionary Mind* (2nd ed., Oxford, 2017) Corey Robin explains the logic of conservatives, from the nineteenth century to the present, who have seen the market as embodying the ancient agonistic ideal:

Power is demonstrated and privilege earned ... in the arduous struggle for supremacy. In that struggle, nothing matters, not inheritance, social connections, or economic resources, but one's native intelligence and innate strength. Genuine excellence is revealed and rewarded, true nobility is secured. ... Though most early conservatives were ambivalent about capitalism, their successors [came] to believe that warriors of a different kind [than soldiers] can prove their mettle in the manufacture and trade of commodities. Such men wrestle the earth's resources to and from the ground, taking for themselves what they want and thereby establishing their superiority over others.

Aside from this quasi-Nietzschean aesthetic ideal, which has attracted capitalists and intellectuals of fascist persuasion, thinkers have defended capitalism on moral grounds; most (in)famously, Milton Friedman's writings exemplify the argument that the market is "free, voluntary, and non-coercive" and thus a highly liberal, indeed libertarian, and *moral* institution. For ideologists like this, it would sound paradoxical to condemn capitalism and its culture as dehumanizing or as turning

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people into passive atoms.

We know what to think of such conservative arguments, though. They are of little intellectual or moral interest. The economist Robin Hahnel, for example, has no trouble demolishing Friedman's apologetics (*ABCs of Political Economy*, Pluto, 2002) by pointing out that the market is hardly voluntary or non-coercive if people come to it with different amounts of capital. In a sense, yes, employees have freely chosen to work for some corporation, perhaps even in a hideous sweatshop. But they have been coerced into making that decision by their relative lack of capital. It's either rent yourself out or starve.

In general, reactionary ideologies like Friedman's or those that Robin dissects function by substituting for gritty reality, forged in the crucible of conflict-ridden material institutions, an appealing, idealistic myth. In some cases the myth is heroic: free individuals, virtually bereft of socioeconomic context, battling for supremacy, bending the earth and the masses to their will; nations or races waging a similar but more apocalyptic war; or the Nietzschean notion of masters and the rabble locked in perpetual conflict, the fate of humanity and the collective will to power at stake. In other cases the myth is ethical: the United States spreads freedom and democracy abroad by invading countries; the philanthropy of the wealthy legitimates capitalism, in Andrew Carnegie's formulation; "a rising tide lifts all boats," as the typical American liberal declares (for example, Richard Goodwin, *Remembering America*, Open Road Media, 2014); and so on. All these ideologies are merely pretty disguises of political-economic realities and can be dismissed. (For an acute analysis of the role of irrational myths in capitalist culture, see Georg Lukács's magnificent polemic *The Destruction of Reason*.)

The truth, of course, is that after two centuries of the evolution of industrial capitalism, the individual is hemmed in by gigantic bureaucratic structures of social control and

economic exploitation. Starting from puny embryos in England in the late eighteenth century, industrial capital has remade the world in its own image, as Marx foresaw: the image of universal commodification, social "reification" and depersonalization, mass regulation of labor, mass markets, mass privatization, mass administration of society for the benefit of capital.

The early stages of this process have been analyzed by social historians in the tradition of E.P. Thompson, who, before Foucault (and more acutely than him), showed how "the modern subject" is a product of *subjection*, how workers and citizens have had to be relentlessly *disciplined* for the sake of capital accumulation. In his classic *The Making of the English Working Class* (Vintage, 1966), Thompson reveals the Herculean efforts of early British manufacturers and their state to impose mechanical industrial rhythms on a workforce that had from time immemorial lived by the pastoral rhythms of the countryside. These "lazy" ex-peasants just could not get it through their heads that it was their sacred duty to God, country, and employer to submit to the clock and the overseer in a cotton sweatshop every day from 5:00 am to 9:00 pm. Only if they were trained from the age of six and indoctrinated en masse with a submissive Methodism that preached the blessedness of poverty and hard labor and a compensation for their miseries in the hereafter was there any hope of widespread docility—although even then it was, as always, necessary to back up indoctrination with something a little more reliable, namely state-sanctioned killing (the death penalty for Luddism, the occasional military massacre, like Peterloo, and so forth). And so it continued for many decades.

Women were subject to even more policing than men, in accordance with authorities' belief (since before ancient Greece) that female sexuality, maenadic and riotous, threatens social order. It has to be controlled. In her book *"More Than Mere Amusement":*

Working-Class Women's Leisure in England, 1750–1914 (Northeastern UP, 2001), Catriona Parratt gives a sense of just how much energy and how many resources authorities devoted to this effort through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their task was monumental, after all—they had to kill an “almost Rabelaisian” popular culture:

Throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, women were visible and vital participants in popular recreational culture. In their cottages and workshops, in urban streets and on village greens, in alehouses and on farms, they worked and socialized alongside men. In the daily ebb and flow of labor and release from labor, and in the seasonal and annual round of celebrations, feasts, and holidays, ... they shared in an array of amusements that were gregarious and open. They gossiped and gambled, ... got drunk and got rowdy at private parties and public assemblies, ... and trekked out into open fields and onto moors to listen to ranting preachers.

Decade by decade, magistrates, justices of the peace, and new police forces got the upper hand: “Alehouses were closed, fairs were suppressed, wakes and other customary holidays were ‘tamed.’” Later, middle- and upper-class women promoted the “moral elevation” of the nation in their own way, by organizing “rational recreation” schemes that channeled young working-class women’s vitality into safe institutions like classes (in “domestic science”), lectures, and chaperoned dances. It was a steeply uphill battle for the forces of domestication, but by the twentieth century they had made immense progress.

In fact, they were already making significant progress by the mid-nineteenth century, and even in the less-industrialized United States. In 1840s New York, Democratic politician Mike Walsh lamented that “a gloomy, churlish, money-worshipping spirit has swept nearly all the poetry out of the poor man’s sphere. Ballad-singing, street dancing, tumbling, public games, all are either

prohibited or discountenanced, so that Fourth of July and election sports alone remain.”¹ By the turn of the century, the United States was becoming the world center of pacification of the working class, which is to say, suppression of its freedoms and bacchanalian tendencies.

This campaign was carried out at least as vigorously inside the workplace as outside it. The historian David Montgomery has described the epic, decades-long struggle between skilled workers, who were proponents of workers’ control within the factory (collective control over their specific productive tasks), and management, which sought to strip workers of all vestiges of control.² The businessman’s goal, of course, was to increase productivity, lower wages, and in general create a more compliant workforce. The explosive labor unrest from the 1870s until after World War I was in large part a response to this crusade to deskill work, to turn management into the brain and the worker into an appendage of the machine. The working-class ethic of “mutualism,” too, had to be undermined, by hiring African Americans as strikebreakers (to foment racism), giving higher wages to certain ethnicities (to foment resentment), destroying unions, planting spies in factories, and so on. Frederick Winslow Taylor’s ideology of scientific management was a quintessential, and very influential, expression of all these tendencies, for by breaking down work processes into their smallest components and transferring knowledge to the ranks of management, it effectively dispossessed workers of the remnants of their autonomy. And in fact, from that time up to the present, the capitalist agenda to deskill, monitor/regulate, mechanize, and finally automate has continued almost without interruption.

The one time there was something like an interruption was when the mechanisms of the capitalist economy ground almost to a halt, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. This was a remarkable time, which we might look to for lessons about the future (about

organizing the unemployed, building communal support systems, resurrecting *public space*, building a workers' political party, and so forth). It was the only time in the twentieth century when the drive to marketize and privatize everything, including nature and the nation-state itself, met sufficient resistance to be not only halted but even, in some respects, reversed. Because of the economic collapse, people were no longer only consumers and employees, only nodes in a network of buyers and sellers; to some extent they became actual people, with the revitalization of community, generosity, and shared struggles. Historians of that time are well aware of the glowing reminiscences of many who experienced it. Rose Chernin, for example, who was a Communist organizer in the Bronx, observed that

This struggle of people against their conditions, that is where you find the meaning in life. In the worst situations, you are together with people. If there were five apples, we cut them ten ways and everybody ate. If somebody had a quarter, he went down to the corner and bought some bread and brought it back into the council. Life changes when you are together in this way, when you are united. You lose the fear of being alone. ... In those years I was happy.³

The labor movement saw a tremendous resurgence, and working-class culture—which was quite different from the ruling-class culture of individualism, acquisitiveness, and greed—experienced one last flowering before it was finally suppressed in the postwar and then neoliberal eras.

After World War II, mass bureaucratization and corporatization came of age. The corporate counteroffensive against the leftist legacies of the 1930s and the New Deal was remarkably successful and far-reaching, such that politics and culture as a whole became, arguably, more conservative and “regimented” than ever. The colossal industrial unions, such as the United Autoworkers and the United Steelworkers, that had been formed in the

1930s purged themselves of the radicalism that had so excited Rose Chernin and were integrated into the “corporate-liberal” political order, serving, ironically, as enforcers of properly subordinate behavior on the part of their members. The domestication of women reached new levels as working-class conditions became middle-class conditions and millions of housing units sprouted on suburban lawns, manicured and garnished with little gardens, across the country. Meanwhile, the American mind began to fall to that great instrument of atomization, pacification, and indoctrination: television.

Noam Chomsky, in the tradition of Marx, is fond of saying that technology is “neutral,”⁴ neither beneficent nor baleful in itself but only in the context of particular social relations. But I’m inclined to think television is a partial exception to that dictum. I recall the *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip (www.geocities.ws/erbeeble/strips.html) in which, while sitting in front of a TV, Calvin says,

I try to make television-watching a complete forfeiture of experience. Notice how I keep my jaw slack, so my mouth hangs open. I try not to swallow either, so I drool, and I keep my eyes half-focused, so I don’t use any muscles at all. I take a passive entertainment and extend the passivity to my entire being. I wallow in my lack of participation and response. I’m utterly inert.

Where before one might have socialized outside, gone to a play, or discussed grievances with fellow workers and strategized over how to resolve them, now one could stay at home and watch a passively entertaining sitcom that imbued one with the proper values of consumerism, wealth accumulation, status-consciousness, objectification of women, subordination to authority, lack of interest in politics, and other “bourgeois virtues.” The more one cultivated a relationship with the television, the less one cultivated relationships with people—or with one’s creative capacities, which “more than anything else make the

individual feel that life is worth living.”

Television is the perfect technology for a mature capitalist society and has surely been of inestimable value in keeping the population relatively passive and obedient—distracted, idle, incurious, separated yet conformist. Doubtless in a different kind of society it could have a somewhat more elevated potential—programming could be more edifying, devoted to issues of history, philosophy, art, culture, science—but in our own society, in which television is controlled by institutions that are monomaniacally fixated on accumulating profit and discouraging critical thought (because it’s dangerous), the outcome is predictable. The average American watches about five hours of TV a day, while 60 percent of Americans have subscription services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu. Sixty-five percent of homes have three or more TV sets.⁵

Movie-watching, too, is an inherently passive pastime. Theodor Adorno remarked, “Every visit to the cinema, despite the utmost watchfulness, leaves me dumber and worse than before.” To sit in a movie theater (or at home) with the lights out, watching electronic images flit by, hearing blaring noises from huge surround-sound speakers, is to experience a kind of sensory overload while being almost totally inactive. And then the experience is over, and you rub your eyes and try to become active and whole again. It’s different from watching a play, where the performers are present in front of you, the art is enacted right there organically and on a proper human scale, there is no sensory overload, no artificial splicing together of fleeting images, no glamorous cinematic alienation from your own mundane life.

Since the 1990s, of course, electronic media have exploded to the point of utterly dominating our lives. For example, 65 percent of U.S. households include someone who plays video games regularly.⁶ Over three-quarters of Americans own a smartphone, which, from anecdotal observation, we know tends to occupy an immense por-

tion of their time. The same proportion has broadband internet service at home, and 70 percent of Americans use social media. As an arch-traditionalist, I look askance at all this newfangled electronic technology (even as I use it constantly). It seems to me that electronic mediation of human relationships, and of life itself, is inherently alienating and destructive, insofar as it atomizes or isolates. There’s something anti-humanistic about having one’s life be determined by algorithms (algorithms invented and deployed, in many cases, by private corporations). And the effects on mental functioning are by no means benign: studies have confirmed the obvious, that “the internet may give you an addict’s brain,” “you may feel more lonely and jealous,” and “memory problems may be more likely” (apparently because of information overload).⁷ Such problems manifest a passive and isolated mode of experience.

But this is the mode of experience of neoliberalism, that is, hyper-capitalism. After the upsurge of protest in the 1960s and early 1970s against the corporatist regime of centrist liberalism, the most reactionary sectors of big business launched a massive counterattack to destroy organized labor and the whole New Deal system, which was eating into their profits and encouraging popular unrest. The counterattack continues in 2018, and, as we know, has been wildly successful. The union membership rate in the private sector is a mere 6.5 percent, a little less than it was on the eve of the Great Depression, and the United States spends much less on social welfare than comparable countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Such facts have had predictable effects on the cohesiveness of the social fabric.

