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SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

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The Bestiality of Imperialism

BY ERNESTO “CHE” GUEVARA



Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Artwork by Jose H. Villarreal

A bestiality that knows no limits, that has no national frontiers. The bestiality of Hitler’s armies is like the North American bestiality, like that of the Belgian paratroopers and that of the French imperialists in Algeria. For it is the very essence of imperialism to turn men into wild, bloodthirsty animals determined to slaughter, kill, murder and destroy the very last ves-

tige of the image of the revolutionary or the partisan in any regime that they crush under their boots because it fights for freedom. The statue of Lumumba¹, destroyed today but rebuilt tomorrow, reminds of us of the tragic story of this martyr of the world revolution. And make sure that we never trust imperialism. In no way at all! Not an iota!

Video: *Che Guevara Talks About Imperialism* (with English subtitles,) 1965

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/video-che-guevara-talks-about-imperialism-1965/5659908>

sionists. Both refused. Lumumba was subsequently imprisoned by state authorities under Mobutu and executed by a firing squad.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrice_Lumumba

¹ Patrice Émery Lumumba (July 2, 1925-January 17, 1961) was the first Prime Minister of the independent Democratic Republic of the Congo from June until September 1960. Shortly after Congolese independence in 1960, a mutiny broke out in the army. Lumumba appealed to the United States and the United Nations for help to suppress the Belgian-supported Katangan seces-

“If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine”

Ernesto “Che” Guevara



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www.socialistviewpoint.org
email: info@socialistviewpoint.org
(415) 824-8730

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Yellow Vest Movement Raises Big Questions

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

Capitalism is in a crisis it can't solve. It can only lead us to a breakdown of catastrophic proportions—a breakdown that could end all life on earth. The only way to prevent this catastrophe is to end capitalism and establish socialism. This is what Marxists have known for a very long time. But a revolutionary socialist vanguard must be re-established in the ranks of the current struggles of the worlds' working class.

The Yellow Vest movement in France seems to be ripe for a regeneration of such a vanguard party formation.

In a December 8, 2018 article that appeared in *Time* magazine by Lorne Cook and Mike Corder titled, "Yellow Vest Protests Grow in Belgium and The Netherlands," the authors note that the French Yellow Vest movement has spread to countries that traditionally had a strong "social safety net," *i.e.*, free healthcare, education, *etc.*

This social safety net is now being eroded and privatized everywhere. This was expressed in the article by two sisters who were among those protesting:

"In the Dutch city of Rotterdam, a few hundred protesters in the high-visibility vests that have become a symbol of the movement walked peacefully across the downtown Erasmus Bridge singing a song about the Netherlands and handing flowers to passers-by.

"Sisters Bebe and Ieneke Lambermont, aged 76 and 67 respectively, were among them.

"Our children are hard-working people but they have to pay taxes everywhere. You can't get housing anymore. It is not going well in Dutch society,' Ieneke said. 'The social welfare net we grew up with is gone,' she said. 'The government is

not there for the people. It is there to protect its own interests,' she said."

This certainly seems to be the underlying motive for the Yellow Vest protests. Masses of working people are fed up with "trickle down economics" that only trickle down into the pockets of corporate CEOs while the rest of us must swallow "austerity measures" that place the entire economic burden of running a capitalist government—its infrastructure, war machine, health services, housing, education—squarely on the backs of the working class and the poor.

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capitalist class.**

The concessions made by French president Emmanuel Macron are a drop in the bucket and do nothing to alleviate the suffering of the French working class. They can't make ends meet. Youth coming of age can't afford to have a home of their own. Families are doubling up on housing, going without necessary medications while working long hours at multiple low-paying jobs. These conditions are not limited to France but are increasing everywhere including in the U.S.

Migration from violence, poverty and war

Compounding this problem is the forced migration of workers fleeing war—either directly carried out by the U.S. government and their allies or funded by them—at the expense of the whole working class.

This includes the centuries of imperialist plunder of the world's resources leaving nothing but ruin, poverty and pollution everywhere they go.

This is the capitalist *modus operandi* in Africa, the Middle East, India, Latin America—anywhere there is abundant labor or natural resources needed by capitalist interests.

The populations effected are forced to leave their homelands. They have no choice. And the burden of helping these desperate people falls on the backs of their fellow workers wherever they go.

This is no accident; this is how capitalism turns worker against worker. This is at the root of the current "migrant crisis."

The fermenting of racist ideology against undocumented workers is designed to divide, conquer and diffuse working-class solidarity. Clearly, we all want the same thing—a happy, healthy, comfortable and productive life.

The power of the working class

The only way that capitalism can survive is to make the working class cover the expenses of their wars and plunder. That is the material foundation of their power.

This is not an "immoral choice of evil men." It is the fundamental nature of capitalism itself.

Yet at the same time, it's the working class that actually produces all the necessities of life upon which every one of us depends.

We don't need the capitalists; they need us to obey them so they can continue to steal our wealth.

That's what capitalism is—a tiny dictatorship of the owners of the means of production who rule over the masses of workers who labor to produce the wealth the capitalist class privately owns. All the while we workers are barely earning enough to survive.

Nothing left to lose

The Yellow Vest movement has taken hold in those countries that had a social safety net that provided for a more comfortable lifestyle as long as the profits for the ruling elite continued to rise.

Today capitalism can no longer make these concessions. They have conquered and plundered the world. There's no where else for them to go to increase their rate of profit but to extract it from the masses of workers—by any means necessary—war, repression, taxation, incarceration, militarization and police occupation of workers' communities everywhere.

Capitalism is the ultimate state of war. They are at war with each other all over the world.

The world's working class is not only the cannon fodder for these wars, but we are paying for the costs of war, occupation and oppression directly from our own pockets.

Democratic roots of workers' power

What we are seeing in the Yellow Vest movement in France is a profound realization of the French working class that they have nothing to lose. They can't earn enough to survive so they've taken to the streets and have lost all faith in their politicians and even in their union leaderships who are in "partnership" with the bosses just like they are here in the U.S.

They've been sold out over and over again and have lost the safety net they fought for and won through their labor struggles of the past.

They want a re-distribution of wealth, higher wages, pensions, the return of the social safety net (which we in the U.S. never had) and they want to tax the rich to pay for it.

This is an insurgent fight against austerity from the ground up.

It has great potential if it is able to cross borders and solidify with workers from other countries in a battle against capitalist rule.

It needs to become a profoundly democratic, anti-capitalist, pro-socialist movement able to expand working-class consciousness, and build unity and solidarity among all workers.

It must reject bourgeois politics in favor of forming an independent, democratically structured, working-class party that can challenge the rule of the capitalist class.

What is missing in this movement so far is a revolutionary socialist vanguard party that can lead the working class toward this goal. That is the missing link in the Yellow Vest movement. It is a crucial first step to building a mass party of the working class.

While small reforms can be won through mass demonstrations and protests it takes much more organization to win significant improvements in the daily lives of workers.

What is a vanguard party?

In a 1967 article by James P. Cannon titled, "The Revolutionary Party and Its Role in the Struggle for Socialism"¹ Cannon wrote:

"The greatest contribution to the arsenal of Marxism since the death of Engels in 1895 was Lenin's conception of the vanguard party as the organizer and director of the proletarian revolution. That celebrated theory of organization was not... simply a product of the special

Russian conditions of his time and restricted to them. It is deep-rooted in two of the weightiest realities of the 20th century: the *actuality* of the workers' struggle for the conquest of power, and the *necessity* of creating a leadership capable of carrying it through to the end. ...the vanguard party is based on two factors: the heterogeneity of the working class and the exceptionally conscious character of the movement for socialism...Under class society and capitalism, the toilers are stratified and divided in many ways; they live under very dissimilar conditions and are at disparate stages of economic and political development. Their culture is inadequate and their outlook narrow. Consequently they do not and cannot all at once, *en masse* and to the same degree, arrive at a clear and comprehensive understanding of their real position in society or the political course they must follow to end the evils they suffer from and make their way to a better system. ...It has to be constituted by those elements of the class and their spokesmen who grasp the requirements for revolutionary action and proceed to their implementation sooner than the bulk of the proletariat on both a national and international scale. Here also is the basic reason that the vanguard always begins as a minority of its class, a 'splinter group.' The earliest formations of advanced workers committed to socialism, and their intellectual associates propagating its views, must first organize themselves around a definite body of scientific doctrine, class tradition, and experience, and work out a correct political program in order then to organize and lead the big battalions of revolutionary forces. ...It has to be constituted by those elements of the class and their spokesmen who grasp the requirements for revolutionary action and proceed to their implementation sooner than the bulk of the proletariat on both a national and international scale."

In a *YouTube* video of the massive December 8, 2018 protest in Paris titled,

“Yellow Vests shift to the left,²” demonstrators indicated that there was a “... convergence of movements that are different and today we started from a demonstration in which there were railway workers; there was the Adama Committee against police violence; there were sex workers organizations, there were LGBT organizations, so we are seeing today that this movement is the place where demands come together.”

A vanguard party encourages this convergence because not only do the divergent sections of the working class have common interests but, by uniting together in the struggle to achieve common goals, they multiply their power.

The vanguard party recognizes that barriers between workers are manufactured by the capitalist class for the very reason of preventing them from seeing their interests as common, and that they have the same enemy—the capitalist system.

The conscious revolutionary socialist leadership that embodies the vanguard party is capable of formulating demands that are reasonable and that expose the fundamental inability of the capitalist system to grant them.

There are many reasonable reforms that could ease the disastrous plight of the working class today.

- We could institute a sliding scale of wages and hours, *i.e.*, shorten the workweek with no reduction in pay to put everyone to work.
- We could seize the profits of private medical corporations; nationalize the entire healthcare industry and provide universal healthcare for everyone—including pharmaceuticals.
- We could make all education free from cradle to grave by ending the privatization of education and provide quality education for everyone on an equal basis.

- We could embark on massive public housing developments—built to last and built for the utmost comfort and beauty—with clean, green open spaces with rents capped at one-quarter of income.
- We could expand public transportation to make it more convenient than private automobiles.
- We could revamp our entire energy grid to the most modern, safe and efficient systems available today and end all use of fossil fuels.
- We could upgrade our water and sewage systems to ensure clean water for everyone.
- We could recycle goods and materials, end wasteful production methods and enact a vast pollution-clean up campaign.
- We could upgrade all manufacturing and industry to ensure they are safe for our environment and for the safety, health and welfare of the workers.

A revolutionary vanguard party, by raising these demands, will help the working class see how these reforms would benefit everyone.

By ending war, and the manufacture of the weapons of war, trillions of dollars could be freed up to accomplish these tasks.

In addition, we could establish a progressive taxation of private profits of the wealthiest since they, too, would benefit from these reforms.

These are rational demands that are attainable through the power of a united working class. But this vanguard must be an integral part of the working class uprising. It must emerge from the ranks of those struggling against injustice and for a better life and show how best to strengthen them through unity and action.

This is what is needed in the Yellow Vest movement and all the recent uprisings around the globe.

The vanguard party knows we must learn from the lessons of the past. The capitalist class always sells us out. The vanguard party is able to show how the sharp decline in organized labor is due to the bureaucratic leadership of our unions who have “partnered” with the capitalists in order to get workers to accept concessions instead of win victories.

The workers vanguard knows this has never worked because increasing the rate of private profits is in diametric opposition to satisfying the needs and wants of the working masses.

The capitalist class and the working class are class enemies. We cannot co-exist.

The fact is, capitalism can’t fix the ills it has created. And it can’t stop the continued destruction it wreaks.

Our only hope is that a new, revolutionary vanguard of the working class will rise to the challenge to lead the formation of a mass working class party that can disarm the capitalist class and build a socialist world.

Real freedom, equality and democracy is the product of united, world working-class rule. There is nothing this power can’t accomplish.

1 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/cannon/works/1967/party.htm>

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54yAOKvWRxk>

Yellow Vests and the Left

BY JIM KAVANAGH

Something's happening here...

Class act

The “Yellow Vest” (*gilets jaunes*) movement has upended French politics, at least.

It has delivered a sharp and refreshing smack in the face to the smuggest of smug, entitled neoliberal brats, Emmanuel Macron, forcing him to retreat on substantive tax and minimum wage issues. It has also raised a raft of issues from wealth inequality (including demands for higher taxes on the rich) to a rejection of austerity and the dreaded Frexit [French exit from the European Union.]

Most importantly, it has acted outside the gatekeeping of traditional opposition parties and institutions—including those of the left, which have all been thoroughly decaffeinated and beguiled by the fantasia of Third-Way EU becoming “Social Europe.” The Yellow Vest movement is millions of people out in the street, engaged in militant, confrontational protest, talking to and acting with each other unsupervised, telling the governing elite: “Va te faire foutre!” [Kiss my Ass!]

A self-mobilization of the working class: This is the specter of Europe past, which Third-Way politicians and intelligentsia thought they had once and for all banished to the netherworld a few decades ago. The Yellow Vest movement, now spreading to other countries, is striking a new body blow to the teetering edifice of neoliberalism that has been built on the bones of the working-class lives in Europe and America over those decades.

This explains why the American mainstream media has avoided focusing on the Yellow Vest movement. The left, on the other hand, must be overjoyed, right?

Well, it's more like: *Comme-ci, comme ça*. [So so]

Why? “Identity politics” is, of course, the term that immediately comes to mind, though that term oversimplifies, particularly regarding the French context. As C. J. Hopkins put it: “Nothing scares the Identity Politics Left quite like an actual working class uprising.” Scares and confuses.

Historically, the core definition of the left has been solidarity with the working class (everyone who depends on wages to live,) which includes the majority of people of all races and genders. But a new definition has taken hold among American/Western/college-educated liberals and progressives, as well as socialists and Marxists, who are perceived and think of themselves as on the “left,” and it has given rise to a new pattern of solidarity. These leftists have trained themselves to quickly embrace movements defined in terms of race and gender. Critical interrogation will come from within an assumed position of solidarity, and it will usually be in terms of those categories: Does your racial justice movement x have the right attitude and/or demographics in terms of gender?