Meanwhile, as government has become less concerned with popular well-being and business has had a freer hand in how badly it can treat employees, bureaucracy has—contrary to the predictions of conservatives—only expanded. We’re told by free-marketeers that the penetration of market relations into ever

more spheres of life is supposed to reduce bureaucracy and increase “efficiency.” The opposite is the case (especially if “efficiency” is defined in terms of the actual well-being of people). In *The Utopia of Rules* (Melville House, 2015, 4), David Graeber states his “Iron Law of Liberalism” as follows: “Any market reform, any government initiative intended to reduce red tape and promote market forces will have the ultimate effect of increasing the total number of regulations, the total amount of paperwork, and the total number of bureaucrats the government employs.” He continues,

English liberalism [in the nineteenth century], for instance, did not lead to a reduction of state bureaucracy, but the exact opposite: an endlessly ballooning array of legal clerks, registrars, inspectors, notaries, and police officials who made the liberal dream of a world of free contract between autonomous individuals possible. It turned out that maintaining a free market economy required a thousand times more paperwork than a Louis XIV-style absolutist monarchy.

With the spread of privatization and marketization over the last generation, public and private bureaucracies, intermeshing, have hypertrophied. Graeber calls this the age of “total bureaucratization” (or alternatively, “predatory bureaucratization”). We all know from our own lives, from (the necessity of) our continual interactions with corporate and government bureaucracies, how maddening this development has been. No wonder that when an irate 75-year-old woman went to a local Comcast office ten years ago and smashed it up with a hammer, she became something of a folk hero.⁸

Speaking of Graeber, his notion of “bullshit jobs” is apropos here.⁹ The kinds of jobs that were first springing up in large numbers around the time of Taylorism in the early twentieth century, namely “administrative” jobs like human resources, public relations, and corporate law (but also, more recently,

academic and health administration, financial services, telemarketing, and the like), have attained unprecedented numerical heights. Millions of people fill these positions, which seem to become more numerous every year. The tragedy is that untold numbers of these people see no point to their jobs. “How can one even begin to speak of dignity in labor,” Graeber asks, “when one secretly feels one’s job should not exist?” Such a response signifies a particularly acute condition of what Marx called “alienated labor.” (One wonders how many people would identify with the central character in the movie *Office Space*, a classic expression of workplace alienation.)

In short, in less than two centuries we’ve gone from being free-spirited, unpolished, semi-rebellious plebeians and immigrants to being dutiful, docile, lonely bureaucrats administering fellow administrators who are administering the people who, obediently, do the actual productive work and get paid a pittance for it. We’ve become a society of units, a society almost perfectly “legible” to both the state and the corporate sector.¹⁰ Even in our forms of entertainment, we tend to be isolated and *receptive* rather than creative.

The nightclub culture, for instance, plays an important function in permitting young people to let off steam from all their weekdays of repressive rule-following. So once or twice a week they stand in a line at one of various designated spots in the city where they can go inside and let loose. In the safe anonymity of darkness, pressed against hundreds of bodies, they can lose themselves in the sensory overload of drunken dance-humping to a heavy pulsing beat under booming hip-hop music interrupted only by screams in each other’s ears. There may be little or nothing wrong with this sort of mass-produced, capitalist-friendly Dionysian recreation, but, whatever it is (and I find it mysterious), it’s symptomatic.

And what of love and sex in this brave new world of ours? It turns out that the most common way to meet people is in the privacy of one’s room, with the help of algorithms

written by dating websites. In 2017, online dating became the most common way that newlyweds had met one another, 19 percent of brides saying they had met their spouse online.¹¹ I don't mean to bash internet-searching-for-soulmates, but there is something pathological about a society in which people are "together" with others when they're physically alone and are alone when they're in the physical presence of others. Nor is the Tinder-originated phenomenon of swiping-right and swiping-left through an endless series of faces anything but the ultimate infiltration of the consumerist mentality into the ideally most *human* of spheres, that of romance and sex. That sphere is becoming practically the *least* human—with the help of an infinite supply of internet pornography, which encourages the attitude of treating people as but vulgar means to one's own pleasure. There is a disturbing tendency for us all to be sex objects for one another. Ours is a society of objects, not subjects.

Perhaps the most poignant expression of this state of affairs, and of the desperate loneliness that results from it, is the latest "revolution" in artificial intelligence: sex robots that can get aroused, can have orgasms, and have customizable personalities. One of them, Solana, has an app for a phone or tablet with which you can "drag her face around to make her move her head, give her commands to make her smile at you, and type in sentences for her to say." Another one, Samantha, "is programmed to want romance first, then get comfortable before getting sexual." She has different "modes of interaction": romantic, family, and sexy. "The objective," her creator says, "the final objective of the sexual mode is to give her an orgasm." Sex-doll brothels already exist, which are proving more popular than brothels with actual women—even when the women are available for the same price. But not all the new dolls are only for sex, we're assured: Some of them "can have conversations about anything, from history to science to politics." This capability "lends itself to

bonding," another sex-doll maker says, "and I think a simulated male that you can talk to and bond with will appeal to women too." Some customers have fallen in love with their dolls and married them.¹²

Thus we reach the *reductio ad absurdum* of trends that began with, or perhaps long before, the British Industrial Revolution, as people have become objects and objects have become people.

In the meantime, and correlatively, humanity continues to do next to nothing (compared to what ought to be done) about climate change and the threat of nuclear holocaust, either of which may do us in sooner than we think.

What is to be done? Now that we're approaching the literal manifestation of the capitalist *telos*, is there any hope? Or has our collective passiveness already doomed us to moral and physical oblivion?

The only hope is that, collectively, we will act to *create* rather than to *let happen*. We have to create and expand public spaces, for there is rationality in the public and irrationality in the private. As the activists of Occupy Wall Street understood, we have to bring back sit-ins on a mass scale, on a larger scale than in the 1930s and 1960s. We have to sit in at universities, and in public parks, and in legislative chambers; we have to sit down on highways and bridges and city streets. We have to flood the centers of power with wave after wave of popular rage. We have, in short, to *disrupt*, for that is how change happens. We should emulate the Luddites, pioneers of a sophisticated anti-capitalism (as E.P. Thompson showed), and totally resist our final reduction to the status of appendages to the machine.

In a society of exquisite bureaucratic subservience, we become free and active by acting, as have, say, the teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona. That's how we become people, as opposed to institutional automatons programmed to serve the powerful (who themselves are au-

tomatoes programmed to accumulate profit). The necessity is to act directly contrary to every norm of privatization, which is always in the interest of reactionaries.

But protest isn't enough. Nor is it enough to force governments to pursue more progressive policies. In the long run, it's necessary to create a new system of social relations, starting with new economic relations. I've addressed this matter in *Worker Cooperatives and Revolution: History and Possibilities in the United States* (Booklocker, 2014), and can't go into any depth here. Suffice it to say that a new, sustainable world will have to be grounded in economic democracy, which is to say cooperatives of all types, public ownership and control of major industries, public banking, divestment from the military sector and massive investment in public works and public education, and in general a "socialistic" transformation of the nation-state system. The vision embodied in the British Labour Party's manifesto (labour.org.uk/manifesto/) is an excellent place to start, for, with modifications, it can apply to every country that has had capitalism foisted on it.

In the coming years, the opportunity to seize our humanity again will present itself. The crisis of the old regime will lead to the birth of the new.¹³ Institutional breakdown will open up the space for radical experimentation in new modes of production and politics, modes responsive to the popular will. And it will become possible for the disenfranchised to take the initiative again.

There is indeed hope. We have only to reject despair in order to realize that hope.

NOTES

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Socialism as Pacifism

BRYANT WILLIAM SCULOS

AT TIME OF WRITING, we are still in the dissipating wake of another mass shooting in the United States, this time in a Parkland, Florida, high school. The American people are once again reminded of the ubiquitous threat of violence that characterizes their everyday lives. We are once again confronted with the nauseating reality of a two-party system that defends this violence in word and deed—while providing rhetorical paeans to security, freedom, and safety.

The horrors of seventeen dead children may justifiably capture the headlines and occupy the rhetoric of politicians bought by gun manufacturers and the National Rifle Association (NRA) for a few days—maybe even a week or a month—but there is almost no chance that the deeper violence that constitutes our society will receive much attention. Thus far, with few exceptions in independent left media, this is exactly what has occurred.

The left is, again, caught in a familiar pattern, calling for significant increases in gun control, greater access to affordable (mental) health care, and increased funding for schools so that disaffected youth are less likely to fall through the cracks of a deeply unstable system; highlighting the role that

shady campaign contributions from the NRA have on the federal and state governments' ability or interest in enacting any effective policy (or even to fund research on improved policy); and recalling the historical connections between gun control, racism, and worker suppression.¹

What is typically missing from the often-well-justified slogans that characterize the typical responses to gun violence is a connection back to a broader critique of the violence inherent to capitalism. Part of the inability of the left, particularly the liberal left, to connect these various responses to a broader critique of capitalism and its inherent, direct, and structural violence is the refusal of many on the left to appreciate that socialism, and even a watered-down social-democratic welfarism, is best understood as a kind of pacifism.

Now, before you call me a liberal idealist with no appreciation for the violence experienced by those who are most egregiously exploited and oppressed by capitalism, for the historical effectiveness of tactically deployed violence in various anti-colonial struggles, or for the potential need to use violence in a revolutionary context to prevent the reemergence of capitalism—hear me out.

Against the Self-delusion of Liberal Pacifism

While there is something lost in saying “socialism is not pacifism,” just as much confusion is produced if one claims the opposite, that socialism is pacifism. Socialism is not liberal pacifism, nor is it a tradition that opposes the use of necessary violence in self-defense.² While this is certainly a complicated

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theoretical and practical distinction, it is one worth highlighting.

Too often, pacifism is interpreted as opposition either to war or to individual acts of violence. While these are certainly viable readings of the pacifist tradition, they overlook the structural dimensions of society, which are themselves functionally violent and often lead to increased instances of direct violence.³

Capitalism is violent. The police, military, prisons, and under-regulated corporations conspire to enforce exploitative wage-labor relations and do seemingly as little as possible to actively protect workers, immigrants, people of color, gay people, trans people, or women from the incidental violence produced as a result. The juridically reinforced lack of access to high-quality, affordable health care is a kind of violence. Similarly violent are the “right to work” laws that undermine the effective labor organizing needed to ensure that workplaces are free of danger, harassment, and discrimination. Even the more obvious violence of imperial warfare perpetrated by the United States and its NATO allies around the world, at great profit to weapons manufacturers, has deep structural elements that more or less ensure its continuation.

The goal of socialism is a pervasively nonviolent world, achieved primarily — though not necessarily exclusively — through nonviolent means, thus making it a unique form of pacifism.

Socialism opposes (capitalist) violence. Socialism opposes structural forms of violence including systemic deprivation and exploitation, the direct violence deployed to defend these structural forms (like police violence and war), as well as the indirect violent con-

sequences of structural violence (such as drug addiction, intimate partner violence, suicide, and working-class “crime” more broadly).

Socialism much prefers the use of nonviolent resistance and organizing (for both ethical and strategic reasons), but its adherents acknowledge that defense against the violence of capitalism could require, and historically has required, violence to prevent further increases in violence (both direct and structural). Put more simply, if capitalism were nonviolent, socialism’s tactics would be too.

Socialism as Nonviolence: Principle and Practicality

The reality is that capitalism is inherently violent, both structurally and in that it requires direct violence to maintain itself. Socialism, on the other hand, aims to minimize all forms of violence. The goal of socialism is a pervasively nonviolent world, achieved primarily—though not necessarily exclusively—through nonviolent means, thus making it a unique form of pacifism. There are two dimensions to this pacifist interpretation of socialism.

First, and less controversial, is that socialists oppose all of the various forms of violence (re)produced by and through capitalism: workplace violence; sexual violence; police violence; war; pollution; devastating super storms driven by climate change; and lack of access to affordable housing, health care, healthy food, or leisure time to maintain one’s physical and emotional well-being—deprivations that can only be mitigated by acceding to the functional but precarious wage-labor market.

Socialists aim to build a world where these forms of violence simply don’t exist. While well-meaning socialists can disagree about the best processes to achieve such a society, or the specific institutional or organizational arrangements to maintain such a society, that the goal of socialism is to create a world beyond the violence of global capitalism

should be beyond dispute.

The second pacifist dimension of socialism gets into the means of achieving a democratic, egalitarian society beyond capitalism. Because socialism is fundamentally rooted in the equal worth of all people and everyone's right to live a decent life free of oppression and exploitation (tied to the prohibition that no person or group can oppress or exploit others), direct and structural violence are antithetical to socialism.

This is not to say that violence exercised in self-defense is antithetical to socialism, or that the violence of the oppressor is the same as the violence of the oppressed. Quite the opposite is true. Socialists recognize the potential practical justification for defensive violence.

The oppressors' violence is unjustifiable because it is exercised in defense of violence. The violence of the oppressed, exploited, or otherwise threatened is only possibly justifiable in strategic terms if it is aimed at lesser—and eventually the abolition of—violence.

Self-defense or practically grounded emancipatory violence is aimed not at the destruction of life, but in the defense of life. The question of when it makes sense or is justifiable to engage in this kind of violence can only be answered through praxis—through strategic and tactical decision-making rooted in the broader interests of the socialist project, itself aimed at a nonviolent world.

Jonah Birch and others, who represent an anti-pacifist interpretation of socialism, are not wrong when they point out that even though, in their view, violence is potentially justifiable for socialists, violence is unlikely to be a key tool in any long-term, successful revolutionary project. The capitalist states and the national and transnational capitalist classes have exceedingly disproportionate access to, and ability to deploy without conscience, deadly weaponry. These agents of capital can also exercise structural violence through punitive policy agendas like hyper-policing, mass incarceration, “right to work”

laws, and “welfare reform.”

Resistance to this violence of capitalism is unlikely to succeed primarily by counter-violence. For this reason, combined with consciousness-raising effects, socialists prefer

More aggressively taking up the mantle of nonviolence is both a theoretically justifiable and a rhetorically powerful tool for socialists.

nonviolent struggle (for instance, organizing, intervening, marching, protesting, running independent candidates in elections, and various forms of civil disobedience).

Augmenting Socialist Praxis

Beyond contributing to an otherwise merely theoretical debate, what is the payoff of thinking of socialism as a kind of pacifism? By thinking in terms of pacifism, socialists are able to name their enemy, as well as the reason that that group or class is their enemy, explicitly and simultaneously; the enemy is the violence perpetuated by the capitalist system, the capitalist class, and the capitalist state (especially its police and militaries). They are the purveyors of the violence that comprises life within contemporary capitalism.

When we think about anti-union legislation, for-profit health care, imperial warfare, police violence, intimate partner abuse, or even school shootings, the broader critique of violence offered by a theory of socialism as pacifism points us more readily to potential solutions. That is because this thinking gives us greater capacity to analyze the constitutive structures of violence, which are also often the roots of the too-often individualized instances of direct violence.

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting was a violent manifestation of a violent system that (re)produces a violent society. Nikolas Cruz, the confessed shooter, only 19 years old, was raised surrounded by violence and inadequate social care. He was overlooked by underpaid and overworked social workers. He was failed by underpaid and overworked teachers and school administrators. He was failed by overpaid and underworked politicians and executives of gun manufacturers, who ensured that an eighteen-year-old with a documented history of violence and mental illness could still buy an AR-15. He was failed by the president and by the Republican Party, which has repeatedly defended bigotry, sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and White supremacy. He was failed by a society that defends, normalizes, and promotes toxic masculinity—which the #MeToo movement and women's marches have again have again drawn attention to.

And if Cruz was failed in all these ways, his victims have been failed immeasurably more; they paid for these failures with their lives. All of this is violence that is structurally reinforced, if not caused, by capitalism.

More aggressively taking up the mantle of nonviolence is both a theoretically justifiable and a rhetorically powerful tool for socialists. Pacifism has been castrated by the hypocrisy of a liberalism that refuses to acknowledge either the complicity of existing institutions in mass systemic violence (reserving “pacifism” exclusively to the realm of individual

acts of civil disobedience) or, more broadly, the inherent violence of the existing order itself. By being unafraid to re-appropriate the word and tradition, we gain a greater capacity to point out those contradictions without surrendering the strategic or ethical high ground to inadequate, incomplete, or unrealistic discourses of nonviolence deployed in defense of a system of violence.

NOTES

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Libya under Gaddafi

CLAY CLAIBORNE

A CNN REPORT LAST NOVEMBER about slave auctions in present-day Libya shocked the world.¹ The existence of these slave auctions was widely treated as a new development in the country and a result of the chaos that resulted from the NATO-supported overthrow of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. In truth, however, what CNN discovered is but a surviving remnant of Gaddafi's regime—the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya—a police state with systematic racism and abuse both of Libyans of sub-Saharan African descent and of sub-Saharan African migrants.

Donald Trump has been wailing that U.S. immigration laws are “weak” because they provide some minimal protection to migrants and allow those fleeing from violence and repression to at least apply for political asylum. He would have loved the immigration policies of Gaddafi's Libya, which recognized no refugee status at all and fired on migrants with fatal effect for trying to enter, and even to leave, Libya without state permission. Also, no doubt, Trump would have cheered the extremely racist policies of Gaddafi and his government toward not only African migrants, but also Libyans of sub-Saharan descent, policies that included stripping black populations of Libyan citizenship, bulldozing their homes, bringing in helicopter gunships and tanks when they protested, and busing

hundreds of thousands out to the desert to die.

We know about the “slave auctions” that CNN reported on, and many other things—both good and bad—in Libya today, because now the press enjoys freedoms it never had while Gaddafi ruled. It wasn't easy gathering information on Gaddafi's Libya. Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2009, 12) reported that when they visited Libya in 2005, the “first migrant our researchers interviewed on the street was arrested one hour later.”

Nevertheless, there was research done on Libya, research that was available to all who cared to pay attention, which unfortunately didn't include a lot of the left. Here's what the record showed.

Gaddafi's Libya Was a Police State

This is the context for everything to be examined below: The Libya Gaddafi ruled was a poorly run police state. In 2004 Amnesty International (AI) did its first country report on Libya in 15 years. They found that government policy

includes the policy of “physical liquidation” of political opponents of the 1980s; numerous deaths in custody without adequate explanation; the “disappearance” of political prisoners, especially since 1996; and the “disappearance” of Libyan nationals abroad and foreign nationals visiting Libya. Hundreds of families still do not know whether their relatives are alive or dead, or how they died. Many are too scared to ask about their relatives for fear of retaliation. (AI, 2004, 3–4)

The report documented a number of

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such cases in detail, and also noted, “In 1980 the Libyan authorities introduced a policy of extrajudicial executions of political opponents, termed ‘stray dogs.’ The policy, known as ‘physical liquidation,’ seemed to have been endorsed at the highest levels.” (5) AI added,

In recent years, the Libyan authorities have used the international context and the language of the “war on terror” to further justify the continuation of a repressive policy at home which severely curtails the right of Libyan citizens to freedom of expression and association. The “counter-terrorism” argument is clearly used as a new justification for an old practice, enshrined in Libyan law, of repression of all political dissent. (12)

AI also had some specific criticisms of Libyan law under Gaddafi, and highlighted these:

Law 71 of 1972 bans any form of group activity based on a political ideology opposed to the principles of al-Fateh Revolution of September 1, 1969.

Article 3 of Law 71 provides for the death penalty for forming, joining, or supporting groups prohibited by law.

Article 206 of the Penal Code (Law 48 of 1956) provides for the death penalty for those who call “for the establishment of any grouping, organization, or association proscribed by law,” and even for those who belong to or support such an organization.

Article 208, which bans forming or joining an international association, states that “the punishment is imprisonment for whoever sets up, establishes, organizes, or directs international non-political organizations, associations, or bodies, or a branch thereof, without government authorization, or where such authorization is based on false or insufficient information.”

Article 178 prescribes life imprisonment for the dissemination of information considered to “tarnish [the country’s]

reputation or undermine confidence in it abroad.”

Article 207 states that “the punishment is execution for whoever spreads within the country, by whatever means, theories or principles aiming to change the basic principles of the Constitution or the fundamental structures of the social system or to overthrow the state’s political, social, or economic structures or destroy any of the fundamental structures of the social system using violence, terrorism, or any other unlawful means.” (19).

Two years before the Arab Spring uprising of 2011, the *New York Times* found that “Libya is a police state, but the trains still do not run on time.” So government services at the time were awful (“Step one block off almost any main road and the streets here are badly damaged or completely unpaved. There are problems with the schools, the health care system, and the government bureaucracy, which is plagued by corruption and inefficiency. Untreated sewage is dumped right into the Mediterranean.”), and on top of that, it was also the case that “the police here do not tolerate public criticism, and people still disappear in the night.”²

Migrant Sales Under Gaddafi

While CNN was able to document a few clandestine “slave auctions” in post-Gaddafi Libya, while Gaddafi ruled—nighttime slave auctions were common. Two or three times a week, the manager of a Kufra camp conducted the sale of several dozen migrants. A 26-year-old Eritrean told HRW,

Every two or three days, the manager of Kufra camp took 25 or 30 persons at night and sold them to Libyan transporters so he could get money from us. Other people were just thrown in the desert. Sometimes they would take people in the desert and run over their legs with a car and just leave them. He sold me with a group of 25 or 30 people to a Libyan man who put us in a big house in

Kufra and told us we needed to have our families send \$200 to pay for our release from Kufra and to take us to Benghazi. (HRW, 2009, 72)

Even children were used as slaves. One unaccompanied child, Kofi, an orphan from Ghana, was 16 years old while in Libya for one year in 2007. Kofi spoke of being pressed into forced labor after being detained by the Libyan authorities: "The guard took me out to work on his house. I worked all the time every day for four months, but he never paid me. Then he gave me to an Egyptian woman. I worked on her farm for seven months. She also didn't pay me, but she at least gave me food and clothes." (HRW, 2009, 62)

Gaddafi's Libya also regularly brought slaves back from its "adventures" in other African countries (Claiborne, 2011). Speaking of the Gaddafi-supported Arab supremacist terror campaigns in Sudan and Mauritania, Jeff Jacoby wrote in the *Boston Globe*, April 2, 1996, "Tens—maybe hundreds—of thousands of black Africans have been captured by government troops and freelance slavers and carried off into bondage. Often they are sold openly in 'cattle markets,' sometimes to domestic owners, sometimes to buyers from Chad, Libya and the Persian Gulf states."³

In 1993, Augustine Lado, president of Pax Sudani, noted,

In 1990, Africa Watch concluded that there was evidence of kidnapping, hostage-taking and other monetary transactions involving human beings "on a sufficiently serious scale as to represent a resurgence of slavery." And a declassified report from the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum released last May by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) documents how Sudan government troops and armed Arab militias are involved in massacres, kidnapping and the transporting of African Sudanese to Libya.⁴

As we shall see, there can be no doubt that this required the support of the Libyan government. In March 1996, U.S. congress-

sional hearings were held on "Slavery in Mauritania and Sudan" (U.S. House of Representatives, 1996), and while those two countries were the headliners, the subject of Libya kept popping up. For example, Augustine Lado told the hearing, "There has been very critical evidence that the people, our people, some of them were actually sold into slavery in Libya, Saudi Arabia, and other parts of the Arab world."

While Gaddafi ruled nighttime slave auctions were common. 2 or 3 times a week, the manager of a camp conducted the sale of several dozen migrants.

Charles Jacobs, research director of the American Anti-Slavery Group, testified,

As a result of the war, Arab militias, armed by the government of Khartoum, raid African villages, shoot the men and enslave the women and children. These are either kept as individual booty by the militias, sold north, or, as a recently declassified U.S. State Department document contends, trucked into Gaddafi's Libya.

He added,

Equally incomprehensible is the failure of Western human rights organizations to have marshalled public support for these black slaves. Today you are hearing directly from people who have seen slavery and who have interviewed slaves and escaped slaves in Mauritania and Sudan. But in fact evidence of slavery in Sudan, Mauritania, and Libya, compiled by the most prestigious and reliable sources, has been available for years. If the existence of chattel slavery in the last decade of the twentieth century is tragic, so is the failure of the human rights community

to have developed an adequate activist constituency that could come to their aid.

This statement was made in a congressional hearing more than twenty years ago, and it is all still true today. Only now we can add the rank hypocrisy of journalists, politicians, and members of the white left who are suddenly “shocked, shocked” to discover slavery in Libya. It is clear that the cause of human rights for refugees and immigrants in Libya, let alone the struggles against racism, human trafficking, and slavery there, could make little headway so long as the Gaddafi dictatorship ruled. Nevertheless, the white left seemed to discover slavery and racism in Libya only after the overthrow of the dictator, which they saw simply as a U.S. “regime change” operation, not a successful Libyan revolt. For example, Phyllis Bennis wrote an article in *Fortune* magazine (December 8, 2017) titled “How America Bears Responsibility for Libya’s Slave Auctions.” Bennis, after acknowledging that slavery’s origins in many parts of the world “go back centuries,” refers to “a new system of slavery,” declaring that “the emergence of slave auctions in Libya has a more immediate basis as well: a catastrophic Western military intervention.”⁵

The word “emergence” puts the lie to her statement. Her interest is in using slavery to attack those that overthrew Gaddafi, not in ending slavery in Libya. To do that, you have to start with the truth. And the truth is that this problem didn’t just arise with the fall of Gaddafi; it is the remnants of a regime of slavery that he cultivated for 42 years before Libyans changed that regime. Now they can begin to change this system.

The Exploitation Was Systematic

Under the Gaddafi regime, the exploitation of the refugee and of migrant flows was systematic and organized by the state. A major study by Sara Hamood (2006) for the American University in Cairo noted, “There

are indications that smugglers and police or prison guards may cooperate in order to make financial gains, both from receiving payments in exchange for the release of detainees and from facilitating further travel by illegal means within or outside the country.”

As refugee accounts from Libya at the time show, this was something of an understatement. Habtom, a 28-year-old Eritrean man who arrived in Libya in June 2008, explained, “The police know everything that happens in Libya. They know what is going on with the boats. They get their own share of the money. The only problem comes when the police don’t get their share of the money or too little of it. If the government didn’t like [the migrant smuggling] they wouldn’t do it.” (HRW, 2009, 53)

That government was the product of 39 years of Gaddafi rule at that point. The Hamood report (61) gives this picture of business as usual, Libyan style:

A stark example of this alleged corruption was related by an Ethiopian man, Y.U., granted humanitarian status in Italy, who was detained on arrival in Kufra after having crossed the desert in 2002. After about one year of detention without charge or trial for illegal immigration, he was released and told that he should return to Sudan, where he had lived prior to traveling to Libya. He and a group of others were driven to the border with Sudan, and at the last minute the Libyan police offered to take them back with them to Kufra for a fee. Each man paid \$300 and they were indeed taken back by the police to Kufra. On arrival in Kufra, the police themselves took them to a smuggler who could arrange for their travel to Benghazi.