Much less frequently and urgently, and virtually never as a condition of support, will a race or gender movement be interrogated regarding its position—its attitude and demographics—in terms of class.

There's a different default setting for working-class movements. They will almost always be looked upon with suspicion, until and unless they prove their attitudinal and demographic race and gender *bona fides* to the satisfaction of American/Western/college-educated “leftists.” That interrogation has effectively become a prior condition of solidarity for working-class

movements. Leftists have adopted a kind of checklist of concerns, and class has moved way down.

So that's been affecting the slow uptake of left support and coverage of Yellow Vest movement, which is, centrally and unashamedly, a working-class movement. Though the spark was a hike in the diesel gas tax, the flame quickly engulfed a wide range of issues. Far from being an “anti-tax” revolt, as some on the right and the left rushed to characterize it, Yellow Vest has called for the reimposition of the wealth tax that Macron had so kindly abolished for the French elite. Fundamentally, it's an eruption of a lot of people who are rightly raging about economic inequality.

Diana Johnstone sums it up well:

“The gasoline tax was the last straw in a long series of measures favoring the rich at the expense of the majority of the population.... Briefly, the message was this: we can't make ends meet. The cost of living keeps going up, and our incomes keep going down. We just can't take it any more.”

And the French people make it clear repeatedly:

The Yellow Vest movement is a widespread working-class revolt against economic injustice *and* the neo-liberal state. Exactly what the left should embrace.

When we see a “Center for American Progress (CAP), progressive, feminist,” like Neera Tanden tweeting, from the checklist: “I don't understand why any progressive is cheering French protesters who are amassing against a carbon tax,” and a correspondent for the “leftist” French publication *Libération*, calling Yellow Vest a “movement of hicks” or a “band of polluting oafs, addicted to their cars, who need to be dealt with by the police,” we are seeing the sorry,

degraded, utterly clueless state of what passes for the left.

Neera should talk to, or have clue one about, Colette, age 83, who “doesn’t own a car, but explained to whoever would listen that the steep raise of gasoline prices would also hurt people who don’t drive, by affecting prices of food and other necessities. She had done the calculations and figured it would cost a retired person 80 euros per month.”

Or the young woman in southwestern France who “cares for elderly people who live at home alone in rural areas, driving from one to another, to feed them, bathe them, offer a moment of cheerful company and understanding. She loves her vocation, loves helping old people, although it barely allows her to make a living. She will be among those who will have to pay more to get from one patient to the next.”

Another “polluting oaf.”

As commentator O Societyr astutely put it:

“The Paris protests aren’t over a fuel tax any more than Colin Kaepernick is about the American National Anthem. Kaepernick is protesting police brutality and the *Gilets Jaunes* are protesting their ‘Let them eat cake’ government.”

The ability of leftists to reject the diversions and cut through to the crux of the matter in one case, while quickly succumbing to them in the other is a perfect example of the left’s diminished attention to, and concern for, class.

As Tanden and *Libé* remarks indicate, it’s not just “identity” that’s up there in the hierarchy of the checklist. As I’ve said before, the left has succumbed to deprecating a politics of class solidarity in favor of a politics of solidarity based on like-mindedness on a checklist of issues.

But this has things backward. Solidarity is not a matter of prior agreement. It’s bedrock socialism that you

can only build a movement with the working-class we have, not the one we wish for. Which means solidarity must start with material interest, not like-mindedness. You don’t have to agree with me for me to defend your interests.

Agreement doesn’t precede; it results from, solidarity. You get—earn and build—popular support for progressive, socialist, and revolutionary ideas and programs by defending and fighting for people’s material interests, not by interrogating people who are in actual revolt against the neo-liberal state to see whether they have the correct ideas regarding everything on your checklist, and insulting and attacking them if they don’t. That’s the approach of the liberal intellectual, not the left socialist.

Agreement will come from respectful engagement in a common fight for a dignified life for everyone. Or it won’t. There are no guarantees. Because everybody in a capitalist society gets “taught wrong on purpose,” a lot of people with a lot of half-assed ideas—whether kinda-sorta racist or sexist, or kinda-sorta authoritarian, or kinda-sorta in thrall to liberal capitalist politicians, or kinda-sorta self-righteous, or kinda-sorta skeptical of global warming—must get together and learn what ideas, attitudes, and actions help the movement, and what kind of bullshit will guarantee defeat and has to go. Or they won’t, and the movement will fail, or turn nasty.

Furthermore, the change from “normal” opposition to a radical, insurrectionary, or revolutionary movement always starts with an abrupt, unforeseeable explosion over a relatively minor “final straw” slight. And it never starts with an agenda of all the correct demands. What that explosion does, precisely, is initiate a process of struggle and learning, through which the working classes, acting outside of any preconceived agenda, and joined by those who have had the time and privilege to study history and politics, can

define not only an agenda of specific demands, but a new type of polity.

I certainly have my pessimism of the intellect about where this movement can go without more clearly defining itself politically and organizationally. And it must and will do that, through the work and influence of someone (some persons or groups,) if it doesn’t disappear or get destroyed by the repressive and ideological power of the neoliberal capitalist state.

It’s not that, because it’s a working-class movement, Yellow Vest is sure to be socialist and successful. Given the actual socio-economic, ideological and political state of neo-liberal capitalist societies, it would be foolish to think such a thing.

It’s that: that someone can only be a participant. Rather than hold its nose in pre-judgment, for the self-satisfaction of “Tsk, tsk,” and “I told you so,” any self-respecting left has the responsibility to support and participate, as it can, in a working-class uprising, in order to make a better outcome more likely.

The *Gilets-Jaunes* is clearly a movement of the rightfully pissed-off working classes against the smug capitalist elite. It deserves our solidarity.

Union gap

“Across the West, the left has struggled to know how to respond to the populist uprisings of recent years. There is a tendency on the left to denounce any shock to the *status quo* as driven by reactionary forces. The revolting masses are often written off as fascists.” —Fraser Myers

“For some two or three hundred years, people one could call ‘left’ hoped that popular movements would lead to changes for the better. Today, many leftists seem terrified of popular movements for change, convinced ‘populism’ must lead to ‘fascism.’” —Diana Johnstone

Let’s also dispel the elitist liberaloid night in which all populisms are black. Enough of ceding popular democra-

cy—including combative, even insurrectionary, democratic movements (*i.e.*, those seeking to really—socially and politically—empower the majority of people) to the right.

Sure, Yellow Vest, the Brexit vote in England, and the vote for Donald Trump in the United States are all expressions of politically-amorphous class anger. But, A) That’s not intrinsically “fascist;” and B) The social overdeterminations and political alliances differ from each other in important ways, particularly as Americans, we should have the humble good sense not to confuse the politico-ideological situation of the French working class with our own.

Unlike its American cousin, the French working class is not steeped in libertarian, casino capitalist, market-worshipping, Shark Tank ideology. Yellow Vest is precisely fighting against the encroachment of that ideology. Indeed, that’s what Macron has been trying to foist on France, as the agent of the neoliberal finance globalism in which he sincerely believes—and which has, just coincidentally, netted him “a few quick millions during his passage through the Rothschild Bank.” (\$31.5 million in four years, in fact. Nice Work.)

Macron, known as “the president of the rich,” has been “on a mission... to change things across the board in a way that I consider right.” That has involved introducing “a raft of tax reforms in a bid to dispel France’s reputation as a country that soaks the rich and stifles enterprise.”

As a result of his zeal, the French can now celebrate that “Paris has overtaken London for the first time in a global league table of the world’s ultrarich.” Mission accomplished.

That is what the French working class is protesting against. It is not taken in by this market-worshipping crap, and never was. There was no wave of enraptured workers who

thought Macron would make France great again for them. He was elected “only because a majority felt they had to vote against the ghost of “fascism” allegedly embodied by his opponent, Marine Le Pen...the French voted two to one in favor of a man whose program most of them either ignored or disliked.”

Macron has been trying to impose the American paradigm, promoting “a profound ideological transformation of the French ideal of *égalité*, equality, from a horizontal concept, meaning equal benefits for all, to the vertical ideal of ‘equality of opportunity,’ meaning the theoretical chance of every individual to rise above the others.” Fortunately, “The French have traditionally been logical enough to understand that everyone can’t rise above the others.”

Like many of its counterparts throughout Europe, the French working class, including its unions and political parties, has historically been infused with socialist and communist ideologies. Though capitalist ideology has been making inroads, French workers are far from persuaded that casino capitalism is the best of all possible worlds. The core understanding of class struggle remains, and is a primary engine of the Yellow Vest movement. This is left populism.

It is nothing like the American working-class—the exceptionalism of which is its thorough and consistent saturation with capitalist social ideology, which leaves so many of them with the fantasy that they are, as Steinbeck (apocryphally) put it: “temporarily embarrassed millionaires.”

That ideological formation sets the American working class up for capture by the two proudly capitalist parties—today, by Trumpian right-wing *faux* populism through which working-class anger is eaten by the reactionary Republican party; yesterday and tomorrow, by kindler, gentler, “we’re

capitalist and that’s just the way it is” Clintonism, through which working-class anger is euthanized by the Democratic party.

In the Yellow Vest movement, the French working class is defending its social state, a form of social democracy that doesn’t exist in the United States. Their fight—actual fighting in the streets—is for robust, publicly-funded public services, to defend them against being privatized. As Diana Johnstone explains Macron’s attempted neo-liberal healthcare “reforms” they are fighting:

“France has long had the best public health program in the world, but this is being steadily undermined to meet the primary need of capital: profit. In the past few years, there has been a growing government campaign to encourage, and finally to oblige people to subscribe to a ‘*mutuelle*,’ that is, a private health insurance, ostensibly to fill ‘the gaps’ not covered by France’s universal health coverage. The ‘gaps’ can be the 15 percent that is not covered for ordinary illnesses...or for medicines taken off the ‘covered’ list, or for dental work, among other things. The “gaps” to fill keep expanding, along with the cost of subscribing to the *mutuelle*. In reality, this program, sold to the public as modernizing improvement, is a gradual move toward privatization of healthcare. It is a sneaky method of opening the whole field of public health to international financial capital investment. This gambit has not fooled ordinary people and is high on the list of complaints by the *Gilets Jaunes*.”

Meanwhile, in the home of the brave, establishment liberals are trying to prevent the American people from getting anything close to what the French working class is fighting to defend, as Adam Cancryn writes in a *Politico* article, sharply titled, “Establishment looks to crush liberals on Medicare for All.”

“The private-sector interests, backed in some cases by key Obama administration and Hillary Clinton campaign alumni, are now focused on beating back another prospective healthcare overhaul.”

The Yellow Vest movement is not a repeat of, but a model for, American working-class populist protest. A few million working-class Americans out on the street busting things up to get Medicare-for-All is exactly what we need. It got the French people some major “impossible” concessions right quick, and it’s probably the only way we’re going to get even the one social-democratic advance of Medicare-for-All. Working with the Neera Tanden and other Clintonite Democrats is certainly a waste of time.

So the Yellow Vest movement is a protest against international neoliberal, sometimes called “globalist,” project to destroy European social democracy. The Yellow Vest protest is demonstrating, if not entirely recognizing, that the European Union—and especially its capstone, the Euro—is that project.

Too many Western leftists, including among the working-class, bought the idea that the European Union was a progressive project. This was understandable, as it was sold as a prophylactic against the recurrence of the kind of horrendous wars among European nations that ravaged the continent.

Leftists let themselves be persuaded that it could also be the foundation of a new, united “social Europe” that would spread and strengthen the achievements of progressive social democracy and the values of new identity, diversity, ecology, and human rights movements. It would be a project for overcoming both military conflict and archaic social attitudes. All good things. Through one good thing to rule them all.

But that was, and is, hogwash.

For its architects—the ones who had real power in government, busi-

ness and finance, not the professors in their post-modern symbolic-exchange seminars—the primary purpose of the EU was always clear: to increase the power of capital over labor.

European capital (in conjunction with and under the tutelage of American capital) needed to find a way around the power of national labor movements embedded in strong unions and allied socialist and communist political parties.

European capital didn’t give a damn about diversity and human rights, but was happy to use those tropes as needed to marginalize class-based politics. Anything that would promote the idea that class was *passé*, and thereby help hasten the victory of the European capitalist classes over national labor movements, was fine by them. (Ecology is a little trickier, but they have some workarounds for that.) Wrapping class disdain in the patter of progressive, universal *vs.* backward, local values was a shrewd tactic that helped capital misdirect the attention of liberal intellectuals to what the trick actually was.

Comes the reveal

The real point of the EU was to force the member states into the neoliberal austerity program dictated by international capital (and now particularly finance capital,) from its headquarters in Washington/New York through its satellite in Berlin/Frankfurt. With leftist eyes fixed elsewhere, capital proceeded with its economic “reforms”—*i.e.*, elimination of labor protections and capital controls. The privatization of public goods and services, budget restrictions that force the state to take loans from private banks, “competition” rules that favor private and foreign capital over public investment, *etc.*

It’s the program to which, international capital and Third-Way politicians have decreed, There Is No Alternative (TINA). And the EU is there to discipline the various states

with rules and regulation of political economy that ensure that, indeed, there can be no alternative for them

For capital, it’s moving from public constraint to market freedom. For the working-class, it’s moving from secure public services to *sauve-qui-peut*. Every incipient entrepreneur for him or her self.

And the extra-special reveal: the left discovers the card in its own pocket, discovers that it’s been recruited, with various degrees of willingness, to move from its historical place with the working class to up on the stage as “the left-wing of neoliberalism.”

In a specific example of how the imposition of the neoliberal TINA regime has played out in France, Macron’s government abandoned a Tidal Energy project because it wasn’t profitable—because new industrial projects rarely start out profitable, and need government subsidies to succeed. At the same time, General Electric came in and bought a big energy company.