HRW (2009, 55) gives us this story:

Aron, a 36-year-old Eritrean who was detained at the airport jail in Tripoli in 2007, said that the cost for a bribe was either \$500 in cash or about \$800 for a wire transfer. After he paid the bribe, Aron said that a policeman in uniform

took him from the jail in the police car and put him on the street in Tripoli. He later made an appointment with the policeman and “gave him money to release my friends.” Aron said, “It’s a rotating business. They take people out in the city, get money, and replace the prisoners with other Africans.”

HRW also tells us (53-54) the story of Tomas, a 24-year-old Eritrean, who was part of a group of 108 migrants who resisted boarding a clearly unseaworthy vessel in October 2006. Navy officials intervened on the side of the Libyan criminals to force them onto the boat:

Once I saw that boat, I knew I would die if I went on it. They forced two people on the boat and the rest of us began fighting them. Many military men came and caught us at the boat. The smugglers had an agreement with the Navy forces to take our money. They put us directly into the Navy port office. The people who demanded money from us were wearing Navy uniforms. They had an athletic build. They were clearly Navy, not coast guard. A high-level Naval officer spoke to us. What surprises me is that the person who told us he would take us to Italy is the same person who arrested us. The ones who arrested us were in civilian clothes. Those who said they were going to take us were in uniforms. But they all arrested us together.

Tomas concluded, “I think the smugglers were 100 percent connected to the police and the military. I saw the officers in uniform with stars on their shoulders talking to the transporters. And the drivers said, ‘There is no problem,’ when we saw the police or military. The smugglers also told us if we didn’t pay them that we would go to prison.”

Like other countries that have exploited migrant labor, Libya encouraged this immigrant flow. As Hamood notes (18), “At the same time, Libya ran an internal and external campaign situating Libya in the African do-

main and encouraging Africans to come to work in Libya, even by placing advertisements in daily African newspapers.”

Gaddafi’s Libya Refused to Recognize Refugees

The Gaddafi regime took the position that there were no legitimate asylum-seekers in Libya and refused to grant anyone refugee status. As HRW reported in 2010, “Libya is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no asylum law or procedure. In April, Libyan Foreign Secretary Moussa Koussa said his country ‘does not have any refugees but only illegal migrants who break the laws’” (HRW, 2010a, 19-20).

Trump would have loved that guy; this guy too: Brigadier General Mohamed Bashir Al Shabbani, the director of the Office of Immigration at the General People’s Committee for Public Security, told HRW (2009, 10), “There are no refugees in Libya. They are people who sneak into the country illegally and they cannot be described as refugees. Anyone who enters the country without formal documents and permission is arrested.”

We can glean Muammar Gaddafi’s views from this report on his 2009 visit to Italy:

During his first visit to Italy, in June 2009, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said that the issue of asylum-seekers “is a widespread lie.” He went on to say that Africans are “living in the desert, in the forests, having no identity at all, let alone a political identity. They feel that the North has all the wealth, the money, and so they try to reach it. ... Millions of people are attracted by Europe, and are trying to get here. Do we really think that millions of people are asylum-seekers? It is really a laughable matter.” (HRW, 2009, 10)

Libyan oil money fueled conflicts in Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Darfur that many of the refugees were fleeing (Claiborne, 2011). Commenting on Gaddafi’s EU visit, Ethiopian author, poet, and journalist Hama

Tuma (2010) wrote,

Over the years Libya has been accused of racism and of officially provoking the beating and killing of African migrants. Gaddafi's pan-African pretensions have always appeared shoddy and hollow as a consequence, and his recent statement in Europe—calling Africans ignorant and barbarian invaders—has nailed his coffin as an Arab racist.

For Gaddafi, the really big money to be made off the African migrants was the millions he got, some say extorted, from the European Union (EU) for all that he was doing to suppress that migration. That was what he was selling in Italy.⁶ When he spoke to Italian senators in June 2009, he told them that the money he was already getting wasn't enough, saying, "Many billions of euros are needed to stem the flows of immigrants into the Mediterranean."⁷ The BBC reported on his August 2010 visit, "Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi says the EU should pay Libya at least 5 billion euros (£4 billion; \$6.3 billion) a year to stop illegal African immigration and avoid a 'black Europe.' Speaking on a visit to Italy, Col. Gaddafi said Europe 'could turn into Africa,' as 'there are millions of Africans who want to come in.'"⁸

Needless to say, the millions of euros⁹ paid to Libya went straight into bank accounts controlled by Gaddafi with no accountability.

Human Rights Abuses of Migrants in Gaddafi's Libya

In 2004 HRW reported,

Libya's recent immigration "reforms," introduced by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, apparently after overtures from Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, resemble a catalogue of human rights abuses against migrants and asylum-seekers. African internees and migrants in Libya are being detained in what one [member of the European Parliament] has described as "catastrophic conditions." And Libya

continues forcibly to deport Eritrean refugees to Eritrea, where they face arrest, illegal detention and torture.

The Hamood report simply stated (5), "In Libya, refugees and asylum-seekers are not afforded adequate protection due to unclear policies regulating their stay in the country and to a lack of recognition of the specific legal status of refugees."

The UN Human Rights Council's 2010 review of Libya's record found that Libya "does not have a law on asylum-seekers and refugees"; that "Libyan women married to non-Libyan nationals are not granted equal rights with respect to the nationality of their children"; that personal status laws "do not provide for equal rights for women and men"; that there was a "discrepancy between the State's assessment, according to which Libyan society is ethnically homogenous, and information indicating that Amazigh, Tuareg, and Black African populations live in the country"; that there was an "absence of legislation prohibiting racial discrimination" and inadequate information "to guarantee that migrant workers are treated on a non-discriminatory basis"; and that Libyan laws prohibited "the use of languages other than Arabic or the registration of non-Arabic names for newborn children." (UNHRC, 2010b)

The U.S. State Department country report on Libya in February 2001 stated,

The government discriminates against and represses certain minorities and tribal groups. The government continues to repress banned Islamic groups and exercises tight control over ethnic and tribal minorities, such as Amazighs (Berbers), Tuaregs, and Warfalla tribe members. The government restricts basic worker rights, uses forced labor, and discriminates against foreign workers. There have been reports of slavery and trafficking in persons.

Hamood reported (22) that the Gaddafi regime used the immigration issue to promote

racism in a way that is becoming increasingly familiar to Americans:

However, statements by Libyan officials reported in the media more regularly describe the phenomenon of illegal immigration in negative terms, describing it as an “invasion” (AFP, August 9, 2004) and recalling the heavy price Libya has paid for the rise in immigration, especially after the increase in smuggling activities. Migrants are often presented as causing wide-ranging problems in Libya related to health, cultural norms, social relations, and the economic situation. They are also portrayed as bringing about a degradation in the security situation. Thus, they are said to be at the heart of the rise in criminality, the spread of disease (particularly HIV/AIDs), the decline in morality, the economic downturn (brought about by the abundance of cheap labor), and even to be linked to “terrorism.”

And Hamood noted (37) that these policies had results: “On 21 July 2004, 110 Eritrean nationals were returned from Libya to Eritrea, where they were at risk of torture. On arrival, they were arrested and reportedly held in incommunicado detention—that is without access to the outside world—in a secret prison. ... Until today, there is no news of their fate and whereabouts.”

Migrant Detention Was Brutal in Gaddafi's Libya

The detained immigrants and refugees were imprisoned under squalid conditions and regularly beaten as more monetary demands were made of them. Tomas, the Eritrean mentioned earlier, recounted an experience he had while he was being held at Jawazat Prison in 2006:

One day we were singing songs. The guards came and said, “Who is making this noise?” The others said, “The Christians.” (HRW, 2009, 81)

Migrants were subjected to very long pe-

riods of imprisonment in Gaddafi's Libya. A diplomatic source in Libya told HRW (2009, 74) that migrants could be detained “from a few weeks to twenty years.”

Amina, a 19-year-old Somali woman, spoke about her experience in Kufra: “They held us for ransom. They hit me and the others too. They hit us with a special stick for hitting people. Every time the smuggler guard entered the room he beat us. He said that we needed to pay them money.” (HRW, 2009, 59)

In late 2004, the European Commission interviewed some immigrant detainees in Libya and reported on the lack of due process they were receiving: “Throughout this period of detention, they had no access to a lawyer, nor were they presented before a judicial authority. In addition, no trial took place to establish their guilt or innocence, so far as they were aware” (Hamood, 31).

Instead of due process, beatings and torture were regularly used to resolve cases, as AI explained in 2004 (32):

From the testimonies collected by Amnesty International, it appears that if a detainee “confesses” quickly, they are usually subjected to light beatings or other forms of ill treatment. However, if a detainee refuses to “confess,” torture is used in order to extract a “confession.” The most frequently reported techniques are beatings with electric cables, beatings on the soles of the feet (falaqa), the use of electric shocks, and being suspended from a height by the arms.

Slavery, called “an obligation to perform labor,” was also a feature of Gaddafi's detention system.

The 2001 State Department report stated,

In its report this year, the Committee of Experts of the International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that in Libya “persons expressing certain political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social, or economic

system may be punished with penalties of imprisonment,” including “an obligation to perform labor.” The ILO report also noted that public employees may be sentenced to compulsory labor “as a punishment for breaches of labor discipline or for participation in strikes, even in services whose interruption would not endanger the life, personal safety, or health of the whole or part of the population.”

There have been credible reports that the government arbitrarily has forced some foreign workers into involuntary military service or has coerced them into performing subversive activities against their own countries. Libyans, despite the Penal Code’s prohibition on slavery, have been implicated in the purchase of Sudanese slaves, mainly southern Sudanese women and children, who were captured by Sudanese government troops in the ongoing civil war in Sudan.

The Hamood report (32-33) had this to say about the racist treatment African migrants received while in detention in Gaddafi’s Libya:

Both men and women reported being regularly insulted by guards who used racist remarks. ...

A Sudanese man, A.K., reported being detained in al-Janzur Prison, near Tripoli, in 1996 for two days, during which time he, and more than forty other Sudanese arrested alongside him, were made to roll around in dirty water until they became dizzy and immediately forced to stand and run for short distances from wall to wall, causing some to fall to the ground. They also had dirty water poured on their heads.

An Eritrean man, B.G., granted humanitarian status in Italy in November 2004, also related having to roll around in dirty water, as well as being forced to stand in the burning sun for long periods of time. He was detained for one month in late 2002/early 2003. ...

D.G., an Eritrean asylum-seeker in Italy,

was detained in 2003 for six months in four different locations. He described regular evening beatings and on one occasion being burned with a cigarette butt on his leg. He recalls the horrific experience of seeing a newly arrived inmate, a Chadian, being struck on the head with an iron stick which caused him to fall to the ground. The guards reportedly ignored the fall and continued to beat others. The Chadian detainee died shortly afterwards in the presence of D.G. and the guards. ...

As documented by Amnesty International, “the practice of unlawful detention after completion of sentence seems to be widespread.”

In 2004 AI reported (24) on seven Eritrean refugees detained in Libya:

For some 18 months of arbitrary detention, the seven men lived in fear of being deported to Eritrea, where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations. They have been moved to several different prisons. In two separate instances, the men described being beaten with sticks; ... Michael Yemane Tekle said that he was particularly badly injured on the second occasion and lost consciousness after being hit over the head with a truncheon. ... The men told Amnesty International, “We just want to get out of detention. We have seen here in prison what we never saw in our country.”

The most notorious killing in Gaddafi’s prison system took place in 1996, although the regime denied it until 2004. It was mentioned in the 2010 report of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC, 2010a, 4), which summarized relevant human rights reports:

Libyan authorities had failed to adequately address the killings of up to 1,200 prisoners in the Abu Salim Prison, in June 1996. Most killings occurred the day after a riot took place sparked by appalling prison conditions as well as the denial of medical treatment and family visits. Official recognition of the facts came only eight years later, when the

Libyan leadership acknowledged in February 2004 that killings did take place.

It should be added that in those eight years, while Gaddafi regime officials continued to deny family visits to the murdered prisoners, they continued accepting family payments into the dead prisoner's welfare fund.

The Abu Salim Prison massacre was far from the only one. It was just the most famous. Abukar, a 25-year-old Somali, was interviewed about a shooting at Ganfuda, a migrant detention center outside of Benghazi, where he had been held for more than a year. First, he spoke about their treatment: "The guards just keep us locked up here. They humiliate us. They beat us. If we talk to them, they punish us very hard. They hurt us with electricity." Then on August 10, 2009, "a group of Somalis and Nigerians saw the external gate was open and tried to escape. The guards opened fire on them. There were around thirty guards, but five did the shooting. I could see most of my friends were injured, and some fell to the ground" (HRW, 2009, 91).

Somali news sources reported twenty detainees had been shot and killed; Mareeg news website reported on it from Mogadishu: "At least twenty Somalis have been confirmed dead and fifty wounded in Bangazi town in Libya. The Libyan soldiers reportedly used knives and electric machines for torturing the Somali prisoners."¹⁰

And, of course, sexual abuse in detention was pervasive. A twenty-year-old Somali man told HRW about a "special house" outside of Tripoli where migrants were held and where women were raped. Daniel, a 26-year-old Eritrean man, was also held in a smuggler's house in Tripoli where women were preyed upon. He was also detained in Misrata, where, he reported, "Every night the guards took women for their pleasure." It was even worse in Kufra, where "all feared that they would be left in the desert to die." Berihi, a

32-year-old Eritrean man, saw women taken away (HRW, 2009, 60, 61, 83-84, 78).