De-industrialization provides another example. France has lost 40 percent of its industry as capital moves to lower-wage EU countries like Poland (The dismantling of the post-capitalist Soviet bloc was another huge boost for European unity capital freedom.) Autoworkers in central France, desperate to save their jobs, threaten to blow up the plant if the government doesn’t intervene. But workers have lost their greatest weapon, the strike; the power to shut down an industry, when capital has beaten them to it.

The EU’s real mission was to forge this single neo-liberal political economy to which all its states and all their citizens are subjected. Johnstone sums it up nicely for France, where all the ruling parties “have followed European Union directives requiring member states to adopt neoliberal economic policies. Especially since the adoption of the common currency, the euro, a little over fifteen years ago, those economic policies have become tangibly

harmful to France, hastening its deindustrialization, the ruin of its farmers and the growing indebtedness of the State to private banks.”

Thus, the neoliberal austerity offensive of the EU is a war on social democracy. That’s what the Yellow Vests and other European populists and “nationalist” movements are responding to. What’s also taken so many on the left and in the working class too long to get is that it has been a war on social democratic economic arrangements, carried out by the Social Democratic political parties.

When asked to name her greatest achievement, Margaret Thatcher said instantly and correctly: “Tony Blair and New Labor.” Similarly, Reagan’s greatest legacy was Bill Clinton and the Clintonite Democratic Party. And Mitterrand became the best bud of Reagan and Thatcher, creating the Socialist Party of Hollande and Macron. Turning the Socialist Party of France into one of the midwives of neoliberalism in Europe. Rinse and repeat throughout Europe.

For thirty years, the ostensible Social Democratic parties steadily but surreptitiously—under false pretenses—introduced elements of the austerity project, until austerity was all that was left. It’s been a neat trick of political-economy substitution—switching social-democracy with austerity right before your eyes.

And one day—after a gas-tax hike or whatever—the working class woke up to realize that all the incremental changes had added up to a qualitative difference. The great post-war social democratic arrangement—whereby the capitalist classes agreed to provide a set of essential public services and decent-life guarantees, in exchange for being allowed to maintain their decisive control of society’s capital wealth—was gone. “Macron is a bubble that has burst.”

There are a few conclusions to be drawn from all this that are severely

discomfiting to, and have been assiduously avoided by, too many leftists who have been entrenched in anything-but-class discourse.

One is that the European Union itself (with the Euro) was one of the main weapons, and falsest of pretenses, in this flim-flam. The EU was the pretty box the rabbit went into, and came out cooked.

The EU is, and always was, a project of capitalist globalization, which, despite much wishful thinking, is not—in fact, is the opposite of—proletarian internationalism. It’s a nasty simulacrum thereof that pushes European society in the opposite direction.

Many leftists, grounding themselves solely in a humanitarian and altruistic paradigm, resist thinking about the disruptions and depressions of labor pools and markets, and the transfer of cheap labor around the continent and the world, as part of a process of capitalist globalization, as a complement and enhancement to the “free” movement of capital, as a process created and managed by capital in its interest and antithetical to the interest of proletarian internationalism. In so resisting, they are again forgoing the critique of the political economy of capitalism and resting within a paradigm of concern shared with wealthy elites. Angela Nagle’s argument deserves to be taken seriously. There are many difficult things to unpack here, but altruism is not solidarity, and we have to start thinking the difference.

A corollary conclusion is that it turns out *the European nation-state is now the last redoubt of social democracy.*

As Michael Hudson frequently points out, we have to think of what the EU (especially through the Euro) has been doing to European nations—and especially to the working classes of those nations—as war with financial and economic weapons: “It’s a financial war. And finance really is war by other means, the way it’s being con-

ducted today, because the objective of finance in Western Europe is the same as that of war.”

It’s not a metaphor; it’s a war of the bankers and capitalists to wrench the public wealth of European nations from the political control of their working-class populations, with deadly consequences. The working classes are besieged and are fighting back, for social democracy, from the territory in which they are cornered, and in which they still have some power: the national polity.

If leftists can’t think of it this way, and only see the expressions of nationalism as “fascism,” if they decry the Yellow Vests for singing the Marseillaise... Well, all I can say is: *If it was good enough for Rick...* The important thing isn’t what song you sing, it’s whom your song is defying.

Euro, trash

A crucial point about the EU and the key role of the Euro is perfectly summarized by Greg Palast (echoing Hudson:) “currency union is class war by other means.”

Palast explains: “The euro is doing exactly what its progenitor—and the wealthy one percenters who adopted it—predicted and planned for it to do.”

Palast’s “progenitor” is University of Chicago economist Robert Mundell, who “produced the blueprint for European monetary union and a common European currency.” Mundell hated the fact that, in his words: “It’s very hard to fire workers in Europe,” so he designed a tool that would make it easier. As Palast says, the Euro was designed specifically to “remov[e] a government’s control over currency... [and be] a weapon that would blow away government rules and labor regulations.” And Mundell, its architect, said it himself: “It [the Euro] puts monetary policy out of the reach of politicians, [And] without fiscal policy, the only way nations can keep jobs is

by the competitive reduction of rules on business.”

Diana Johnstone explains that this is exactly how the Euro has ravaged France:

“...it has become more and more obvious that EU monetarist policy based on the common currency, the euro, creates neither growth nor jobs as promised but destroys both. Unable to control its own currency, obliged to borrow from private banks, and to pay them interest, France is more and more in debt, its industry is disappearing and its farmers are committing suicide, on the average of one every other day.”

This is the result of the EU and the Euro, and the “eco-tax” that provoked the protest has everything to do with it: Johnstone again:

“Indeed, it is perfectly hypocritical to call the French gas tax an ‘ecotax’ since the returns from a genuine ecotax would be invested to develop clean energies—such as tidal power plants. Rather, the benefits are earmarked to balance the budget, that is, to serve the government debt.”

This “ecotax” is a fraud in every way. Macron’s “ecotax” is nothing but a means of restricting spending and

balancing books—zeroing out numbers—at the insistence of the banksters running the EU. As Johnstone points out, it does not “pay for” anything.

And, really, think about how utterly silly that would be. The premise is that the tax is a measure to stop catastrophic global warming. So: “We’re facing an apocalyptic disaster that will drown half the earth in a few decades. What should we do?” Answer: “Levy a tax.”

That’ll do what? All it will do is stop people who can’t “pay for” the tax to stop driving (or be driven deeper into debt.) Everyone in the one percent, who can afford it, will keep on destroying the earth. That’s all “pay for” can mean in this context: The wealthy will pay a few more euros; the working class will pay with even more degraded lives. The problem will remain.

If you’re a serious political authority facing a global apocalypse—if the asteroid is heading for Earth—you don’t sit around trying to figure out: “What should we tax?” You decide what you have to do, and you do it, paying for it with your sovereign currency. *If you have one.*

You’d also need world-wide, cooperative public planning unconcerned

with profit—something like, you know, socialism. Taxes, along with their obverse, profit “incentives,” are precisely the capitalist workaround for pretending to tackle the complex, global and systemic ecological problems that can only be solved by a socialist commonwealth.

So, while the masters of the EU universe are pushing us away from that, the Yellow Vests are perfectly right to say: “I’m more worried about the end of the month than about the end of the world.” That’s the succinct, populist version of Pepe Escobar’s observation: “Why is it easier to imagine the total destruction of mankind, from nuclear war to a climate catastrophe, than to work on changing the system of relations spawned by neoliberal capitalism?”

This also has everything to do with the point about money and taxes that I’ve made in a previous essay—namely, that taxes do not fund government spending, and that monetary sovereignty, which France and other European countries fatally surrendered to the EU and the Eurobank, is an indispensable tool for progressive policy initiatives. The Yellow Vest revolt is implicitly, and must be explicitly if it is to succeed, a revolt against the Euro. And leftists need to understand why that is so.

Finally, a point alluded to above is worth reprising: *Social Democracy killed social democracy.* And it wasn’t by accident. The Social Democratic parties and politicians (like Macron) that spent 30 years undoing social democracy, and now firmly perceive their identity as uber-State stewards of global finance capitalism, are not going to bring it back. Willingly.

The only reason we had post-war European social democracy in the first place was because of the threat of socialist revolution. The only thing that could get it back is precisely the same threat.

We are in a conjuncture—the Social Democratic parties have brought us



Demonstrators gather at the the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Élysées avenue in Paris during a protest of “yellow vests” on December 1, 2018

here—where: *If you want social democracy, you have to fight for full-on socialism.*

But, hey, if you succeed so well as to threaten a socialist victory, why stop short? If you again leave the capitalist class with their control of the capital wealth of society, they will again use it relentlessly to erode whatever social democracy they concede, and you'll repeat the same cycle. That's what a class analysis tells you.

Of course, the Yellow Vest movement, though it may be in that conjuncture, is nowhere near that choice. And I do not know, and have serious doubts about, whether it ever will be. This percolating crisis of European neo-liberalism has been throwing up a lot of disappointing false-hope movements, like Syriza (which I critiqued sharply at the time here¹ and here².) As the song goes: "What it is ain't exactly clear."

But what's happening here, with the Yellow Vests, is a self-actuated working-class movement against austerity, inequality, and the neo-liberal uber-State. It's a hell of a start, and deserves the support of the left.

It's the classic scene, where the detached American decides to take the risk of siding with a movement that's not what he asked for.

Play the Marseillaise.

—*CounterPunch*, December 21, 2018

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/12/21/for-what-its-worth-the-yellow-vests-and-the-left/>

1 <http://www.thepolemicist.net/2015/02/the-syriza-moment-skeptical-argument.html>

2 <http://www.thepolemicist.net/2015/07/syrizas-final-charade.html>

Yellow Vests of France

BY PAUL STREET

The deletion of events that don't fit with the reigning ideology is part of how ruling class-owned media works to manufacture mass consent to unjust hierarchy.

I spent much of last week in a cable-television-equipped U.S.-American apartment with CNN, MSNBC, and FOX News at my fingertips. As I inhabited this abode, flicking between sports and cable news, a political crisis of the state was unfolding in one of the world's richest and most powerful states. France was gripped by an historic working-and-middle-class uprising. In the biggest popular unrest seen there since May of 1968, many hundreds-of-thousands of *Gilets Jaunes* ("yellow vests") took to French roadways and other public spaces in their fourth straight week of explosive mass protests. As Gilbert Mercier wrote last Friday (see next article in this issue):

"From the Island of La Reunion to the Napoleonic symbol that is the Arc de Triomphe, through big and small towns, as well as the usually bucolic countryside in France, there is something special in the air: the smell of fires on barricades, the smoke of tear gas, the anger built upon decades of inequality, injustice and despair for most. Among the *Gilets Jaunes*, many understand intuitively that the current democratic process is dead, and therefore the only option is the occupation of streets and roads. History usually moves at a snail's pace, but some-

times a series of events abruptly push societies to a breakdown, to the fascinating and somewhat beautiful and chaotic quantum leap that is a revolution...It is still premature to call the *Gilets Jaunes* movement a revolution, but one can say categorically that this unexpected and spontaneous grassroots movement has put

France on track for the preliminary stages of such a dramatic event."

As in previous weeks, the yellow traffic vest-wearing crowds did not turn out to politely carry signs and hear speeches. They burned rich folks' cars, trashed bourgeois luxury stores, smashed banks, set up fiery barricades, and engaged in running street battles with tear-gas-wield-

ing and water cannon-spraying riot squads. The number of street rebels remained high—125,000 or more (300,000 came out on November 17th)—last Saturday even as the government deployed 89,000 police officers to contain the rebellion.

The absurdly unpopular French president, Emmanuel "Hot for Teacher" (HfT) Macron, largely disappeared from public view behind rings of heavily armored protection at his presidential palace. There was talk of Macron calling out the national army to suppress the revolt.

The establishment French media blamed the disturbances on a minority of right-wing and left-wing "extremists" and destructive "*casseurs*" (vandals and rioters.) In reality, the great

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majority of protestors were ordinary and politico-economically exasperated working-poor and middle class citizens not affiliated with either the far right or the left. The extraordinarily spontaneous and leaderless *Gilets Jaunes* movement was supported by nearly 80 percent of the French citizenry.

Beneath the pre-revolutionary protests lay a broad popular sense that the arrogant neoliberal former investment banker Macron is “the president of the rich.”

The trigger behind the rolling street agitation and angry crowd behavior came four weeks ago when the government raised taxes on petrol in the name of curbing the climate crisis. The tax sparked road blockades by suburban, ex-urban, and rural French working people, who spend inordinate parts of their largely stagnant incomes on gas thanks in part to their inability to afford the high cost of living in the cities where most of the jobs are located.

The gas levy—repealed by Macron in an effort to placate the automobile-torchers last week—was just the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back. The demonstrations swelled into a broader protest against the bourgeois president’s whole neoliberal agenda. HfT Macron’s provocative measures have included slashing taxes on the wealthy few (to “spur investment,” of course,) hiking pensioners’ taxes, reducing housing allowances, weakening business regulations, curbing union powers, and an educational “reform” that will make it more difficult for young people to attend colleges and universities.

The *Gilets Jaunes*’ diverse and diffuse demands (there is no centralized yellow vest leadership or agenda/policy platform at this point) go far beyond the repeal of the gas tax. They include reinstatement of the nation’s wealth tax (the “solidarity tax on wealth”/ *Impôt de solidarité sur la fortune* or *ISF*), increases in the minimum wage and the minimum pension to 1300 Euros a

month, government jobs programs, higher taxes on big companies, rent ceilings, expanded mental health services, and a general rollback of austerity policies.

Yellow vest-wearers demand real democracy—popular self-rule. They have called for a popular referendum whereby 700,000 citizen signatories would force the French Parliament to debate and vote on a law within one year. There have been calls (evoking memories of the great French Revolution of 1789) for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution meant to create a new French government—a Sixth Republic based on popular sovereignty and majority rule, not the plutocratic commands of a *de facto* corporate-financial dictatorship. Imagine!

The Gilets Jaunes are in revolt against capitalism or neoliberalism, which is a worldwide system of concentration of wealth and power into a few hands.

Calls for Macron’s resignation have been prominent in *Gilets Jaunes* rhetoric and graffiti. Many, probably most French people want a new and genuinely democratic government now, not on the ridiculously time-staggered scheduled imposed by an outdated Constitution.

Despite predictable attempts by the right to hijack the movement and notwithstanding an absence of coordination by Left parties or unions, France is experiencing a left-leaning popular and working-class uprising consistent with the French revolutionary tradition of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.” It is not a neo-fascist or anti-immigrant or

anti-environmental petit-bourgeois rebellion. As Mercier writes:

“...What the yellow vests of the *Gilets Jaunes* symbolizes is blue-collar workers, struggling retirees and students who revolt against the suits of the political class and CEOs. ... The *Gilets Jaunes* movement is strictly horizontal, without a hierarchy or recognized leaders. It has, so far, refused to be hijacked by political parties: either the *Rassemblement Nationale* of Marine Le Pen on the far-Right, or *La France Insoumise* of Jean-Luc Melenchon on the Left. It has also rejected association with French labor unions. Without spelling it out, the *Gilets Jaunes* movement is anti-capitalist: a guttural revolt of the have-nots against the elite. It is a popular, not a populist, movement. Europeans and even American populist-nationalists are already distorting the *Gilets Jaunes*’ significance to serve their political agenda. As opposed to the rise of nationalism-populism elsewhere, such as in Italy, Austria, Hungary, the UK as expressed by BREXIT, the U.S., and Brazil with the election of Bolsonaro, the *Gilets Jaunes* do not have an anti-immigration or even an anti-EU agenda that reeks of racism and neofascism. ...The *Gilets Jaunes* are in revolt against capitalism or neoliberalism, which is a worldwide system of concentration of wealth and power into a few hands. With our pending ecological collapse and vanishing biodiversity, capitalism has failed and is reaching its end game. Unlike the neofascist science deniers, the *Gilets Jaunes* perceive climate change as a crisis, but they say that it is hard to focus on a global ecological collapse when you live from paycheck to paycheck. They feel that they deal with the anxiety of putting food on the table at the end of the month while the rich talk about the end of the world. Thinking about humanity’s survival is hard to do on an empty stomach.”

The *Gilets Jaunes* have resisted the nativism of the nationalist right. They

have called—not for closed borders—but rather for improved integration policies to help foreigners settle in France (language and civic education,) for all foreign citizens working in France to have the same labor rights as French citizens, and for policies that address the causes of forced migrations.

The yellow vest uprising was/is no small development in a nation that is a leading nuclear power and one of just five permanent member of the United Nations Security Council!

You wouldn't have known it from U.S. cable news last week or weekend, however. The chatterboxes on *CNN*, *MSNBC*, and *FOX News* could barely break from their week-long commemoration of the imperialist war criminal George H.W. Bush and their breathless reporting of the latest developments in Bob Mueller RussiaGate investigation to give any serious attention to the momentous events in France.

To be sure, the death of a U.S. president is always a big Orwellian deal for dominant U.S. media. The RussiaGate news (prosecutorial sentencing recommendations for former Trump cronies Michael Flynn and Michael Cohen) was significant. But the near-blackout on France was over-the-top and quite telling given the world-historic import of the story unfolding in one of the world capitalist system's crown-jewel core states—a great Western nation-state whose history has been intimately linked to that of the United States since before and during the American Revolution.

My limited viewing sample last week suggested that *FOX News* gave the *Gilets Jaunes* more—and more sympathetic—coverage than did *CNN* and *MSNBC*. That's probably because Trump state television (*FOX*) identifies more with the creeping fascist anti-immigrant French right-wing (Marine Le Pen's National Front) than it does with the neoliberal Macron—and because *FOX* joined Trump in finding

it useful to misrepresent the Yellow Jackets' opposition to the petrol tax as a rejection of positive climate action. Macron is more fashionable and popular at “progressive-neoliberal” *CNN* and *MSNBC*.

Still, since the Yellow Jackets have risen up against capitalism in a popular and anti-capitalist movement. Arch-capitalist *FOX* wasn't eager to pay all that much more attention to the street-fighting men and women of France than did the Obama-Macronists at *CNN* and *MSNBC*.

The *Gilets Jaunes* have resisted the nativism of the nationalist right. They have called—not for closed borders—but rather for improved integration policies to help foreigners settle in France (language and civic education,) for all foreign citizens working in France to have the same labor rights as French citizens, and for policies that address the causes of forced migrations

There's a very simple reason I had to turn to the Internet to get any decent coverage and commentary on the yellow vests. The problems that have pushed ordinary French people into the streets and to support those ready to destroy bourgeois property are widely present—more present, in fact—in the United States. The U.S. is more plagued than any other rich Western nation by the savage inequality (of both condition

and opportunity,) plutocracy, corruption, insecurity/precarity, and debasing soullessness of contemporary eco-cidal capitalism—and of a constitutional political set-up that is badly out of step with the needs of its embattled working-class majority. We, too, suffer from the horrid arrogance of a corrupt, out-of-touch political class that represents the rich, not “We the People,” in the corridors of policy and power. As the distinguished liberal political scientists Benjamin Page (Northwestern) and Marin Gilens (Princeton) showed in their expertly researched book *Democracy in America?* last year:

“...the best evidence indicates that the wishes of ordinary Americans actually have had little or no impact on the making of federal government policy. Wealthy individuals and organized interest groups—especially business corporations—have had much more political clout. When they are taken into account, it becomes apparent that the general public has been virtually powerless...The will of majorities is often thwarted by the affluent and the well-organized, who block popular policy proposals and enact special favors for themselves...Majorities of Americans favor... programs to help provide jobs, increase wages, help the unemployed, provide universal medical insurance, ensure decent retirement pensions, and pay for such programs with progressive taxes. Most Americans also want to cut ‘corporate welfare.’ Yet the wealthy, business groups, and structural gridlock have mostly blocked such new policies [and programs].”

We, like the French, get to vote? Super! Mammon reigns nonetheless in the United States, where, Page and Gilens find, “government policy... reflects the wishes of those with money, not the wishes of the millions of ordinary citizens who turn out every two years to choose among the preapproved, money-vetted candidates for federal office” (emphasis added). *Plus ca*

change, plus c'est la meme chose. (The more things change, the more they stay the same.)

“World’s great democracy?” University of Kentucky history department chair Ronald Formisano’s latest book is titled: *American Oligarchy: The Permanence of the Political Class* (University of Illinois, 2017). By Formisano’s detailed account, U.S. politics and policy are under the control of a “permanent political class”—a “networked layer of high-income people” including Congressional representatives (half of whom are millionaires,) elected officials, campaign funders, lobbyists, consultants, appointed bureaucrats, pollsters, television celebrity journalists, university presidents, and executives at well-funded non-profit institutions. This “permanent political class,” Formisano warns, is taking the nation “beyond [mere] plutocracy” to “the hegemony of an aristocracy of inherited wealth.” It:

“...drives economic and political inequality not only with the policies it has constructed over the past four decades, such as federal and state tax systems rigged to favor cor-

porations and the wealthy; it also increases inequality by its self-dealing, acquisitive behavior as it enables, emulates, and enmeshes itself with the wealthiest One Percent and .01 percent...[It engages in] the direct creation of inequality by channeling the flow of income and wealth to elites [while]...its self-aggrandizement creates a culture of corruption that infects the entire society and that induces many to abuse positions of power to emulate or rise into the One Percent’...[and as it] contributes to continuing high levels of poverty and disadvantage for millions that exceed almost all advanced nations.”

We also chafe under the limiting of our supposed grand “input” on excessive executive branch power to preposterously time-staggered elections scheduled by an archaic Constitution. “Our” decrepit charter was drafted and passed behind locked doors by and for wealthy slaveholders and merchant capitalists for whom popular sovereignty was the ultimate nightmare during the time of Louis XVI.

We, too, are badly overdue for another revolution and the holding of

a national Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution based on real popular sovereignty and the advance of the common good and over and against the unelected and environmentally catastrophic dictatorship of capital.

Thanks to all of this and more, the yellow vests could prove highly contagious to millions of ordinary U.S.-Americans if the French movement was given anything like the coverage it deserves in “mainstream” U.S. media. Hence the ruling-class “mainstream” cable networks’ near blackout of the *Gilets Jaunes*.

—CounterPunch, December 12, 2018

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/12/12/blacking-out-the-yellow-vests-on-cable-news-corporate-media-doing-its-job/>

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Are the *Gilets Jaunes* Today's *Sans-Culottes*?

BY GILBERT MERCIER

December 7, 2018—From the Island of La Reunion to the Napoleonic symbol that is the Arc de Triomphe, through big and small towns, as well as the usually bucolic countryside in France, there is something special in the air: the smell of fires on barricades, the smoke of tear gas, the anger built upon decades of inequality, injustice and despair for most. Among the *Gilets Jaunes*, many understand intuitively that the current democratic process is dead, and therefore the only option is the occupation of streets and roads. History usually moves at a snail's pace, but sometimes a series of events abruptly push societies to a breakdown, to the fascinating and somewhat beautiful and chaotic quantum leap that is a revolution. Some cultures have it in their collective DNA to embrace, without fear, the chaotic changes of revolutionary turmoil: France is not only one of them, it was arguably the first one when its *sans-culottes* citizens cut off the head of their absolute monarch Louis XVI. It was unthinkable then; could it happen again?

From gas-tax protests to “*Macron Démission!*” (Macron Resignation!)

It is still premature to call the *Gilets Jaunes* movement a revolution, but one can say categorically that this unexpected and spontaneous grassroots movement has put France on track for the preliminary stages of such a dramatic event. While the *Gilets Jaunes* started as an apolitical protest mainly focused on gas taxes deemed unfair, it has, in a matter of three weeks, morphed into a movement that calls for many structural changes as well as the resignation of France's President, Emmanuel Macron. The French government is under attack and says that the Republic is in peril from the chaos of the unrea-

sonable extremists within the *Gilets Jaunes*. What the yellow vests of the *Gilets Jaunes* symbolizes is blue-collar workers, struggling retirees and students who revolt against the suits of the political class and CEOs. The *Gilets Jaunes* feel betrayed by the political class and even the Republic, and they view Macron as the president of the rich, acting often like a king and as if he is whispering about his subjects the “let them eat cake” of Marie-Antoinette. It is an anger over social inequality that fuels the *Gilets Jaunes*. While the integrity of the European Union should be defended for geopolitical reasons—otherwise European nations will lose their voices on the world stage—if the *Gilets Jaunes* movement spreads, perhaps the EU can fully become a European Union by and for the people, not the current EU of a rarefied ruling class.

A popular anti-capitalist revolt not a populist neofascist rise

The *Gilets Jaunes* movement is strictly horizontal, without a hierarchy or recognized leaders. It has, so far, refused to be hijacked by political parties: either the Rassemblement Nationale of Marine Le Pen on the far-Right, or La France Insoumise of Jean-Luc Melenchon on the Left. It has also rejected association with French labor unions. Without spelling it out, the *Gilets Jaunes* movement is anti-capitalist: a guttural revolt of the have-nots against the elite. It is a popular, not a populist, movement. Europeans and even American populist-nationalists are already distorting the *Gilets Jaunes*' significance to serve their political agenda. As opposed to the rise of nationalism-populism elsewhere, such as in Italy, Austria, Hungary, the UK as expressed by BREXIT, the U.S., and Brazil with the election of Bolsonaro, the *Gilets Jaunes* do not have an anti-

immigration or even an anti-EU agenda that reeks of racism and neofascism.

“*Les riches parlent de la fin du monde, on a peur des fins de mois*” (The rich talk about the end of the world, we are afraid of the end of the month.)

The *Gilets Jaunes* are in revolt against capitalism or neoliberalism, which is a worldwide system of concentration of wealth and power into a few hands. With our pending ecological collapse and vanishing biodiversity, capitalism has failed and is reaching its end game. Unlike the neofascist science deniers, the *Gilets Jaunes* perceive climate change as a crisis, but they say that it is hard to focus on a global ecological collapse when you live from paycheck to paycheck. They feel that they deal with the anxiety of putting food on the table at the end of the month while the rich talk about the end of the world. Thinking about humanity's survival is hard to do on an empty stomach.

May 1968 or 1789?

Some outside observers, as well as a few *Gilets Jaunes* have made an analogy between this movement and the events of May 1968 in France, from which the main result was the resignation of General Charles de Gaulle. This is questionable. The 1968 movement was, at its origins, a student movement partially inspired by neo-Marxist ideas. In France, and worldwide, especially in the U.S., there was the somewhat fuzzy hippy peace-and-love cultural trend dancing to the soundtrack of Woodstock. This was more like a mini cultural revolution: a clash of generations, with the youths revolting against the moral rigidity of their parents. As the ultimate father-figure, General de Gaulle was a prime target. As the baby

boomers came of age, the late 1960s everywhere were more about sexual liberation than anything else. In our darker times, when humanity's extinction has become a legitimate topic of discussion, this hedonist element is entirely gone. The *Gilets Jaunes* are about bread-and-butter issues, not free love. This is not the *Gilets Jaunes* reality, as their demographic is, on average, much older. In this regard, the *Gilets Jaunes* have more in common with the *sans-culottes* ("without breeches"—a term for the common people of the lower classes in 18th century France) of the 1789 French Revolution than the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie of 1968. *Gilets Jaunes* is at its core a blue-collar revolt against unfair taxation and blatant social injustice, a revolt against the dead end that is global capitalism.

The “casseurs” (breakers) are insurgents: repression or compromises?