Route 666—the Migrant Ping-pong Path Through Libya

Sub-Saharan Africans trying to go north for a better life, or to escape war, followed a well-traveled route that usually started with paying a smuggler to bring them across the Sahara and the Libyan border to Kufra. This account from the 2009 HRW report (64) is typical:

The smugglers were drug addicts. They didn't bring spare parts for the vehicle. We were left stranded in the desert with no food or water. The original agreement was to pay them \$250 to go from Khartoum to Kufra. But in the middle of the desert the Sudanese turned us over to the Libyans, and they told us we had to pay another \$300 or they would abandon us in the Sahara before we reached Libya. About 75 percent of us were able to pay. We paid for the other 25 percent, so no one was left.

Once in Kufra, they had to try to find transport to the coast while avoiding arrest and detention in desert outposts. Hamood (61) reports on an interview with B.M., an Eritrean man, about this leg of his journey:

On release from seven months' detention in Kufra in 2004, he explained, he was met by two officials, whom he understood to be the governor of Kufra and the director of the prison. They asked him how he had traveled to Libya, and he replied that he had come by means of a smuggler. The officials went on to offer to organize to take him and a group of 127 Ethiopians, who were released at the same time, to Benghazi for a fee of \$200 per person. When the detainees said that they did not have the money to pay such a fee, they were transferred some 5 km into the desert to a detention camp and threatened with being abandoned there if they did not pay the money. After the detainees insisted that they did not have money, the officials

suggested that they use the “hawala” system [an appeal to loved ones back home for money]. The detainees agreed and were taken to a farm, apparently owned by a police officer, while they waited for the money to arrive. Those who had money were released immediately, and once each group of twenty or so had paid their fee, they were sent with a smuggler in a pick-up truck to Benghazi. B.M.’s money arrived after a couple of days and he too was smuggled to Benghazi for \$200.

By forcing immigrants to use the “hawala” system to save their lives, Gaddafi’s oil-rich Libya was able to extort money, not only from the intrepid traveler, but also from the whole of impoverished sub-Saharan Africa.

If immigrants made it to one of the seaside cities, Tripoli, Misrata, Sirte, or Benghazi, they had to live like refugees no matter their legal status. That meant finding a boat out of there while avoiding arrest and living under conditions of complete illegality. Since both transport and living cost money, and as one fictitious refugee in North Africa famously said, “it was much more than we thought to get here,”¹¹ they probably also needed to find work while they waited and hid from the police. HRW (2009, 14) summarized its interviewees: “They said they feared being robbed, beaten, and extorted not only by common criminals, but also by the police. Many told HRW that they even feared children on the street, who often threw stones at them.”

The Hamood report (40) gave additional details:

Typical examples of the problems mentioned by respondents from Sudan and the Horn of Africa are: Libyan youth throwing stones at them or hitting, spitting, or insulting them, often shouting “abeed” (meaning “slave” in Arabic). Both men and women described facing such harassment when walking in the street or taking public transport.

In 2000 *The Economist* reported

that, “Black-bashing has become a popular afternoon sport for Libya’s unemployed youths” (*The Economist*, 2000). The Hamood report (41) noted that migrants also faced racist treatment from the police and other Libyan government agencies:

When relating the problems they faced from Libyan society, interviewees regularly described what they saw as a massive disparity between the treatment by police and other state officials of foreigners, particularly sub-Saharan Africans, and that of Libyan nationals. Those interviewed felt that they had no recourse to the police, who would never take action against a Libyan in the case of a dispute between a Libyan and a “black African.”

Hamood added for clarification, “When probed, respondents using the term ‘foreigners’ explained that they specifically meant ‘Blacks.’”

According to HRW (2009, 58),

Being mugged is a common experience for migrants, particularly for sub-Saharan Africans, in Tripoli and other cities, as is having children throw stones at them. Ermi, a 25-year-old Eritrean, expressed experiences and feelings shared by other migrants in interviews: “Even children took money from me. Libyans could beat me and I couldn’t defend myself. Even their parents didn’t stop them. The police back them up. Most of them don’t know that we are human beings.”

F.H., a Somali refugee interviewed in Egypt, told Hamood (40), “Libyans have a separate plate for their black servant and they refuse to eat from it after it has been used by them, they might even throw it away.”

Such racist attitudes among the Arab population led to pogroms in Gaddafi’s Libya. Hamood (40) reported on one occurrence:

The potential for this racism to have dangerous and even fatal consequences was borne out in 2000, when racist attacks against sub-Saharan Africans led to dozens of deaths and scores of injuries.

Disturbances in Tripoli and neighboring al-Zawiyah soon spread to other parts of the country. Many sub-Saharan Africans found themselves homeless after their homes were burned and looted, forcing them to move to camps, “where on occasion members of the security forces failed to protect them from further attack. On at least one occasion, there were allegations of police involvement in the attacks.” The attacks were followed by a wave of large-scale repatriations. In 2001 two Libyans, a Ghanaian, and four Nigerians were sentenced to death in connection with the attacks.

The October 12, 2000, report in *The Economist* provided additional detail:

Planeloads of bodies, dead and alive, flew back to West Africa from Tripoli this week, after Libya's worst outbreak of anti-foreigner violence since the expulsion of Italians and Jews in Muammar Gaddafi's coup in 1969. Survivors told of pogroms.

Emeka Nwanko, a 26-year-old Nigerian welder, was one of hundreds of thousands of black victims of the Libyan mob. He fled as gangs trashed his workshop. His friend was blinded, as Libyan gangs wielding machetes roamed the African townships. Bodies were hacked and dumped on motorways. A Chadian diplomat was lynched and Niger's embassy put to the torch. Some Nigerians attacked their own embassy after it refused refuge to nationals without proper papers—the vast majority.

Libyans sheltering Africans were warned that their homes would be next. Some of Libya's indigenous one million black citizens were mistaken for migrants, and dragged from taxis. In parts of Benghazi, blacks were barred from public transport and hospitals. Pitched battles erupted in Zawiya, a town near Tripoli that is ringed with migrant shantytowns. Diplomats said that at least 150 people were killed, 16 of them Libyans. The all-powerful security forces intervened by shooting

into the air. ...

Over the past fortnight, hundreds of thousands of black migrants have been herded into trucks and buses, driven in convoy towards the border with Niger and Chad, 1,600 km (1,000 miles) south of Tripoli, and dumped in the desert.

Europe didn't have a problem with hundreds of thousands of Africans left by Gaddafi in the desert to die. There was no outcry, and U.S. members of the white left, from Cynthia McKinney¹² to Dennis Kucinich,¹³ continued to sing Gaddafi's praises. The migrants certainly couldn't call on the police for protection. There were no sanctuary cities in Gaddafi's Libya. Now, in Trump's America, illegal immigrants who have spent the better part of their lives in the United States may find themselves detained at any time. This was always the case in Gaddafi's Libya, where they might be detained for years, beaten, tortured, and sold into slavery or left to die in the desert. A European Commission team commented, “The detainees did not understand the reasons for their detention since many had already spent years in Libya, mostly working and establishing themselves on a temporary basis in the fringes of any process allowing legal residence.” (Hamood, 31)

Maybe the reason for their detention was to squeeze them dry of what little they had accumulated by working and trying to establish themselves. However, even when they were lucky enough to find work as illegal immigrants, that didn't necessarily mean they would get paid for it, as the Hamood report (41) related:

The two most common problems faced were related to thefts, especially by Libyan youth, and not being paid their salary after having completed their work. M.A.A., a Somali refugee in Egypt, said, “Somalis prefer not working in Libya because they know they will be beaten and humiliated.” M., a Darfuran asylum-seeker in Italy, elaborated further

with a somewhat typical response, “Many people work and do not receive their salary at the end. If you ask for your money, they beat you and the police do nothing to help.”

The Return Route: Failed Boat Crossings Meant Death or Detention

When migrants did find transport, they were likely to pay a premium for travel on a safe ship, only to later be forced onto a flimsy raft at gunpoint, with beatings. Then the motor would likely die in the first hours of the voyage, leaving them adrift. That’s what happened to Daniel, the 26-year-old Eritrean:

The smugglers beat us with a stick to get us to board the boat. They crammed 264 of us onto the boat. There were pregnant women, babies, children. The captain of the boat said there were too many, but the smugglers wouldn’t listen. After ten hours, the motor broke. We had no food or water. We drifted for five days. ... We were waiting to die. (HRW, 2009, 38)

The group got “lucky” and were found by a coast guard boat from Malta, which towed them back to Libya:

When we arrived, there were no doctors, nothing to help, just military police. They started punching us. They said, “You think you want to go to Italy.” They were mocking us. We were thirsty, and they were hitting us with sticks and kicking us. For about one hour they beat everyone who was on the boat. Then they put us in a closed truck with only two little windows, not enough air to breathe. There was no food or water on the truck. It was 40 degrees centigrade outside but it felt like 80 degrees inside the truck. I thought we would all die inside the truck, but somehow we all survived. They first took us to Al Fellah Prison, but it was full, so they took us to Misrata Prison. (HRW, 2009, 39)

In a way, Daniel’s boat really was lucky. If

Gaddafi’s Libyan Navy had found it, it might have been fired upon with live ammunition.

In 2010, for example, a Libyan patrol boat with Italian officers aboard opened fire on an Italian fishing trawler. Since Gaddafi had long been working with Berlusconi to suppress the refugee flow, they were both quick to patch things up, with the Italian interior minister explaining, “Perhaps [the Libyans] mistook the fishing boat for a boat with illegal migrants.” Apparently, that was okay with the Italians, so they were willing to excuse it on that basis (HRW, 2010b). (It wasn’t just refugees at sea who were met with lethal force: “West Africans describe similar problems when they enter Libya’s southwestern frontier. Migrants said that border police would shoot at them” [HRW, 2009, 64])

If the Italian Navy found an immigrant boat, it might not be fired upon, but it would be returned to Libyan custody where the beatings would begin again. As HRW (2010b) reported, “Italy and Libya patrol waters near their borders to interdict boat migrants and return them summarily to Libya without screening ... to identify refugees, the sick or injured, pregnant women, unaccompanied children, victims of trafficking, or victims of violence against women.”

Some of the migrant boats sank on the way to Europe, and, if they were lucky enough to be rescued, the passengers were brought back to Libya and imprisoned. This is what happened to Abdi Hassan, a 23-year-old Somali. He was imprisoned in Zleitan after the boat he was on sank and he was rescued. He described his release on July 7, 2008:

The head of the prison used me to translate an announcement to all the prisoners. He said, “It’s time for business. Everyone has to pay us \$1,000 for rescuing them at sea. Those who pay will be sent to the smugglers to help them go to Europe.” Most of us paid the money. We were all released and taken by police car to the Abu Salim neighborhood and put at the door of the smuggler’s house,

back where we had started before our boat sank. (HRW, 2009, 88)

That was how the cycle was made to repeat itself until Gaddafi's Libya had squeezed the last dollar the poor immigrant had or could raise from the folks back home.

The Return Route— Deportation Back to Kufra

After varying periods of imprisonment and abuse in the coastal region, in which more money was extorted from them, they were likely to be transported back to Kufra for deportation from Libya. HRW (2010c) told of the aftermath of an immigrant prison protest:

Detainees told Human Rights Watch that Libyan guards severely beat them in the confrontation in Misrata, as well as on the way to al-Biraq; some were taken from Misrata to hospitals, while others arrived at al-Biraq with broken limbs. The detainees said they were given no food or water during the journey and no medical attention in al-Biraq. They also said that Libyan guards told them they would be deported to Eritrea.

Then as now, deportation to Eritrea meant “imminent torture or death at the hands of the brutal, dictatorial regime that rules Eritrea.”¹⁴ The truck journeys themselves were “extremely dangerous and degrading. Migrants told HRW about being crammed into closed vehicles with almost no air. They would remain standing for a two-day journey, not allowed out even to urinate and defecate.” (HRW, 2009, 71)

Being trucked to Kufra for deportation didn't necessarily mean that the migrants would get there. Very likely they would be released short of Kufra to traffickers who would take them back to Tripoli if they could pay, or leave them in the desert if they couldn't. “Libyan authorities in the coastal area put migrants (particularly from the Horn of Africa) in trucks and send them to Kufra purportedly to deport them across the land

border with Sudan, but often they are not actually deported, rather simply left in the Libyan desert” (HRW, 2009, 70).

Tomas, the 24-year-old Eritrean we met above, was sent to Kufra after his failed boat attempt and a two-month stay in Jawazat Prison in Tripoli. He continues his story:

After two months, they put us with another group of Eritreans—150 people in all. They put us in a big truck packed with people. There wasn't room for anyone to sit down. ... The only air was from some open holes in the roof of the truck; otherwise it was completely closed. The truck drove us from Tripoli to Kufra. We started at 6 am and traveled all day and all the next night. The truck was closed the entire trip. There were cracks in the floor and people urinated on the floor, but my eyes were in pain from the smell.

We begged for air. The truck would stop for the drivers to take a break and eat, but they would not open the door for us. They were afraid we would run away. The worst was when we arrived in Kufra. At least the air circulated when we were moving. In Kufra, we stopped for two hours in 45 degree [Celsius] weather and we could hardly breathe. The truck was made of metal. They kept us in there for two hours as punishment because we were shouting during the journey. God is great; we all survived.