French mainstream media, which are all on the side of the establishment, have portrayed some *Gilets Jaunes* as “casseurs” responsible for what they describe as urban guerrilla warfare. By doing so, they are attempting to gut the

protests of their sociological and political content. *Casseurs* break things and attack riot police for no reason, whereas the insurgent segment of the *Gilets Jaunes* target symbols of capitalism, such as luxury stores and banks, and retaliate against the blind violence of the state personified by the CRS riot police. Macron's compromise to scrap the gas tax hike is viewed as too little too late. *Gilets Jaunes* demands have grown to include systemic fiscal and social changes, such as: reinstalling the *Impot sur la Fortune* (ISF) that taxes the rich; and increasing both the minimum wage and minimum retirement income to 1,300 Euros a month. Macron can either compromise on these and other points, get rid of his prime minister, and perhaps dissolve the National Assembly and call for new elections. Or he could harden the police repression by declaring a state of emergency and, even worse, call on the French Army to maintain order as some police officials have suggested, in which case the state of emergency would become a *de-facto* martial law. Playing hardball with the *Gilets Jaunes* could be a fatal mistake for the French government. Back in 1789, King Louis XVI had a chance to abdi-

cate his absolute power and become a constitutional monarch: he refused, and this mistake cost him his head.

Revolutions need revolution

Revolutions never happen in a sociological and historical vacuum. This being said, the spark that can light up the fuse of such an atypical event is usually unexpected. A population can take only so much inequality, injustice and oppression. Under inhumane and unbearable pressures, societal time bombs do go off. Revolutions, successful or not, express a collective rage against a social order that has failed the vast fraction of a population. It is the fracture when talks and compromise become useless, a break point where violence and destruction appear to be the only options. This critical mass was reached for the brutalized and exploited French *sans-culottes* in 1789, Haitian slaves in 1791, Russian serfs in 1917, and Chinese workers and farmers in 1949. As an expression of the anger of a population with nothing left to lose, cornered by a delusional ruling class, revolutionary explosions are mighty and often unstoppable. Time will tell if the *Gilets Jaunes* movement has enough legs and bite to catalyze such an improbable revolutionary event.

Gilbert Mercier is the author of The Orwellian Empire.

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<http://newsjunkiepost.com/2018/12/07/are-the-gilets-jaunes-todays-sans-culottes/>



**Without spelling it out,
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The Case Against “The Case Against Open Borders”

BY JUSTIN AKERS CHACÓN

In a recent article in the conservative journal *American Affairs*, liberal author Angela Nagle argues that leftists should back immigration crackdowns as a way of standing with native-born workers in their own countries. Echoing a theme of Democratic Party leaders, Nagle claims that solidarity activists who support open borders are “useful idiots for big business” because we provide cover for the way capitalism uses immigrant labor to undermine working-class living standards.

Angela Nagle’s “The Left Case Against Open Borders” is not a perspective from the “left,” and it isn’t a new argument.

It is a liberal appeal to reactionary nationalism that offers nothing constructive to a new generation of people standing in solidarity with migrant workers and refugees, acting against militarized borders, Gestapo-like ICE enforcement, and brutal family separation and deportation.

While Nagle decries some of the crimes of capitalism—such as unprecedented global inequality, wealth transfer from poor to rich nations, imperial plunder of poor countries and the displacement of millions—she draws the backward and fundamentally flawed conclusion that the left’s best response is to join with the far right in blaming immigration for the attacks on working-class living standards.

Much of the article reads as a puffed-up opinion piece, without much in the way of examples or substantive evidence, aside from some cherry-picked quotes and decontextualized statistics to make her arguments sound empirical and authoritative. Nagle strings together right-wing tropes, misconceptions, stereotypes and outright falsehoods about immigration and labor history, but peppers them with left-sounding rhetoric to sound like a *bona fide* radical.

In reality, though, she sounds more similar to Hillary Clinton, that paragon of the globalized neoliberalism that Nagle claims to be trying to oppose.

Last week, Clinton joined with former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Italian leader Matteo Renzi on a European “center-left” publicity tour to offer a global alternative to rising right-wing populism. Her solution? Incorporate anti-immigration into the framework of liberalism:

“I think Europe needs to get a handle on migration because that is what lit the flame...We are not going to be able to continue to provide refuge and support...because if we don’t deal with the migration issue it will continue to roil the body politic.”

The Clinton family’s entire political career is testament to the fact that these types of rightward shifts may (or may not) win a few elections, but they cede the ideological ground to the forces of reaction. Just as this right turn of official liberalism against immigration will only validate and legitimize Trumpism. Pseudo-left appeals like Nagle’s to incorporate xenophobia into the ranks of the left and the labor movement would also be disastrous.

Under scrutiny, Nagle’s article falls backwards onto the sword of her own twisted logic, revealing her as the “useful idiot” for far-right forces grasping for an intellectual beachhead into the working class.

No class analysis

Nagle’s arguments are predicated on several false premises, which reveal the absence of a class analysis, even though she opportunistically backs her argument with select quotes from Karl Marx.

First, she echoes right-wing talking points by implying that working-class people today have the freedom to move

across national boundaries without persecution. In fact, open borders only exist for the global ruling classes, which enjoy the right to move freely across borders and invest their capital in all corners of the world. Nowhere in the essay does she advocate for any restrictions on capital, the wealthy or anyone or anything other than workers.

Global capital investment in 2017 was nearly \$1.5 trillion, with \$671 billion flowing into “developing” countries, and \$712 billion pouring into “developed” nations. This free flow of capital is facilitated by trade rules, agreements and treaties that favor the movement of capital while restricting labor.

Of the existing 288 free-trade agreements recorded by the World Trade Organization, only 40 contain provisions that allow for some form of labor migration, typically reserved for highly specialized professions, limited by time and constrained to certain industries. Meanwhile, the global One Percent plays by a different set of rules, relying on a set of investor-class visas to bypass the barriers that others face.

Most of the world’s population, especially the working classes and poor, do not have the freedom to cross borders and must take great pains to gain entrance into the economies that employ them. In fact, borders exist almost exclusively for the world’s working classes, with deadly militarized borders facing the Global South.

For most of the global migrant population, there is no legal route or “open border” to await them. For Hondurans, for example, the U.S. only granted about 4,500 visas per-year between 2008 and 2017, with about two-thirds based on family reunification. Over that same period, about 32,000 Hondurans migrated to the U.S. each year.

At the same time, capitalist classes across the globe have increasingly militarized their frontier regions, leading to a massive increase in deaths and disappearances, and giving lie to the phony idea of “open borders.” Since 2000, more than 60,000 migrants worldwide have died or disappeared attempting to cross dangerous borders.

In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the deadliest crossing zone in the world, at least 8,600 people have died and thousands more disappeared since the early 1990s trying to cross mountains, vast expanses of desert, or bodies of water.

Nagle claims that the global wing of the capitalist class is the fundamental base of support for these “open borders.” In fact, the whole capitalist system has come to rely on the super-exploitation of immigrant labor through criminalization. Ramped-up enforcement has become a means not to stop immigration, but to disenfranchise and subjugate undocumented workers within the bottom tier of a segmented labor economy.

Extensive research shows that there is a correlation between increased immigration enforcement and a relative decline in wages among undocumented workers. A 2010 study documents how prior to the onset of employment-based immigrant criminalization in the passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act—in which business owners were required to check Social Security documentation of their employees—wages between citizen and immigrant labor were in relative parity.

In practice, employers were rarely scrutinized or punished for employing undocumented workers, and instead used this “law” to their own advantage, which is how immigration policy is designed. They pushed wages downward by having the ability to reveal those without papers, fired workers who protested, and got rid of those who tried to unionize.

As the study shows, undocumented laborers weren’t driven out of the economy. Rather, wages for undocumented workers as a whole declined in relation to other workers, as this approach was used widely by employers to structure lower-wage tiers within and across whole industries, setting the low-wage standard of “immigrant labor” by the early 1990s.

The declining wage benchmarks for undocumented labor had the further effect of holding all wages down within those same industries.

Ironically, the approach of empowering employers to have more control over their workers to weed out those who are undocumented is the model that Nagle holds up as a success. It is precisely the restriction of immigration and persecution of migrant workers that has allowed employers to divide and weaken organized labor as a whole.

The proliferation of entire industries devoted to secondary immigration enforcement is also a strange characteristic of a supposed “open borders” society.

Over 42,000 people have been held in custody each day throughout fiscal year 2018, the highest rate since 2001. About 70 percent of ICE-administered detention centers are contracted to private, for-profit detention corporations, making immigrant repression a booming business.

Who is the U.S. working class?

A second misrepresentation that Nagle promotes is an ethnocentric and nationalistic mischaracterization of the U.S. working class, one that has allegedly achieved its greatest gains during outbreaks of xenophobic exclusion and reaction. Again, these misrepresentations turn labor history on its head.

The U.S. working class has always been a multinational amalgam, consisting in large part of immigrants who arrive in staggered waves corresponding to world events.

The U.S. in 2018 is as much a reflection of this process as it was a hundred years ago. The difference has been the policies in place regarding immigration, which has corresponded to how immigrant labor fits into patterns of capital accumulation and labor exploitation in each period.

Nagle’s conception of labor is situated in the antiquated idea of the “citizen worker,” an atavism of the old white, nativist, AFL craft worker. The actual U.S. working class is very different. Of the 153 million people employed, an estimated 47 million workers, or about 31 percent, are naturalized citizens, permanent residents, temporary residents and workers, refugees and undocumented workers. An additional large percentage is made up of the children or grandchildren of immigrants, while many other workers have mixed citizenship-status families.

From a demographic standpoint, immigration sustains the “reproduction rate” of the U.S. population, as the fertility rate has precipitously dropped to 1.76—below the 2.1 threshold necessary for replenishment. Although concentrated in manual labor jobs, foreign-born workers tend to have higher employment rates than U.S.-born workers, showing how their labor is integral to the U.S. economy and made even more profitable—by artificial means—as a result of state repression and subjugation.

Furthermore, any discussion of the U.S. working class today has to extend beyond borders, because multinational corporations employ workers in the U.S. and those in other countries as part of integrated, transnational assembly, production and distribution networks.

In Nicaragua, for instance, over 120,000 garment workers create clothing for major U.S. companies that is transported by U.S. workers to retail outlets, where it is sold by another group of workers. An estimated 600,000

people are employed making auto parts in Mexico, a large share of whom produce car components as part of a supply chain linking them to GM, Chrysler and Ford workers in Detroit and other parts of the U.S.

These workers are employed by the same corporations as workers in the U.S., but divided by borders and subject to more intensive (and U.S.-abetted) degrees of labor repression in their home countries, typically underwritten by U.S. “security” policy.

Another one of Nagle’s false premises is that most workers see immigrants as a threat to their livelihoods. “Whether [solidarity activists] like it or not,” she writes, “radically transformative levels of mass migration are unpopular across every section of society and throughout the world. And the people among whom it is unpopular, the citizenry, have the right to vote.”

Nagle fails to provide evidence for her claim, which doesn’t hold up under a basic investigation. One-and-a-half years into the Trump administration and amid a new resurgence of white nationalism, a June 2018 Gallup poll shows the resilience of a pro-immigrant majority in the U.S.: Only 29 percent of those polled feel that the current level of immigration into the U.S. should be reduced, while 39 percent believe current levels are beneficial and 28 percent believe it should be increased.

This 67 percent of the population supporting current or increased levels of immigration reflects a large segment of working-class opinion, far beyond the narrow strata of Nagle’s “open borders”-pushing globalist elites. The rate of those supporting more immigration has actually increased since Trump and the right wing have controlled the federal government.

There are certainly anti-immigrant political forces on the march. But they are not being led from the ranks of the working class.

Immigrant exclusion: the history of labor’s failures

Right-wing labor populism has always been present as a reactionary current in the working class, even when draped in pseudo-left rhetoric. There is a long and cyclical history of the ruling class parties (and their intellectual popularizers) whipping up xenophobia and racism against immigrants at times of increased labor struggle, economic crisis and social and political polarization.

The diffusion of anti-immigrant racism and xenophobia to divide workers along racial and national lines, and to deflect or demobilize class struggle, is as old as the class struggle itself.

Each epoch of left-labor support for immigration restriction has failed the working class miserably. Conversely, the greatest gains of organized labor have occurred when the left has had its greatest influence within the working class, and when workers make the greatest strides.

Nagle gets this history horribly wrong. She holds up late-19th century exclusion of Chinese workers and the United Farm Workers’ (UFW) collaboration with the Border Patrol as two examples of the successful utilization of immigration restriction in the service of union-building:

“From the first law restricting immigration in 1882 to Cesar Chavez and the famously multiethnic United Farm Workers protesting against employers’ use and encouragement of illegal migration in 1969, trade unions have often opposed mass migration. They saw the deliberate importation of illegal, low-wage workers as weakening labor’s bargaining power and as a form of exploitation. There is no getting around the fact that the power of unions relies by definition on their ability to restrict and withdraw the supply of labor, which becomes impossible if an entire workforce can be easily and cheaply replaced.”

But these are two examples of unqualified failure.

Nagle conflates immigration with strikebreaking, which was not the source of defeat for labor in the 1870s or the 1970s. She fails to provide any historical context for the strikes, examples of how immigration was relevant, or outcomes to what happened; she just expects us to accept that immigrants played some kind of negative role.

In both cases, a turn towards anti-immigrant racism or a strategy of restriction contributed to major setbacks.

In 1877, a profound capitalist crisis mired the U.S. in economic depression. In the fast-growing rail industry, the bosses used the opportunity to cut wages across the industry, provoking a strike of over 700,000 workers. One of the central demands was for union recognition.

Because of police and company repression, when workers fought back, the strike took on an insurrectionary character, with pitched battles between strikers and their supporters against police and company guards across 13 states. The strike was violently suppressed after President Rutherford Hayes deployed thousands of heavily armed federal troops.

It was that same year that both the Democratic and Republican Parties incorporated an anti-Chinese plank into their election platforms. At a time in which rail workers were organizing nationally, the ruling parties, acting on behalf of the railroad tycoons, attacked the small number of Chinese rail workers, some of whom had previously participated in their own strike for equal pay and working conditions.

The concerted denunciation of the “Yellow Peril” at our shores and the subsequent rallying for restrictions on Chinese labor were used to deflect class anger away from the railroad bosses and the failing capitalist system, and to prevent unionization by dividing the work groups by race and nationality.