When they let us out of the truck, we were in Kufra prison. We spent one week there. They fed us food only once a day; rice only. Ramadan was over. I had already experienced two months of hunger in prison. We were now 800 prisoners crowded in different rooms. We slept on pieces of cardboard. There were no mattresses. It was dirty. The guards had no communication with us. They just opened and closed the doors.

Kufra is the border place for deportation. They just let you go from there because there is no place to go. There are always three nationalities there: Sudanese,

Eritreans, and Ethiopians. They cast you back to your country at Kufra. They don't actually take you to the border; they just let you go.

But the smugglers have an agreement with the prison commander. When they let us go, we are ready for market. The drivers wait for us outside the Kufra prison and make deals to take us to Tripoli. The drivers say that they have paid money to get us out of prison. They then take us out of the city to a place in the open bush.

The drivers told us we had to pay them money since they had paid to get us released from prison. We had either to pay the 40-dinar bribe to get us out of prison or \$400 to get to Tripoli. The only way to do that is to call your family to have them send money. My family sent money and I went back to Tripoli. (HRW, 2009, 72-73)

The 2009 HRW report (14-15) described how a truck ride to Kufra, ostensibly for deportation, was turned into a way of recycling the poor immigrant through Libya again to squeeze more money out of him or her:

Libya trucks migrants from the coastal areas to its land borders to deport them. Migrants from the Horn of Africa, including Somalia and Eritrea, are sent by truck to Kufra in Libya's remote southeastern corner to be deported into Sudan. In some cases, however, they are not actually deported. Instead, according to testimony from migrants, they are left in the desert within Libyan territory. In practice, this means that such migrants have no choice but to put their lives in the hands, once again, of the smugglers who brought them from Kufra to Benghazi or Tripoli in the first place, usually abusing them along the way.

Sub-Saharan migrants sent to Kufra for "deportation" were turned over to the human traffickers or simply left to die in the desert, depending on whether they can still pay or not. Many saw the bodies of migrants who had been left in the desert to perish. Madihah,

a 24-year-old Eritrean woman, was left in the desert by smugglers and saw what happened to others who had been similarly abandoned: "I walked to Libya after being dropped in the desert. I saw the bodies of Eritreans and their ID cards there in the desert—two ladies and a boy who looked Eritrean. It took 24 days to get through the desert" (HRW, 2009, 64).

The Bounce—from Kufra Back to the Coast

If they could pay, the cycle repeated until they reached Europe or died trying. Ghedi, a 29-year-old Somali, described how he had to bargain for his release from Kufra detention center in April 2008: "The first time I paid \$300 and was not released. Then I paid another \$500 and was released. It was at night. The smugglers and the police—or the army—were the same. They were all the same" (HRW, 2009, 76). As HRW summarized the pattern in its 2009 report (72),

Although the authorities transport migrants to Kufra for the supposed purpose of expelling them overland to Egypt or Sudan, in fact the Kufra authorities sometimes do not actually take them to the border but rather leave them in the desert outside Kufra or make deals with smugglers who pick them up to start the process again.

For those few lucky enough to finally reach the "promised land" of Italy, this 2009 Reuters article, titled "'Modern slave' migrants toil in Italy's tomato fields," gives us an idea of what they could expect:

Every year thousands of immigrants, many from Africa, flock to the fields and orchards of southern Italy to scrape a living as seasonal workers picking grapes, olives, tomatoes and oranges. Broadly tolerated by authorities because of their role in the economy, they endure long hours of backbreaking work for as little as 15-20 euros (\$22-\$29) a day, and live in squalid makeshift camps without running water or electricity. ...

"It's a feudal system like in the Middle Ages. These modern slaves are handy for the economy: you can exploit them and then get rid of them when you don't need them anymore," said Father Arcangelo Maira, a local priest trying to help the immigrants. ... "They left their country and came here hoping to find an El Dorado, but they end up living in conditions that are often worse than what they had at home," said Benelli.¹⁵

Arab Supremacy Is the Child of White Supremacy

White supremacy developed out of the European practice of enslaving Africans in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁶ Arab supremacy is a derivative of white supremacy. It emerged relatively recently, in the wake of World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. While historically the Arabs also enslaved Africans, the practice never played the critical economic role for them that it did for the Europeans who built empires with slaves. Far from providing the material basis for racist ideology, Arabs trafficked mainly in African women, who were prized for their beauty. They were sold into harems, where they were integrated into the culture and bore their master's children. This was not American-style racial slavery. Those children became full heirs to their fathers' names, legacies, and fortunes, no matter how dark they were. That is why African blood can be seen in almost every Arab face. The vile hatred for that African blood practiced by Muammar Gaddafi and the other Arab supremacists who supported him had a different genesis. It aped the customs and practices of the white racism that seemed to be doing so well as the 300-year-old Ottoman Empire was collapsing. As Jihan A. Mohammed put it, "The emergence of the Arab supremacy was a reaction to the Western powers, Western colonialism, and imperialism in the early twentieth century."¹⁷

Libyan Racism Under Gaddafi

Tomas, the 24-year-old Eritrean, remembers the racism as well as the abuse he experienced in Libya: "They called me 'nigger' as they beat me" (HRW, 2009, 89).

It is a fitting tribute to the fatherhood of white supremacy that these Arab speakers used an English word to insult these Africans. "Nigger" is a racial slur for Africans that developed in the United States in the 1700s along with slavery.¹⁸ The Hamood report (29) noted the effects of this racism on African migrants:

For sub-Saharan Africans, there are additional difficulties faced from society at large, notably racism. Testimonies of some of the Egyptian respondents, as well as those of sub-Saharan Africans, describe a situation in which sub-Saharan Africans face greater difficulties both from state officials, such as police officers and prison guards, and from ordinary members of society by virtue of the color of their skin.

For Hama Tuma (2010), the responsibility for these racist policies came straight from the top:

For all his claims to the contrary, Gaddafi has no respect for Africa or Africans. This is not just manifested by how very inhumanely he treats African workers and asylum-seekers, nor by his self-declaration as the King of All African tribes, but mainly by his deeply ingrained chauvinism and pretension to be an African Messiah. No wonder he refers to Africans as starved and ignorant and violates the rights of Black Africans in Libya.

In 2010 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights compiled reports on Libya's human rights record, including on ethnic and racial discrimination in government policy. Some of these addressed the plight of the Berber, or Amazigh, people, who would later be among the strongest supporters of the revolution:

Some 10 percent of the Libyan population was estimated to be of Amazigh origin. Tens of thousands of Tuareg people migrated from Niger and Mali to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in search for jobs after the disastrous drought in the Sahel countries in the 1970s. But the Libyan government insisted on the Arab identity of the country and described claims of Amazigh identity as a colonial invention. Despite the fact that the Amazigh were the indigenous population of North Africa, on March 1, 2007, the Libyan leadership has publicly stated that no Berbers were living in North Africa. These remarks have caused an outcry among the Amazigh community in North Africa. STP [The Society for Threatened Peoples] reported that the president of the World Amazigh Congress wrote an open letter and protested against the denial of the existence of 30 million Amazigh in North Africa. Libyan Amazigh were facing ostracism, exclusion, and broad discrimination, stated the letter. (UNHRC, 2010a, 6)

The Toubou, too, faced awful conditions:

STP recalled that massive discrimination of the Toubou minority had been reported from the southeastern part of the country. Some 4,000 Toubou people are living in the town of Kufra, an oasis city of 44,000 inhabitants some 2,000 kilometres from Tripoli. In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, they were treated as foreigners by the authorities. In December 2007, the Libyan government withdrew citizenship from members of the Toubou group, stating that they were not Libyans but Chadians. Furthermore, the local authorities issued decrees barring Toubou from access to education and health care services. The armed movement Front for the Salvation of the Toubou Libyans has opposed these measures, and up to 33 people died in Kufra during five days of fighting between the official security forces and the Toubou in November 2008. (UNHRC, 2010a, 7)

A report for the Carnegie Endowment

for International Peace summarized events this way:

Throughout the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the Toubou in Kufra saw their livelihood decline precipitously, with the majority of Toubou confined to ghetto-like conditions in the districts of Swaydiya and Qaderfi. In 2007, Gaddafi withdrew Libyan nationality from many Toubou in Kufra, effectively depriving them of health care, housing, jobs, and education. In response, local Toubou formed the Front for the Salvation of Libyan Toubou; widespread rioting and protests ensued. In 2008, the regime suppressed a major Toubou uprising in Kufra, deploying helicopter gunships and tanks. (Wehrey, 2012)

In 2009–2010, the repression continued, including these examples of Israeli-style discrimination: “Since November 2009 dozens of families lost their homes due to forced destruction by bulldozers supervised by state security forces. Several dozens of Toubou were arrested because of their opposition against the forced evictions.” Moreover, “Libyan authorities refused to renew or extend passports to members of this minority. Several times parents were prevented from registering births of their children and denied birth certificates. According to STP, the Libyan government is responsible for a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing in Kufra, which violates both Libyan and international law” (UNHRC, 2010a, 7).

White Supremacy and the Green Book

The Green Book is a 19,054 word “book” that Muammar Gaddafi published six years after his 1969 military coup. It sets out the philosophy and political structures of his “revolution.” When asked to explain the Green Book, Professor Dirk Vandewalle of Dartmouth College said,

I must admit it’s very difficult to understand, in part because it really is not a

coherent thought if you compare it, for example, to “The Little Red Book” of Mao and so on, where you get at least a consistent argument. The Green Book contains really a set of aphorisms more than a completely thought-out, integrated philosophical statement.¹⁹

And yet, it was supposed to serve as the supreme law of the land. It has very little to say directly about black people, but what it does say panders to the racist mythology behind the so-called threat of “white genocide”²⁰ that so worries white supremacists. It is also right in line with Gaddafi’s fear-mongering, anti-migrant sales pitch to the EU. Under the heading “Black People Will Prevail in the World,” the Green Book declares,

The latest age of slavery has been the enslavement of Blacks by white people. The memory of this age will persist in the thinking of Black people until they have vindicated themselves.

This tragic and historic event, the resulting bitter feeling, and the yearning or the vindication of a whole race, constitute a psychological motivation of Black people to vengeance and triumph that cannot be disregarded. In addition, the inevitable cycle of social history, which includes the Yellow people’s domination of the world when it marched from Asia, and the white people’s carrying out a wide-ranging colonialist movement covering all the continents of the world, is now giving way to the re-emergence of Black people.

Black people are now in a very backward social situation, but such backwardness works to bring about their numerical superiority because their low standard of living has shielded them from methods of birth control and family planning. Also, their old social traditions place no limit on marriages, leading to their accelerated growth. The population of other races has decreased because of birth control, restrictions on marriage, and constant occupation in work, unlike the Blacks, who tend to be less obsessive about work

in a climate which is continuously hot.²¹

Those 215 words are the sum total of what the Green Book has to say about black Africans in this North African country, although it does peddle its national chauvinism throughout the text with little tidbits like, “People are only harmonious with their own arts and heritage. They are not harmonious with the arts of others because of heredity.”²²

It’s no wonder that today Muammar Gaddafi’s words are featured on extremist websites like InfoWars,²³ Daily Stormer,²⁴ and Stop White Genocide.²⁵

Conclusion

On February 17, 2011, a united majority of the Libyan people, including Arabs, Amazigh, Tuareg, and black Africans, rose up and put an end to the madness and oppression that was the 42-year reign of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. They received substantial help from NATO “allies” that had their own economic-crisis-driven reasons for insuring that the flow of Libya’s light-sweet crude was not long interrupted, reasons that caused NATO countries to support Gaddafi’s crackdown before they opposed it.

While the UN-authorized, NATO-implemented, no-fly zone stopped Gaddafi from doing to Libya what Bashar al-Assad has been allowed to do to Syria, the heavy lifting of defeating Gaddafi’s armed repression, the fighting on the ground, was done by people’s militias organized by the Libyans themselves. They succeeded in doing what no other “Arab Spring” revolt was able to do: They succeeded in completely smashing the dictatorial state machinery, including its instruments of violent repression!

Of course, overthrowing the government is just the first half of the revolutionary process. The process Libya is going through now, typically a ten-year process, is the one in which the people, hopefully, replace the dictatorship with something better. The future is not predestined, however. Ten years after their

revolution, the French got Napoleon, and ten years after our revolution we were still hashing out the U.S. Constitution.

Post-Gaddafi Libya also faces some special problems. Gaddafi's unique style of "governance" left Libya with almost nothing like normal civil and government institutions. If you've gotten to this point in this essay, you know that is something of an understatement. Civil society has to be created virtually from scratch.

Generations of Libyans have no experience living outside of a police state and no tradition of carrying out ordinary civil func-

It's no wonder that today
Muammar Gaddafi's words are
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and Stop White Genocide.

tions like voting, joining civil discourse, or running for office. Generations grew up in an environment in which racism wasn't just tolerated, it was encouraged from the highest levels of law and government. They were also largely abandoned by the white Western left, which discredited communism with their counterfeit versions, failed to criticize Gaddafi when he was in power, didn't notice the revolt until NATO changed sides, and then threw their support behind the fascists because NATO came around to needing to be rid of Gaddafi fast.

Libya deserves criticism for practices of racism, slavery, and immigrant abuse that continue there today, but the left should not join the imperialists in propagating the counter-revolutionary mythology that these features are new to Libya or have gotten worse since Gaddafi was overthrown. Rather it must be recognized that his overthrow was but the

first necessary step to correcting these ills. Libya is still trying to overcome Gaddafi's legacy, and those efforts should be supported, not denigrated, by progressive people around the world.

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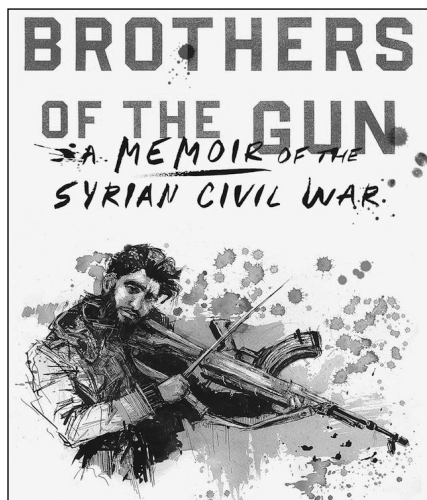
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Political Visual Narrative

KENT WORCESTER

THIS SEASON'S ROUNDUP of nonfiction comics includes self-published and small-press titles as well as noteworthy releases from major trade publishers. Topics covered range from consumer capitalism and imprisoned anarchists to Trinidadian social history and the war in Syria. Each of these titles deploys a distinctive approach to the challenge of folding political themes into visual narrative. In different ways, these books suggest that the forward march of political cartooning continues unabated.



KENT WORCESTER's latest book, *Silent Agitators: Cartoon Art from the Pages of New Politics (2016)* can be ordered online from Bolerium Books: www.bolerium.com.

The Resurrection Point:
Spies of Sex Horse Lake

LLAVES DIOS

Slothco Books, 2018, \$15

Hypercapitalism: The Modern
Economy, Its Values,
and How to Change Them

LARRY GONICK AND TIM KASSER

New Press, 2018, \$19.95

Brothers of the Gun:
A Memoir of the Syrian War

MARWAN HISHAM AND MOLLY

CRABAPPLE

Random House, 2018, \$28

The Young C.L.R. James:
A Graphic Novelette

MILTON KNIGHT, PAUL BUHLE,

AND LAWRENCE WARE

PM Press, 2018, \$6.95

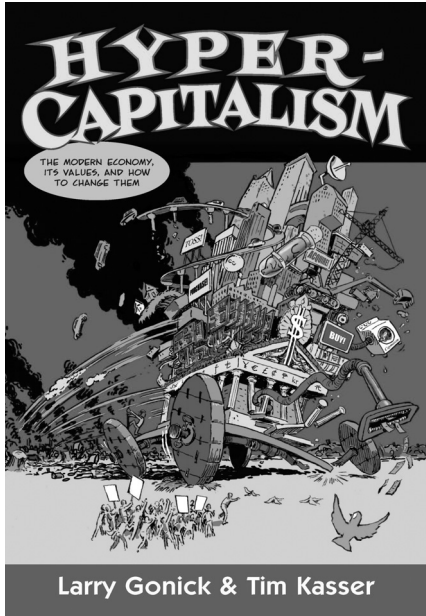
Prisoner 155:
Simón Radowitzky

AGUSTÍN COMOTTO

translation by Luigi Celentano

AK Press, 2018, \$26

Of the five books under review, the one likely to receive the most attention is *Brothers of the Gun: A Memoir of the Syrian War*. Its author was born and raised "in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Raqqa," and he was the first member of his extended

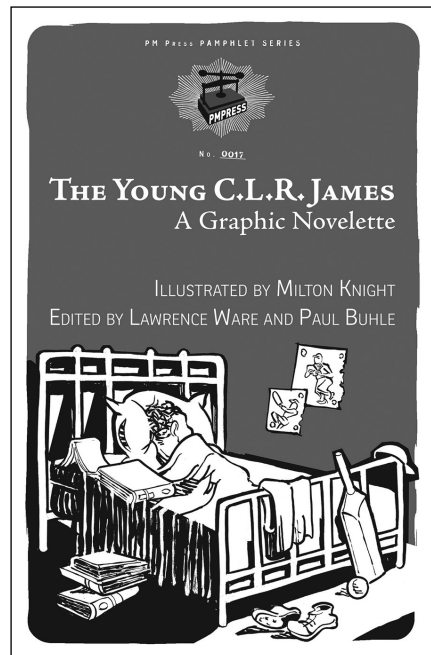


family to attend college. Along with his two closest friends, Marwan Hisham took an active part in the early protests against the Assad regime in 2011. “We want to shout our throats bloody,” he writes, “to force the sound of our voices into the most intimidating ears.” When the protesters are met with tear gas, the three friends went “from corner store to corner store, trying to persuade the scared shopkeepers to sell us cola, which activists in other cities say is the best antidote for tear gas.” “I hated that I had no voice,” Hisham explains. “I wanted to shout in the face of every corrupt motherfucker who thought he was better than me because his father was richer than mine and better connected.”

In those early days the protesters’ demands were simple: an end to corruption and authoritarian rule. But as Hisham reports, the nonviolent protesters and local resistance groups were outmaneuvered “by the Islamists whom Assad had released from Sednaya prison after the first months of protests.” Organizations like Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar

al-Sham “did not believe in our revolution, or that there was a revolution, or that revolutions were anything more than an infidel innovation imported from the infidel West.” By early 2012 Raqqa was under the control of an uneasy coalition of religiously motivated militia groups. Between 2013 and 2017 it was an ISIS stronghold. Hisham navigated the incipient chaos by opening an internet café: “Fighters speaking different tongues from different countries and with skin of different colors, all were united in their thirst for infidels’ blood and our bandwidth.”

By the book’s end, his two best friends have perished and the Assad regime has retaken Raqqa, which along the way has been pulverized by bombing raids by multiple countries including the United States, as well as intense factional violence. With some reluctance, Hisham eventually retreats to Turkey, where he now works as a journalist. His voice is direct, humane, and self-reflective; the events he recounts are harrowing. The book’s power is amplified by Molly Crabapple’s inky





drawings, which are interwoven into the text and which convey Raqqa's slow-motion destruction. In recent years, Crabapple's work has shifted from cartoon to pugnacious, with a nod to artists like George Grosz and Ralph Steadman. The combination of Hisham's first-person reportage and Crabapple's agitated linework is inspired.

A very different but equally inspired collaboration is provided by *Hypercapitalism*, which fuses Larry Gonick's witty narrative art and Tim Kasser's social-psychological research on materialism and value formation. Gonick is an established cartoonist whose books include *The Cartoon Guide to Genetics* (1991) and *The Cartoon Guide to Algebra* (2015), while Kasser teaches psychology at Knox College. Their book explains how "global, market-worshipping hypercapitalism threatens not only human well-being and social justice, but also the planet itself." Their approach is anti-consumerist, and broadly social democratic, and they insist that "private enterprise does great things." They also maintain that "when the 'product' is a public service, the profit motive can run directly against the common good." The strongest

chapters are on "Corporations and Their Owners," and "Capitalism and Values," and the book ends with an impassioned defense of mass protest movements. Doctrinaire readers may object to some of their formulations, but as Bill McKibben notes on the back cover, "This book explains much about how the world works, and why it increasingly doesn't."

The Young C.L.R. James is a pamphlet-sized "graphic novelette" about the early development of one of the great Marxist authors of the twentieth century. It focuses on the tension between the conventional aspirations of James's parents, who assumed he would follow in his father's footsteps by becoming a teacher, and his early enthusiasm for cricket, Carnival, and jazz. Drawing heavily on James's quasi-biographical *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), *The Young C.L.R. James* does a fine job of capturing the lost world of post-*fin de siècle* Trinidad, which at the time was a crown colony in the British Empire. The pamphlet includes an all-too-brief graphic essay on swing, one of James's favorite musical genres. Milton Knight's linework is exuberant, rowdy, and not a little comical, and seems suited to the task at hand.

Agustín Comotto is a gifted cartoonist and children's book illustrator whose latest book tells the story of the Ukrainian-born Simón Radowitzky (1891-1956). Radowitzky was an anarchist of the "propaganda of the deed" variety who spent twenty-one years in a penal colony for using a homemade bomb to kill the Chief of the Argentine Federal Police, and his secretary, in 1909. Pardoned in 1930, Radowitzky marched off to Spain, where he fought alongside other anarchists during the Spanish Civil War. At the time of his death, he was working in a toy factory in Mexico. In his foreword, Stuart Christie describes Radowitzky as "a committed humanist imbued with a deep sense of justice who never expressed regret for the two lives he took." While it may be an exaggeration to describe *Prisoner 155* as "comparable to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and

THE RESURRECTION POINT BY LLAVES DIOS

#128



(See RP #1)

"Jesus, Grandpa, are you ok?" / "I'm alright, Billy. It's just a flesh wound. The damn thing flew right out of the toilet and tried to eat me. If I hadn't had my shotgun handy I'd be dead. The craziest thing is, my *Resurrection Point Gauge* says 'Perfectly Normal'. How could this be perfectly normal?" / "I hate to tell you this, Grandpa, but you've been living by yourself too long. Reality's gone straight to shit. This sort of thing is perfectly normal now. The new Governor of Indiana is part Preying Mantis. At her victory party she had sex with her opponent on stage and then ate him. I bet your R.P.G flew way past its Resurrection Point years ago and blew itself out. We need to get you a new gauge. Modern R.P.Gs are great. They have 24 hour monitoring, smart watch compatibility, and geolocation tracking." / "This is terrible, I had no idea things had gotten so bad." / "I didn't say things were bad necessarily, just weird. My friends Toby and Jake are *Siamese Twin Vampires*, but they prefer to be called *Conjoined Twin Vampires*. They're pretty cool, as long as they're not hungry."

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Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*," Comotto's pages are engaging, and anyone with an interest in early twentieth-century anarchism will be intrigued.

The Resurrection Point collects a year's worth of online comic strips that combine horror tropes, weird fiction, and spooky imagery. "While we drift blissfully through our stupid boring lives," write the authors—Llaves Dios is apparently a pen name—"our reality lies perched upon the edge of the Resurrection Point, the demarcation line for the safety zone of existence, with only a

slight push needed to topple us over onto the other side." Rather than celebrating historical struggles, or championing a post-capitalist project, the strips offer a skewed, nonlinear perspective on a dangerously near future. At first I was baffled by the authors' obsessions with magical toys, time travel, and pancake syrup, but as I read on I became charmed by their commitment to the impossible task of forging something new. The other books under review are committed to things like reason, evidence, and literary realism. But in the era of Trump, surrealism may have its uses.

BACK OF THE BOOK



What I Saw at the (Political) Revolution

JASON SCHULMAN

THIS MEMOIR OF SORTS by Fordham University sociology professor Heather Gautney, who became a policy fellow in Bernie Sanders' Washington DC office and a volunteer researcher and organizer for his unexpectedly popular 2016 presidential campaign, has a very specific focus: to "offer insights from up-close work with Bernie, mixed in with historical and sociological analysis, to perform an autopsy of the 2016 election" (2). Given the sheer number of insightful (to put it mildly) autopsies that have been proffered across the political spectrum—perhaps none more useless than Hillary Clinton's own *What Happened* (Simon & Schuster, 2017)—Gautney's book is more than welcome and

Crashing the Party: From the Bernie Sanders Campaign to a Progressive Movement

HEATHER GAUTNEY
Forward by Adolph Reed, Jr.
Verso, 2018. 180pp.

even slightly overdue.

Both Gautney and socialist professor of politics Adolph Reed, Jr., author of the forward to *Crashing the Party*, make it very clear that electoral action and movement building

operate via two distinctly different logics—even though Sanders sincerely wanted to use the former to build the latter and did it better than one might have expected. In

Reed's words, serious

electoral campaigning "is all about mobilizing and connecting with existing constituencies ... addressing people who understand themselves ... as motivated around a given set of issues parsed and articulated in familiar ways. ... [It] must have as its paramount concern aggregating the greatest number of votes possible" (xii). On the other hand, movement building "operates within a longer, less urgent, and more open-ended time horizon. ... [It] assumes a need to generate a base of support or constituency for a political program, not that one already exists and needs only to be mobilized" (xiii). Gautney, understandably

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not very critical of Sanders overall, admits that even though “Bernie’s campaign engaged in a great deal of on-the-ground organizing, it may have missed an opportunity to engage in more systematic movement-building activities” (133). In any case, “meaningful change doesn’t happen over an election cycle” (134). To forget this is to abandon one’s radicalism, and Gautney clearly has not.