In the aftermath of the railroad strike, a San Francisco-based right-wing labor populist named Denis Kearny launched the California Workingman's Party. This populist party combined opposition to capitalism and immigration, which was posited then, as it is now, as a ploy by the capitalists to undermine unionization.

Combining anti-capitalist and anti-Chinese rhetoric, the party grew to become the second-largest in the state. At its height, it became less opposed to the capitalist class and more virulent in its opposition to the Chinese. According to one historical account:

"Kearney then began agitating for a new state constitution, which was approved by the voters in 1879. Workingmen delegates comprised the largest voting bloc (one-third) at the constitutional convention. A Committee on the Chinese was established to draft anti-Chinese provisions for the proposed constitution.

"The committee recommended that all Chinese immigration to the state be banned and that Chinese residents in California be left essentially unprotected by the laws of the state—denied access to the courts, to suffrage, to public employment, to state licenses, to property purchases, and other restrictions...

"The Chinese were deemed a presence inimical to the welfare of the state, and the legislature was directed to use its authority to deter their immigration and settlement. The final document barred the Chinese from employment by corporations or the government and denied them the right to vote. It also gave localities the authority to expel or segregate the Chinese."

During this period, there were anti-Chinese pogroms carried out by lynch mobs, and other acts of terror to further marginalize Chinese workers. In 1882, Congress banned most forms of Chinese migration, which was then extended to all Asians by 1917.

By 1906, the American Federation of Labor and even sections of the fledgling Socialist Party had embraced opposition to Chinese immigration as official policy, wrongfully believing that their complicity would curry favor with employers who would be more accepting of "citizen unions."

The opposite occurred. With organized labor now dividing itself against Asian labor, the employers redoubled their efforts to break the AFL by maintaining a fervent commitment to the anti-union "open shop" across the country. Right-wing populism contributed to a profound weakening of the labor movement, inflicting setbacks that prevented the unification of a multinational, multiethnic and multiracial working class.

**...open borders only
exist for the global
ruling classes, which
enjoy the right to move
freely across borders
and invest their capital
in all corners
of the world...**

The union movement remained weakened and sclerotic until the period of the First World War, when the rise of the Industrial Workers of the World revitalized labor organizing through industrial unionism, internationalism, cross-border solidarity and the active organization of migrants, immigrants, women and people of color.

Nagle also points to how the United Farm Workers collaborated with the Border Patrol to deter and detain undocumented workers when they were used to cross picket lines, insinuating that this helped grow the union. This assertion is also historically inaccurate.

The success of the UFW was predicated on several factors: multinational unity between Mexican and Filipino farmworkers, the incorporation of socialists into the ranks of the union as organizers and a painstaking organizing strategy, initially built from the bottom up, which welded together a broad base of support from an array of organizations, including unions, religious groups and student organizations.

Militant strike strategy was combined with far-reaching solidarity boycotts, marches and protests, as well as a multitude of other tactics of disruption. These collaborative campaigns broke the resolve of powerful grower alliances and forced them to the negotiating table.

After compelling the grower-aligned Democratic Party of California and then-Governor Jerry Brown to sign the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, which guaranteed collective bargaining rights for farmworkers in the state, the UFW under Chavez's leadership changed strategy. The union moved away from class struggle, instead becoming a campaigning vehicle for the Democratic Party.

The drift into the Democratic Party represented a significant break with labor radicalism and the very structure and function of the union. Chavez centralized control, purged the union of its left-wing leadership and sought to use its relation to the Democratic Party as a legislative route to future growth. Organizers now spent more time campaigning for Democrats than building up farmworker-led locals.

The reorganization of the UFW as an auxiliary for the Democratic Party pushed the union into a precipitous decline. No further significant legislation favoring protection of the union or protections for farmworkers saw the light of day. Growers gained the upper hand without having to face further mass mobilization and the union relied

more on desperate, top-down strategies to try and win the declining number of strikes it had the capacity to conduct.

It was only after this transition that Chavez adopted a policy of calling the Border Patrol when undocumented workers crossed picket lines. But this practice backfired, as most farmworkers had familial and other social ties to undocumented populations and resented collaboration with *la migra*.

Those without papers who did cross picket lines to work, as well as later waves of migrants working in agriculture, distrusted the union thereafter. By the early 1990s, the UFW had become irrelevant to the overwhelming majority of agricultural workers, becoming a shell of what it once was, and it has failed to recover ever since.

Immigrant inclusion: the history of labor's gains

On the other hand, where the labor movement has embraced immigrant inclusion, there is a different story to be told.

In Nagle's telling, immigrants are at best ignorant victims incapable of any kind of collective organizing. "[W]orkers from economies devastated by U.S. agriculture will continue to be invited in with the promise of work, in order to be cheaply and illegally exploited," she warns. "Lacking full legal rights, these noncitizens will be impossible to unionize and will be kept in constant fear of being arrested and criminalized."

It is precisely the role that immigrant labor has played as part of the U.S. labor movement that has led the capitalist parties to curtail their access to citizenship and democratic rights. In the caricature of labor created by Nagle, immigrants are outside the sphere of unions, and as such, pose an existential threat.

So while she feigns sympathy for the displacement of immigrant workers by neoliberal trade agreements such as NAFTA, she deprives them of any

agency in challenging the conditions of exploitation, rendering them hapless victims whose incapacity for self-advocacy reduces them to a threat to those who do resist capitalist exploitation.

In fact, immigrant workers have revitalized an otherwise moribund labor movement in the last three decades, providing the most militant action and class-conscious challenge to capital.

With the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, the Reagan administration traded amnesty for the first significant shift toward workplace-based enforcement.

The 2.5 million people who were legalized went on to join labor unions in droves, establishing a new vanguard of immigrant organizers, campaigns and organizing drives, and assuring that the most vital sections of the union movement have been those that organized immigrants.

In fact, borders exist almost exclusively for the world's working classes, with deadly militarized borders facing the Global South.

This surge in immigrant-led union organizing led to a substantial rise in wages. According to a study by the Department of Labor, real wages of workers naturalized through the amnesty program increased by an average of 15 percent within five years, which also led to wage increases for other workers in the same industries.

This militancy and pro-union orientation of the undocumented working class led the AFL-CIO to reverse its longstanding anti-immigrant policies in 2000, and commit resources and support to organizing the undocu-

mented. The federation led the Immigrant Freedom Rides for full legalization in 2003.

In 2005, right-wing forces united to push for the recriminalization of the undocumented with the passage of the Sensenbrenner-King bill, which contained extreme policy proposals like making it a felony to be undocumented. This and a raft of other anti-immigrant bills were explicitly designed to prevent the sociopolitical integration of immigrants—and more importantly—their proclivity to organize once legalized.

In response to Sensenbrenner, mass mobilizations involving at least three million people took place in over 100 cities between March and May of 2006, culminating in school and workplace walkouts, mass marches and rallies for a new amnesty. The Sensenbrenner bill was killed, and the Democrats were swept into office in 2006 and 2008 in a mass repudiation of the Republicans.

The potential for a new legalization, promised by the incoming Obama administration and the congressional Democratic majority, carried with it the potential for another mass surge of legalized immigrants pouring into labor unions.

Instead, the Democratic Party abandoned legalization and became the executors of the most intensive campaign of immigrant repression and deportation to date.

A caricature of the left

Nagle ignores labor history, treats immigrants as if they aren't part of the working class, and blames them for the decline of unions.

She then criticizes the left for supposedly ignoring the working class she mischaracterizes—and she again makes the baseless assertion that "the destruction and abandonment of labor politics [by the left] means that, at present, immigration issues can only play out within the framework of a culture war, fought entirely on moral grounds."

In reality, the radical U.S. left, including the immigrant left, has played an instrumental role in facilitating the growth and militancy of unions in various ways. This includes building left currents in the labor movement to incorporate immigrants and other marginalized populations into the ranks and opposing imperialist policies abroad that are harmful to workers in other countries.

Currently, the left is at the forefront of opposing the bipartisan repressive apparatus used against immigrants—the biggest obstacle to rebuilding a vibrant and militant labor movement in the current period.

At best, Nagle has a confused or misguided understanding of what the “left” is in the U.S. At worst, she is purposely smearing and belittling it in order to prop up an otherwise weak argument.

She doesn’t seem to understand the distinctions between liberalism, “progressivism” and anti-capitalism—making it hard to pinpoint the substance of her criticisms. Nor is she clear about who supports the globalist project of “open borders,” characterizing them at one point as the “libertarian left” and at another as the “upper-middle class.”

To give her argument weight, she cites support from none other than Karl Marx, “whose position on immigration would get him banished from the modern left,” according to Nagle. She claims that Marx “expressed a highly critical view of the effects of the migration that occurred in the nineteenth century.”

Rather than elaborate on this major point, she quotes extensively and misleadingly from a famous 1870 letter in which Marx argued that because of Irish displacement and forced migration to England:

“[e]very industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians

and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life.”

Nagle uses this statement to illustrate Marx’s supposed anti-immigration stance, even though she includes his next sentence, which argues something very different:

“In relation to the Irish worker an English worker regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself... This antagonism is the secret of

...the whole capitalist system has come to rely on the super-exploitation of immigrant labor through criminalization. Ramped-up enforcement has become a means not to stop immigration, but to disenfranchise and subjugate undocumented workers within the bottom tier of a segmented labor economy...

the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.”

Marx, unlike Nagle, is not celebrating or accommodating anti-immigrant sentiment. He is making the case that that the bigotry, racism and chauvinism of the English working class have to be overcome! And not by immigra-

tion restriction, as Nagle would have us believe, but by the left actively organizing inside the working class to overcome nationalist prejudices and forge solidarity—as he explains only a few sentences later:

“Hence it is the task of the International everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. It is the special task of the Central Council in London to make the English workers realize that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the first condition of their own social emancipation.”

Far from being unwelcome on today’s left, Marx would be with us organizing solidarity with Syrian refugees, rallying for those in exodus from Honduras and other Central American countries to be let in, and arguing within the union halls that all undocumented workers need to be organized.

Nagle then moves on to shaming the left for not opposing the conditions that cause migration. “Progressives should focus on addressing the systemic exploitation at the root of mass migration,” she writes, “rather than retreating to a shallow moralism that legitimates these exploitative forces.”

It is statements like this that make one question whether she has ever been around the left. Socialists, anarchists and communists have a long and consistent history of opposing U.S. military and economic intervention abroad, from active support and participation in the Mexican Revolution 100 years ago through building opposition to the U.S.-aided overthrow of Manuel Zelaya in Honduras in 2009.

The radical left has also played a leading role in struggles against the institutions of corporate globalization that promote the neoliberal orthodoxies and trade frameworks that Nagle claims to deplore.

The 1999 “Battle of Seattle” against the World Trade Organization played a momentous role in raising public opposition to corporate greed internationally. Since then, the U.S. left has built mass mobilizations that defeated the Free Trade Area of the Americas and contributed to the undoing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement.

Left groups building solidarity with Central Americans afflicted by repressive regimes led to a broad-based sanctuary movement that helped thousands of Central Americans escape brutal U.S.-supported military dictatorships by providing safe haven for refugees fleeing conflict zones who were denied asylum by the U.S. government.

Activists have since extended the sanctuary concept to push for policies that prevent local or statewide government and law enforcement agencies from cooperating with federal immigration agents in their pursuit of deportable populations.

This solidarity movement has long linked human rights activities to campaigns against U.S. funding for repressive regimes.

Since 1990, the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) has protested U.S. military training of Latin American military personnel with long histories of human rights abuses. Several iterations of the school have been closed due to the persistent opposition, public education campaigns, and annual high-profile protests at military sites.

So while Nagle claims that advocacy of “open borders”—*i.e.*, immigrant rights and freedom of movement—is a “new phenomenon...that runs counter to the history of the organized left in fundamental ways,” in fact, this internationalism is embedded in the very DNA of the U.S. radical left over most of its history.

This historical ignorance extends to Nagle’s understanding of the U.S. labor movement. “[I]n the days of strong

trade unions,” she writes, “they were also able to use their power to mount campaigns of international solidarity with workers’ movements around the world. Unions raised the wages of millions of nonwhite members, while deunionization today is estimated to cost Black American men \$50 a week.”

Nagle doesn’t seem to see the irony that she is harkening back to the period when many of the strongest unions were led or heavily influenced by Communist Party (CP) members and other radicals in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The years between 1937 and 1946 saw the largest strike wave in U.S. history and coincided with CP-led campaigns in the working class against racism, xenophobia and sexism.

As I write about in *Radicals in the Barrio*, immigrants from Mexico,

It is precisely the restriction of immigration and persecution of migrant workers that has allowed employers to divide and weaken organized labor as a whole...

Central America and the Caribbean were concentrated in 11 CIO-affiliated unions created over this period, while women and people of color joined the labor movement in the hundreds-of-thousands, the greatest gains in labor’s history.

Left-right unity against immigration?

At times in the essay, Nagle runs out of convoluted pronouncements and imprecise historical references, and falls back on the common litany of right-wing fallacies. For example:

“With ‘no human is illegal!’ as the protest chant goes, the left is implicitly accepting the moral case

for no borders or sovereign nations at all. But what implications will unlimited migration have for projects like universal public healthcare and education, or a federal jobs guarantee? And how will progressives convincingly explain these goals to the public?”

and:

“[M]igration increasingly presents a crisis that is fundamental to democracy.”

In other words, immigrants are “taking our jobs, living off our welfare system and threatening our way of life.” In passages like these, Nagle seems to shed any pretense of speaking for the left.

In fact, the essay as a whole reveals a deep-seated contempt for the left she professes to be part of, while also divulging a willful ignorance of labor history and left-wing political thought. To accomplish the ambitious task of selling right-wing ideas to the left, Nagle combines a nationalist critique of capitalism with a condemnation of the left and opposition to immigration, using language hardly discernible from that of the far right.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that such an article would be welcomed at a right-wing publication. The essay was written for a journal named *American Affairs*, a small start-up publication launched in 2016 to provide “intellectual support” for Trump’s project of nationalism, although editor Julius Krein has since distanced himself from Trump’s overt racism.