Some radicals, however, might take Gautney to task for using the terms “democratic socialist,” “social democratic,” and “left populist” essentially interchangeably when discussing Sanders and the program he promoted during the campaign. There’s little reason to get upset over this. Like it or not, Sanders still calls himself a democratic socialist even if his overt anti-capitalism from the 1970s and 1980s is gone; his use of the label helped Democratic Socialists of America recruit “Berniecrats” who were then introduced to a considerably more radical definition of “democratic socialism.” And Gautney admits that “Bernie did not associate himself with anti-capitalist politics or seek to nationalize major industries,” instead running on a robust social-democratic, welfare-statist platform “without the behemoth militarism and uneven ‘compromises’ between capital and labor” of the post-World War II era (15). Moreover, and more importantly, while “Bernie’s association with socialism may have meant something” to those already very politicized, Gautney rightly points out that “for the masses of people with less honed political identities, it was largely beside the point” and also did not hurt his ability to connect with those ever-more-exploited and disenfranchised masses (19).¹

Amidst much valuable discussion of the crimes of New (or “establishment”) Democrats against the U.S. working class—starting back in 1978 with Jimmy Carter’s deregulation agenda—Gautney explains Sanders’ decision to run in the Democratic presidential primary:

Any Democrat or Republican who wins their party’s nomination is guaranteed a place on each state’s ballot for the general election, but in many states, third parties must petition election officials. There are significant barriers to obtaining ballot status, including sabotage from the two major parties. Bernie could have spent the entire campaign season mired in that struggle and may never have broken through the way he did. (35)

Perhaps ironically, even as much of the far left excoriated Sanders for “crossing the class line” because he ran as a Democrat, the Hillary Clinton fan club—especially on social media—consistently denounced him for not being a “real Democrat.” And the “real Democrats” in the Democratic National Committee did all they could to sabotage Sanders anyway, with the Clinton campaign controlling the DNC’s financial resources all through the primary (as revealed by ex-DNC vice chair Donna Brazile in 2017). This was to be expected. More irritatingly, only two Democratic members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, founded by Sanders, openly endorsed him—undoubtedly fearful of the Wrath of Clinton when she “inevitably” became president. Some were vociferous in their support of Clinton, most notably Rep. John Lewis (D-CA), who also spoke for the vast majority of members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in their “there’s no such thing as a free lunch” ripostes to Sanders’ advocacy of single-payer health care and tuition-free public higher education. In Gautney’s memorable words, Lewis and others in the CBC “threw a bright spotlight on establishment Democrats’ practice of branding a conservative class politics as racial justice” (86). Truly, much of *Crashing the Party* illustrates the sheer slimyness of those who propagated bourgeois identity politics to bash Sanders—from Gloria Steinem to Joy Reid—as if to validate every word Adolph Reed has ever written on the subject.

Even more infuriating, of course, was the

refusal of the vast majority of labor officials to even countenance the thought of endorsing Sanders. Here was the most clearly pro-labor presidential candidate to run a credible campaign in decades, and, moreover, *he ran as a Democrat*, not as a “spoiler third-party candidate who would throw the election to the Republican.” What more could organized labor want? But the vast majority of union tops went with the conventional wisdom: “Bernie can’t win.” As Larry Cohen, former Communications Workers of America president and senior advisor to the Sanders campaign wrote in *New Labor Forum* after the Trump victory (quoted by Gautney), “When they said Bernie can’t win, what they really meant was that working-class people can’t win” (45–6). It really isn’t much more complicated than that. Samuel Gompers’ old slogan “reward your friends and punish your enemies” has, by and large, degenerated into “pick a winner.” In this case, the “winner” didn’t even win.

Much of the rest of what Gautney covers is familiar to those who paid attention to Sanders’ campaign and its conclusion at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. She justifies the fight over the content of the party platform because the result “at least nominally set a baseline policy agenda that is far more progressive than what the party has committed itself to over the last several decades” (109). But she admits that the platform is unenforceable; she acknowledges that “the Clinton campaign instructed their staff ahead of time to ‘just give them what they want. No one will ever remember or care about what’s in the platform’” (104). I’d argue that the only thing valuable in the fight was the fight itself—the exposure before the world of just how hostile the dominant, “establishment” Democrats are to the left. (Cornel West’s demand that the party leadership acknowledge that “the Palestinians must be free” fell upon deaf ears for a reason.) Even more damning is the party leadership’s sheer thuggery, with Bernie delegates “threatened and harassed by security guards and DNC staffers, their

signs confiscated or purposely obscured by American flags, and some of them kicked out entirely” (111).

So what now? Gautney is right to stress that building a mass constituency for left-wing policies requires grassroots organizing (to paraphrase a subheading of her book’s concluding chapter); indeed it does. Somewhat awkwardly, she also says that “if Democrats are genuinely interested in mitigating racial and gender disparities in the country, they will have to start considering these disparities in terms of the structural dynamics of the larger political economy. That means implicating the fundamentals of contemporary capitalism” (128). It’s not clear which Democrats she’s talking about—elected officials or merely people registered as Democrats? If it’s the former, plainly the establishment Democrats aren’t going to start implicating any capitalist fundamentals; they represent the ruling class and that’s that. Should a new version of the old “realignment” strategy be initiated? That’s essentially what Our Revolution (OR), the successor to the Sanders campaign, is about (though its support for Gayle McLaughlin’s independent run for Lt. Governor in California indicates that OR is at least not always hostile to left-wing non-Democratic Party electoral action). Gautney explains that OR “doesn’t want to crash the Democratic Party and foment chaos, it wants to rebuild it and expand its reach” (138).

It’s not exactly clear why this would be a good thing. Without a stance of *absolute hostility* to corporate-dependent Democrats, of what use is OR? If OR is going to act, primarily, as a “left opposition” of Democratic candidates, won’t that mean precisely “fomenting chaos,” including a refusal to endorse the ruling-class representatives who beat their candidates in primaries? Is OR planning to take over the DNC? The fate of Rep. Keith Ellison’s attempt to become DNC chair shows how unlikely success is in that arena. And even greater electoral success by OR members as Democrats won’t turn the

party into a democratic, dues-paying membership organization, which is exactly what the working class needs—an actual party, not a state-run ballot line with fundraising arms.² And does OR have any conception of *breaking* the two-party system by changing election laws when its candidates get elected? This goes undiscussed.

Regardless, *Crashing the Party* is a must-read. It provides the most razor-sharp analysis available of the 2016 Sanders presidential campaign, a campaign that proved that in fact it is possible to run for office as what Bhaskar Sunkara has called a “class-struggle social democrat,” on a platform that the Democratic Party establishment will always deride as “too left-wing,” and garner the support of millions. Our job now as socialists is to build upon the accomplishment of “democratic socialism” and “political revolution” entering main-

stream political discourse and work toward a mass movement that will accomplish, yes, an actual *political revolution* that will lead to *socialist democracy*.

NOTES

1. Trying to prove Bernie’s anti-imperialist bona fides is another matter. Gautney ably proves that Sanders is the most pro-Palestinian member of the Senate, but that’s a very low bar. It’s also true that more recently he’s led an effort to end U.S. support of the arguably genocidal Saudi war in Yemen. And he’s voted to repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists. But see Joanne Landy, “The Foreign Policies of Sanders, Trump, and Clinton,” *New Politics* (No. 61, Summer 2016).
2. For a better model, see Seth Ackerman, “A Blueprint for a New Party,” *Jacobin* (No. 23, Fall 2016). For an indication that OR seems to be having significant internal problems, see Sarah Jones, “Is It Time for Change at Our Revolution?” *The New Republic*, May 21, 2018, newrepublic.com/article/148482/time-change-revolution.

Radical America

DAN GEORGAKAS

WHY THE UNITED STATES has not developed a permanent socialist movement has perplexed activists and theorists for more than a century. Paul Le Blanc takes up that query as an activist who wants to see an anti-capitalism mass movement take shape in twenty-first century

Left Americana:
The Radical Heart of US History
PAUL LE BLANC
Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017, 304 pp.

America. To that end, he investigates some of the moments when the possibility of a significant left presence in the United States seemed at hand. He focuses on what made those movements viable and what thwarted their long-term success. The volume’s fourteen essays were written over a period of thirty years, from 1986 to 2015.

The collection’s first essay reviews the speculations of a host of international and American thinkers about the failure of so-

DAN GEORGAKAS is the co-author of *Detroit I Do Mind Dying, a history of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers*, and co-editor of *the Encyclopedia of the American Left*.

cialist mass movements to take root in the United States. Among those whose ideas are thoughtfully examined here and in other essays are Werner Sombart, Selig Perlman, Karl Kautsky, Hal Draper, James Boggs, Eleanor Marx, Bertram Wolfe, and Paul Sweezy. Other essays deal with the Haymarket anarcho-socialists of 1886, Brookwood Labor College, Students for a Democratic Society, social media, C.L.R. James, the New Left, the Occupy movement, Trotskyist organizations, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Left Americana offers an open-minded overview of these select experiences and thinkers in the context of “what is to be done” in the United States. Le Blanc does not seek or offer a formula, he simply asks that leftists think anew about what kind of organization and political agenda is needed to overcome the global triumph of capitalism. How can an organization be thoroughly democratic, yet disciplined enough to be successful without simply replicating the authoritarian society it wishes to replace? What specific national factors must American radicals take into account? The only given, in Le Blanc’s view, is that a viable U.S. left movement must

exemplify the values and governance of the new society it advocates.

This study of actual movements seeks to pinpoint the factors that thwarted long-term development. Le Blanc examines how some movements had such a weak organizational structure that they were unable to resist nationally coordinated government suppression. Other movements were so rigid or so dominated by a single personality that they withered when the leader floundered, became autocratic, or was killed. A perennial dilemma is how a movement reacts to dissenters when consensus on how to proceed is illusive.

Le Blanc concludes that at present there is not even an “embryo” or “nucleus” for an organization that strongly advocates the end of capitalism. Consequently, he believes activism should not focus on trying to consolidate existing organizations, but on fostering dynamic united fronts. That immediate prospective, however, needs to be augmented with “serious minded” reflection and study of the experiences of past left movements to determine how to balance organizational discipline with freedom while retaining the efficiency required to prosper.

Please ask your librarian to subscribe to *New Politics*.

Class DOES Matter

PAUL BUHLE

STEVE FRASER IS A WEATHERED veteran of the New Left and many subsequent movements, author of shrewd books on the acquisitive ruling class and also of the outstanding biography of famed left-leaning labor giant Sidney Hillman, among other works. Here he once again ranges far, but also comes close to home, his own personal home space.

In short, this is about as autobiographical as Fraser is likely to get, and he does so for a reason. His own background, in a lower-middle class corner of Brooklyn now inevitably gentrifying, has offered him a clue to the larger mysteries (more like, mystifications) of class in the United States.

What we have here is a series of vignettes stretching from the white settlement of New England to the civil rights movement (he missed the first by several centuries, but was part of the second) and beyond. Herein, Fraser shows the considerable erudition of a deep-thinking social historian facing a stubborn, collective denial of facts that, objectively speaking, should have been obvious.

Why, then, was the obvious so successfully rejected or suppressed? Race is at the center of this picture, but so intertwined with class

that one cannot be separated from the other. The theme that reaches back to white colonization will be familiar to readers of Fraser's

generation and mine as associated perhaps most clearly with William Appleman Williams, the much-attacked (by the liberal mainstream of the contemporary history profession, that is) scholar of

American empire. According to Williams, expansionism offered a trade between democratic principles and the gains of conquest, by land mass and market. Williams himself was not so keen on class, especially working-class, details, and here Fraser moves ahead, again and again.

I am not at all convinced, as he is, that the disavowals of class conflict and socialism during the 1950s by Daniel Bell and other erstwhile socialists contained sentimental regrets of any kind. The "end of ideology" proclaimed by Bell anticipated "the end of history" after the collapse of the East Bloc, and rang just as false in the light of renewed social conflicts. Liberals and conservatives alike have spent centuries proclaiming the United States free from Old World troubles and ready for business, in a humane way, naturally.

But Fraser is on solid ground when he comes to his own story, intertwined with the civil rights movement and the reality that no Great Society program could withstand the demands of the Empire. The War On

Class Matters: The Strange Career of an American Obsession

STEVE FRASER

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
287pp, \$25.

PAUL BUHLE, a contributor to *New Politics* since 1970, is the co-editor of a *Eugene V. Debs* graphic novel to appear in 2019.

Poverty would be abandoned for the War On Vietnam and no Democratic Party leader—except perhaps Robert Kennedy in the months before his assassination—would want it the other way. Fraser ends with the heavy thought that the “American utopia is a

house divided against itself,” a myth with too much real weight to carry. This is poignant, indeed. I am not sure that the wealthy and powerful, of both political parties, liberal or conservative, are ready to agree.

Labor and the South

MARTIN COMACK

MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, the muckraking journalist Upton Sinclair worked undercover for several weeks in the cattle slaughterhouses of Chicago. The result was his melodramatic but revelatory novel *The Jungle*, a work Jack London called the “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

of wage slavery.” Sinclair’s narrative depicted the brutal working conditions endured by East European immigrants on the killing floor, engaging in back-breaking, dangerous, and tedious labor for subsistence wages.

Evidently, little has changed in the last century for many workers in the American meatpacking industry. Those familiar with Sinclair’s vivid exposé will feel a sense of déjà vu in reading this remarkable documentary study by Vanesa Ribas. Initially entering factory employment to gather material for a doctoral dissertation, Ribas goes far beyond

On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South

VANESA RIBAS
University of California Press, 2016, 272 pp.,
paperback

sociological analysis in describing the year and a half she spent on the line at the Swine Packing Company—her pseudonym for a hog processing plant in North Carolina. She combines a graphic portrayal of work and working conditions on the line with an affecting personal memoir of what

she came to regard as a “life-defining experience” (xx).

The national media has recently taken at least some notice of those who labor in the national economy. So-called reality shows on television have followed the efforts of deep-water fishermen and women and ice-road truckers, primarily for the drama surrounding their difficult and often hazardous occupations. But there is hardly any curiosity about other members of the working class, the majority employed in mundane, boring, repetitive jobs remain uncelebrated and ignored—invisible to the attentions of mainstream society despite the physical and emotional strain under which so many toil to make their contribution to the Gross

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