The point of convergence between Nagle and Krein is their self-professed disdain for “Reaganism” and the trajectory of free-market capitalism, which has benefitted a class of “globalists” at the expense of the nation-state. They both reject “neoliberalism,” albeit for different reasons.

Krein is attempting to position his journal as a voice for the section of capital that laments the decline of the U.S. economy relative to its competitors, and



Protesters in Los Angeles march against Trump's war on immigrants.

the emergence of destabilizing social inequality and its attendant political polarization. He is attempting to stake out a nationalist ideological position within the Republican Party, calling for a “strong state,” protectionism, reindustrialization and infrastructural investment.

For Nagle, the “Reagan Revolution” of neoliberalism has ushered in the ascendancy of a cabal of global capitalists who place profit above national interests. The most significant result of globalism—according to her argument—is that these neoliberals have leveraged “open borders” and immigrant labor to undermine the standard of living for U.S. workers by decimating labor unions.

This characterization of bad neoliberals versus implicitly good national capital allows for some theoretical overlap with the right, from neo-conservative protectionists such as Krein to far-right bigots who view “Jewish globalists” such as their bogeyman George Soros as the biggest threat to the nation.

Separating the agents of globalization from national capitalist interests, therefore, requires an active state,

which protects the interests of the nation—through which Nagle frames her call for excluding immigrants. As she states, “most people need—and want—a coherent, sovereign political body to defend their rights as citizens.”

While taking different routes, both Klein and Nagle argue in favor of a nationalism that puts “America first.”

In the context of the rise of the far right internationally and Trumpism nationally, Nagle’s line of argument does not represent an innovative left-wing analysis, but rather a liberal accommodation to racism and xenophobia.


Nagle claims that the left has “painted itself into a corner” with an anti-borders politics that leads to us offering no concrete proposals other than tailing neoliberal policies.

But there are obvious demands—for those who are willing to look—being made by the left every day. We are for dismantling the immigration-enforcement complex, from the border wall to ICE to the detention industry—the same violent, destructive and divisive force for which Angela Nagle is attempting to provide intellectual cover with some false claims and a phony left accent.

*Justin Akers Chacón is the author of the recently published *Radicals in the Barrio, a rich history of the Mexican and Chicano working class in the U.S.**

—*Socialist Worker*, November 27, 2018

<http://socialistworker.org/2018/11/27/the-case-against-the-case-against-open-borders>



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How Neoliberalism Vandalized Latin America

BY NATALIA SEGURA

I want to begin by naming the region I am writing about as America, I don't mean the United States of America—I mean America, the continent.

For us in Latin America, America is one continent, not a single country. As Eduardo Galeano writes in his book *Open Veins of Latin America*, “We even lost the right to call ourselves Americans.”

The reason to talk about the continent of America, not the country of the United States of America, is that many people continue to live with the illusion that a simple change of elected leadership in a Latin American country can bring a fundamental change for the region. I would argue that this is not possible.

When we focus only on who is elected into power in one country or another in America, there can be a tendency to ignore the ruling class forces that hinder the possibilities for social change and the working class forces that fight for liberation.

We have seen over the past decades that even when a populist leader—even one who holds many social justice and left-wing ideals that threaten the interests of the bourgeoisie—is elected in Latin America, forces like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and international corporate interests quickly start to establish limits to what reforms are possible, and they force governments to embrace more neoliberal policies.

When governments don't follow this “advice,” leaders can be pushed out—by any means necessary, as we saw in Honduras during the Obama years, for example.¹

How neoliberalism began in Latin America

In order to understand the role of international capital in Latin America,

we need to go back to the beginning of colonialism in America. After the Europeans arrived, conquered new territories and began the “discovery of America,” the resources of the colonies were managed in different ways.

To take farming as an example, before the “conquest” of America, the people of each country cultivated all they needed to survive. Colonialism changed multicrop agriculture to the monoculture system we see today.

The land of the new conquered territories was used to cultivate specific crops to satisfy the needs of the colonizers, not the people living there—and these crops were in turn exported to Europe and/or the United States at a low price. In addition, colonies became a place to extract raw materials.

This is why Latin America didn't develop a more self-sustaining multicrop system and balanced economies. Examples of the monocultural-extractive system include: Colombia and bananas/coffee, Cuba and sugar cane, Venezuela and petroleum, and Brazil and rubber trees/coffee.

Monoculture and mineral extraction in these underdeveloped countries are also used as a mechanism of dependency, because their economies are now managed by corporate interests based in the U.S. and/or European countries. For example, we learned how dependent Puerto Rico was on the U.S. after Hurricane María in 2018: most of the island's food was imported.

This means of exercising power over “conquered” territories was transformed from physical occupation in the colonies, termed colonialism, to economic control through the imposition of policies that we identify as neoliberalism. We see that the same purpose was carried out in a different way.

How neoliberalism developed in South America

One way to illustrate how neoliberalism became dominant in Latin America is to look at what happened in Chile in the 1970s.

In 1970, Salvador Allende became the democratically elected president of Chile. As president, he passed socialist economic reforms, but more importantly, his election represented an awakening of the people themselves, who were organizing from below for a socialist society.

One example of this was the way that assemblies of workers were formed, based especially in factories, just like the soviets in Russia came together during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. These councils—or “cordones” in Spanish—were making decisions about conditions of life and work across the country.

But Allende and the people of Chile weren't the only ones who were waking up. The U.S. woke up to the threat that Chile's revolutionary struggles could lead to a wave of governments in Latin America resisting neoliberal policies.

So it launched Operation Condor. The U.S., with assistance from militaries from several Central and South American countries, including Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Bolivia, plotted how to take power away from the people and keep it in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

In 1973, with help of the CIA, Chilean General Augusto Pinochet staged a *coup* to overthrow Allende's democratically elected government. Allende was killed, and Pinochet took power as the dictator of Chile. His reign lasted until 1990.

In addition to the U.S.-backed *coup* in Chile, the “Chicago Boys”—a group

of Chilean economists who were trained in neoliberal economic policies at the University of Chicago—returned to Latin America, where they took high positions in the government under Pinochet. The economic policies they promoted deepened the implementation of neoliberalism, which would gain a tighter grip across the region.

What is neoliberalism and how is it implemented?

The underlying objective of neoliberalism is to create better conditions for capitalist accumulation, and in particular by having a minimalist state that places the free market above all other considerations.

Neoliberalism prioritizes the interests of financial capital. One of the methods used is to concentrate capital in the hands of very few capitalists by deregulating the economy and allowing the expansion of monopolies. A second feature of neoliberalism is austerity, which means a program of spending cuts, reductions of taxes or a combination of both.

Deregulation and austerity in the economy of a country opens the way for privatization of public enterprises and firms, and it increases the role of the private sector in both the economy and society. Examples of public services targeted for privatization include education; healthcare; water, gas, electricity, heating and other utilities; and public transportation.

This year alone, in Argentina, Colombia and Puerto Rico, there have been mass protests against the privatization of universities and the lowering of state investment in higher education, as well as in schools.

Neoliberalism also leads to strict control over wages to drive them down.

In the U.S. and Latin America, big companies and multinational corporations like McDonald's lobby for a minimum wage to be kept as low as possible. Both multinationals and governments work together to make sure that profits rise and workers are paid as little as possible.

Another component of neoliberalism is opening up the economy to for-

ign interests and a liberalization of the flow of commodities and foreign capital—but not labor—across borders.

We can see clearly how this policy was applied in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María. The destruction from the storm served as the excuse for welcoming foreign investment to an even greater extent. As a result of neoliberalism, the Puerto Rican economy is even further away from being managed by or for the people of Puerto Rico than ever. This has resulted in mass emigration from the country.

As a result of neoliberalism, multinational corporations play an outsized, undemocratic role in governments and societies across Latin America.

Free trade agreements established under neoliberalism make it easier for multinational corporations to move across borders. Obviously, these agreements are not free. The big winners, as always under capitalism, are the multinational corporations—usually based in more powerful countries like the U.S.—while the price is paid by small farmers and workers of all countries, but especially the weaker ones.

Because of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), U.S. businesses are able to sell goods cheaply, undermining local economies like Mexico's. As a result of the agricultural agreements in NAFTA, massive numbers of small Mexican farmers went bankrupt.

Mexico has been a self-sufficient corn producer for hundreds of years, but suddenly, corn growers were in competition with corn that was coming from the U.S. at a much lower price because the U.S. government subsidized it.

One of the results of this "free trade" was a massive number of farmers losing their livelihood and being forced to leave their country in search of a better life. Many emigrated to the U.S.

Of course, we didn't hear much in the news about these Mexican farmers. The



Soldiers watch over leftists and labor organizers in Chile's National Stadium in 1973.

discussion of free trade has been one of politically divisive rhetoric and racism.

Misinformation published through the mass media is also a tool of neoliberalism. The U.S. media collaborated with politicians to spread the idea that poverty in Latin America is the result of things like overpopulation—and to then propose solutions like forced sterilization of poor women.

We saw this carried out not too long ago in Puerto Rico, when women were convinced that sterilization would help them and their country advance economically—large numbers of women were sterilized as a result.

Resistance to neoliberalism

Since the rise of neoliberalism in Latin America, many countries have elected officials on platforms to expand the public sector and support social issues. Unfortunately, these changes in government didn't go far enough. Left-oriented presidents have been able to pass laws that improve the quality of life of working people, but the reforms are limited and don't represent a complete revolution.

Evo Morales in Bolivia (2005 to today,) Hugo Chávez (1999 to 2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013 to today) in Venezuela, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil (2003 to 2011) and Manuel Zelaya in Honduras (2006 to 2009) have all been associated with attempts to implement various reforms, including:

- Free education for all children
- Subsidies to small farmers
- Reduction of bank interest rates
- An increased minimum wage (in Honduras under Zelaya, it rose by 80 percent)
- School meals guaranteed for children from poor families
- Domestic employees integrated into the social security system
- Direct state assistance for families in extreme poverty

- Free electricity supplied to those in the most need
- National control of natural resources

After some years of these policies, poverty was reduced in each of these countries. In Honduras under Zelaya, poverty rates declined by almost ten percent in the first two years of his government.

But though these governments, often given the label the “pink tide,” tried to slow or stop many neoliberal policies, they still presided over economies based on capitalism—and particularly economies that remained dependent on exporting natural resources and cheap commodities.

Thus, oil revenues were used to fund many reforms under Chávez in Venezuela, but when the price of oil plummeted on the international market, many of these reforms could not be sustained.

One lesson from these left movements in Latin America is that no one can make a revolution on their own in isolation from the larger world economy. People need to join forces across borders, and the revolution must also be international.

Consequences of neoliberalism

Unfortunately, as we know, the pink tide has not been enough to defeat neoliberalism in Latin America. As a consequence, people all over Latin America have seen their countries plunged into poverty, and they are desperate for better living conditions. This is leading to a mass migration of refugees fleeing north in the search for something better.

This, along with fears about violence and political repression, is what's behind the decision of the people from Honduras to flee with the caravan, journeying toward the U.S.

A pattern has developed over the last several decades that continues to play out in Latin America:

First, people get tired of the economic and social violence they are subjected to as a result of imperialism and neoliberalism.

Second, a popular candidate with left ideas appeals to the masses, gets elected to power and attempts to satisfy people's needs through a series of reforms.

Third, the new leadership goes against institutions like the IMF and U.S. multinational corporations by making reforms that diminish inequality. But the leadership isn't able to follow through with the social change that was promised as neoliberal institutions begin to push back and apply pressure to halt reforms.

Finally, if the leadership doesn't reverse course and follow neoliberal policies, the head of state can be thrown out of power by a military *coup* supported by the U.S. government and multinationals, or even in some cases threatened with an outright imperialist invasion.

In the end, for real change to take root and thrive in Latin America, a revolution from below, across many countries, is needed. Reforms to the neoliberal policies under capitalism or partial revolutions won't be enough.

While we stand with those resisting neoliberalism and imperialism across Latin America today, we also want to help build the seeds of a revolutionary struggle at the same time.

—*Socialist Worker*, November 21, 2018

<https://socialistworker.org/2018/11/21/how-neoliberalism-vandalized-latin-america>

1 <https://theintercept.com/2017/08/29/honduras-coup-us-defense-department-center-hemispheric-defense-studies-chds/>

Terror at the Border

BY PAUL GOTTINGER

On Sunday, November 25, 2018, U.S. border officers fired tear gas at groups of asylum seekers attempting to reach the U.S. border. Images of mothers and small children fleeing the gas drew widespread outrage from politicians and human rights groups.

Wind carried the gas a kilometer away, impacting many individuals not attempting to reach the U.S. border.

As a result of the tear gas, one woman collapsed unconscious, a baby fainted, many others were screaming and coughing, and a child with Down syndrome was among those affected by the gas.

“I felt that my face was burning,” said Cindy Milla, a Honduran woman. “I ran for my life and that of my children.”

But on Tuesday, November 27, 2018, President Trump defended the use of tear gas, claiming the tear gas used was “very safe.”

Experts contacted by the author strongly disputed Trump’s assurances and called the tear-gassing of children illegal and potentially deadly.

“Tear gas should never, in my opinion, be used on children,” said Dr. Alastair Hay, Professor of Environmental Toxicology at the University of Leeds. “The stinging of the eyes and coughing fits that the tear gases cause will terrify any child.”

If a child with asthma comes into contact with tear gas, it could provoke a dangerous asthma attack in a vulnerable population that may not have access to medicine.

Dr. Rohini Haar, Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley School of Public Health, agreed that exposing children to tear gas was dangerous.

“Children are particularly vulnerable to weapons like these—they have more naive respiratory systems, more fragile skin, perhaps don’t know to close their eyes and mouths so they get more in, and they don’t know quite how to get the stuff off as well as adults.”

Dr. Anna Feigenbaum, who has written a book on the history of tear gas, said, “The safety of tear gas was determined by its exposure to fit male

bodies. Tear gas can be far more dangerous for children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions.”

Tear gas is a toxin, which is lethal if an individual receives a high enough dose, and the lethal dose for children is much lower, according to Dr. Feigenbaum.

“It’s a chemical weapon, not a condiment,” Dr. Feigenbaum said.

“Poisoning the air that children breathe puts their lives at risk.”

Tear gases work by compelling people to flee in a panic, which can cause children to be separated from parents, trampled, or trigger an asthma attack.

A percentage of people exposed to tear gas will have long-term impacts, according to Dr. Wright, a professor at Leeds Beckett University. Studies have even linked tear gas to miscarriages.

Both Dr. Feigenbaum and Dr. Haar questioned the legality of using tear gas on children, and Mexico is calling for an investigation into the incident.

“This is a violation of UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force,” said Dr. Feigenbaum.

Dr. Haar said, “Both the U.S. military and police all use standards of conduct that require the use of proportionate force. I can’t imagine how tear-gassing unarmed civilians is proportionate.”

There is also concern that officers using tear gas do so improperly.

“A major hazard for civilians targeted with these weapons is direct injuries to the skull when the projectiles are fired at heads at close range—in contravention of company technical guidance,” said Dr. Wright.

Tear gas is banned for use in war by chemical weapons conventions, but is regularly used against civilians, with especially brutal results by authoritarian regimes.



In 2013, thirty-nine prisoners in Egypt suffocated to death when tear gas was fired into a prison van. In 2011, Saudi Arabia helped the small country of Bahrain crush its Arab Spring uprising, and the security forces extreme use of tear gas killed at least thirty people.

Dr. Feigenbaum criticized the idea that tear gas is truly non-lethal weapon. “Why do we have so many deaths, if these are non-lethal weapons?”

Dr. Wright said the goal of tear gas use is to appear to be less dangerous, but not necessarily be less dangerous.

“In terms of alleged safety, it should be recalled that some of the first WWI agents were so called tear gases,” Dr. Wright said.

In the U.S. alone, there have been over 100 people killed by tear gas, with most of these deaths occurring in prisons or in SWAT raids, according to Dr. Feigenbaum.

Now tear gas has been turned on vulnerable families living in desperate conditions near the U.S. border.

At least some of the tear gas used on that Sunday appeared to be Triple Chaser and Saf-Smoke Grenade, based

on canisters found near the border.

Triple Chaser and Saf-Smoke Grenade are both manufactured by Defense Technology, a subsidiary of The Safariland Group. Defense Technology’s website includes a warning to potential purchasers of both Triple Chaser and Saf-Smoke Grenade:

“This product can expose you to chemicals including Lead Salts and Hexavalent Chromium, which are known to the State of California to cause cancer, and Lead Salts, which are known to the State of California to cause birth defects or other reproductive harm.”

Dr. Feigenbaum said Triple Chaser is a particularly dangerous form of tear gas because the canister splits into three parts, making it hard to control where it will land.

Recently the Trump administration gave U.S. troops at the border permission to use force to protect border officers, and attempted to take away the right to claim asylum by those who entered the U.S. without authorization.

“In the longer term, we are likely to see much greater use of such weapons at borders as conflict and climate

induced migration increase,” said Dr. Wright.

Dr. Anna Feigenbaum summed up one reason she thinks we may be seeing border officers using tear gas at the border.

“Tear gas is cost effective if you don’t have the resources to build permanent infrastructure. You can use tear gas to create a temporary border wall as a solution to the border crisis.”

Paul Gottinger is a journalist based in Madison, Wisconsin whose work focuses on the Middle East.

—*CounterPunch*, November 30, 2018

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/11/30/terror-at-the-border-experts-condemn-the-tear-gassing-of-children/>

Tear Gassing Children Across the Border

Photos of children being tear-gassed stoke outrage while playing into Trump’s manufactured border crisis

BY NATASHA LENNARD

November 27, 2018—As the weekend’s brutal drama unfolded at the U.S.-Mexico border, with American authorities firing tear gas across the border fence at would-be asylum-seekers, an iconic image emerged. Captured by Reuter’s photographer Kim Kyung-Hoon, the photo shows a woman wearing a Disney princess T-shirt running from plumes of white gas, dragging two young children with her, both little girls in diapers, one wearing no shoes. The razor wire border fence stretches behind them as they run away.

Tear gas burns the eyes and skin. It causes choking, gagging, and temporary blindness. The logic behind it is one of torture: to render a situation unbearable. It also produces a violent spectacle, which is why the deployment of tear gas so often constitutes a media event.

Since the shift from its deployment as a chemical weapon in World War I to its use in putting down anti-colonial uprisings from Ireland to India to Palestine, to its ongoing deployment by domestic governments against dissent, this is how states use tear gas—for

repression. In firing tear gas at asylum-seekers at the Mexican border on Sunday, November 25, 2018, U.S. border agents reaffirmed America’s willingness not only to act as a repressive anti-immigrant state, but to embrace the optics of fascistic cruelty while doing so.

Violence against immigrants at the border is not new and has been far deadlier than Sunday’s tear gas attacks. Just last week, U.S. Border Patrol agent Lonnie Swartz was found not guilty of second-degree murder for fatally shoot-

ing an unarmed Mexican 16-year-old through the fence with Mexico in 2012. Swartz claimed that the teen, José Antonio Elena Rodríguez, had been throwing rocks, but José Antonio was found with bullets in his head and back.

The deployment of tear gas, however, provided a visual representation of violence at the border that has proven rare. When they do emerge, the photos are extremely affecting. Think of the images published by *The Intercept* of migrants' dead bodies found in the desert borderlands. Or the photos of caged children and toddlers separated from their parents by the Trump administration—and why media access to those detention centers has been under fierce government control.

The violent optics of tear gas, then, represent the affirmation of an existing state of affairs and the strengthening of an anti-immigrant agenda by means of the administration asserting a state of crisis.

It is for good reason that the photographs and footage from the border on Sunday produced outrage, but it would be a mistake to presume this to be

some sort of watershed moment for the government's racist and brutal immigration policy.

Like the disturbing images of children and toddlers in cages, footage and photographs of tear-gassed asylum-seekers prompted numerous Democrats to decry the situation as somehow un-American. California's Governor-elect Gavin Newsom tweeted, "These children are barefoot. In diapers. Choking on tear gas...That's not my America. We're a land of refuge. Of hope. Of freedom." Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez tweeted, "Shooting tear gas at children is not who we are as Americans." Responses like Perez's and Newsom's are no doubt preferable to the barbaric comments from the Trump administration defending the gassing. But the outraged Democrats' comments miss that the use of tear gas against groups and people the U.S. wishes to exclude and oppress has been a common American practice since the invention of tear gas over 100 years ago.

Newsom, 51, and Perez, 57, were perhaps too young to recall U.S. armed

forces filling Viet Cong tunnels with tear gas before the chemical weapon was banned for use in international war. But they should recall the clouds of tear gas choking protesters—children among them—at Standing Rock in 2016, or the gas canisters lobbed at teenagers protesting in Ferguson in 2014.

When the state uses tear gas, it does so under the purported rationale of a crisis in need of control. As such, tear gas becomes the mark of state-defined crisis. It can play out in a number of ways—and not always in the state's favor.

When the Ferguson police released lashings of tear gas at protesters, the images of a poor, Black suburb under military occupation drew widespread outrage and increased support for the uprising. The police handling of the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle drew broad censure after so much tear gas was used that summit guests had to be evacuated from their hotels. The use of tear gas by French law enforcement against refugees, including many children, before the Calais "Jungle" camp was torn down, provoked international condemnation, but to little avail for those fighting for the encampment.

None of that means that Sunday's brutality will work against President Donald Trump simply by virtue of producing outrage. There's even reason to believe that the spectacle of crisis could work in his favor—and to assume otherwise would be dangerous.

In September 2015, a disturbingly similar scene to that at the U.S.-Mexican border played out at Hungary's border with Serbia. Around 2,500 refugees fleeing war, devastation, and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere had set up camp near the border, hoping to cross through Hungary to head further west. Hungary sent hundreds of riot police to block the Horgoš-Rösztke border crossing. When a few hundred refugees attempted to breach the border fence,



Maria Lila Meza Castro, center, a 39-year-old migrant woman from Honduras, runs away from tear gas with her daughters Saira Nalleli Mejia Meza, left, and Cheili Nalleli Mejia Meza at the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, in Tijuana on Nov. 25, 2018

the police shot tear gas and aimed water cannons into the crowd. Images of screaming, gassed children produced international censure and outrage then, too.

Yet the far-right Hungarian government blamed the refugees and doubled down on its virulent anti-immigrant agenda. The government and its supporters circulated images of refugees throwing rocks and attempting to tear down the border fence. The Hungarian government's invented crisis was made material through the entirely superfluous use of tear gas and riot policing. This fascistic narrative of fictitious immigrant threats continues to win the day.

Like Hungary in 2015, Trump on Monday already used the optics of the militarized immigrant "crisis" zone, which he himself choreographed, to call for tighter border controls, even threatening a border closure. The images coming from the border may be barbaric, but they also present a picture of crisis—something tear gas is most effective in producing—which is entirely what Trump has been working toward conjuring with regards to the migrant caravan.

Even well-meaning outrage at Sunday's violent spectacle risks feeding a narrative of a border crisis where there is none. The only crises are those faced by the migrants stuck in Tijuana seeking American asylum, which this country can well afford to provide. A violent spectacle is not a turning point unless we make it one.

—*The Intercept*, November 27, 2018

<https://theintercept.com/2018/11/27/us-border-tear-gas/>

Love Knows No Borders

I witnessed the horror of border militarization, and vow to fight it

BY BRANT ROSEN

I've just returned from the San Diego-Tijuana border where I had the honor of participating in "Love Knows No Borders"—an interfaith action sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and co-sponsored by a myriad of faith organizations from across the country. As a staffer for AFSC and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace (one of the many co-sponsoring organizations,) I took a special pride in this interfaith mobilization, in which more than 400 people from across the country gathered to take a moral stand against our nation's sacrilegious immigration system. I'm particularly gratified that the extensive media from our action could shine a light on the brutal reality at our increasingly militarized southern border.

The date of the action (December 10, 2018) was symbolically chosen to take place on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and served as the kick off to a nationwide week of action that will conclude on December 18, International Migrant's Day. The action set three basic demands before the U.S. government: to respect people's human right to migrate, to end the militarization of border communities, and to end the detention and deportation of immigrants.

Over the course of this past weekend, hundreds of participants streamed into San Diego for orientation and training. To conclude our preparation and as a precursor to the upcoming action, an interfaith service was held in the packed sanctuary of University Christian Church. As one of the Jewish leaders of the service, I noted that it was the eighth and final night of Hanukkah and invited the Jewish members of our delegation up to sing the blessings.

Before the lighting, I explained that the final night of Hanukkah is the night in which our light shines the brightest, and I pointed out the wonderful confluence of this Jewish festival with our interfaith action the following day. Reverend Tracie Blackmon, a United Church of Christ leader and prominent social justice activist, delivered one of the most powerful messages of the evening, properly placing the issue of immigrant justice within the context of U.S. white supremacy.

Arrests at the border

The next morning, we gathered at AFSC's San Diego office and left in buses to Border Field State Park, located just north of the border with Tijuana. After a press conference, we marched west down the trail to the beach, then turned south and approached the border fence, which snaked across the beach and jutted several hundred feet into the water. As we got closer, we could see a tangle of barbed concertina wire laid out in front of the fence. Behind the wire stood a phalanx of heavily-armed border patrol.

When we reached the edge of the wire, some of the clergy formed a semi-circle and offered blessings for the migrants. As the prayers were spoken aloud, border patrol officers used a megaphone to inform us that we were trespassing on federal property and that we needed to move to the back of the wire. I recited the Priestly Benediction in Hebrew and English ("May God bless you and keep you...") doing my best to articulate the prayer between the voices of border patrol barking out orders (a ceremonial first for me.)

When our blessings were over, we went back to the other side of the

barbed wire and those of us in front formed a line directly facing the guards. A border patrol officer repeatedly told us to leave, adding that he did not want any violence—an ironic statement considering that he and the rest of the riot-gear clad border patrol officers wielded automatic weapons in front of our faces. We began to chant freedom chants and held the line, even as the border patrol officers inched forward and started to push us back.

While we were careful not to touch any officers, we continued to hold the line as the border patrol pushed us forward. Eventually, protesters who did not yield were grabbed, pulled to the border patrol's side of the line and arrested. Most men were thrown to the ground and held down with their faces in the sand while their hands were bound together with plastic ties; women were generally allowed to kneel before they were led away from the beach to waiting border patrol vans.

As I continued to hold the line on the far west end of the front line, I noticed a commotion at the other end: Officers had broken through the line and were chasing protesters down the beach. I saw one of our protest organizers, AFSC staffer Matt Leber, roughly thrown to the ground by at least five or six border patrol officers, handcuffed and led away. While Leber did not intend to take an arrest, this kind of intentional targeting of organizers is a common law enforcement tactic.

In a video taken of the incident you can see Leber (wearing the red T-shirt and backpack) guiding the protest when he is suddenly attacked, unprovoked, by the border patrol, who lunge at him and yank off his backpack. You can also see AFSC staffer Jacob Flowers (wearing the yellow vest) being thrown to the ground.

Shortly after Leber's arrest, I dropped to my knees and was grabbed and pinned down by two border patrol officers. When it became clear that I

wasn't resisting, they allowed me to stand of my own accord and led me to the line of arrested protesters who were arrayed along a fence, waiting to be placed into vans.

According to the border patrol, 32 of us were arrested. We don't currently have an exact arrest count, but it seems that most of us were charged with the misdemeanor of "nonconformity to the orders of a Federal Law Enforcement officer." When a day went by with no further word about Leber, AFSC released a statement calling for his immediate release. To our collective relief, he was eventually let out of the Metropolitan Correction Center on Tuesday afternoon.

The true meaning of border militarization

During our debrief, many noted the ferocity of the border guard's response to our prayerful, nonviolent demonstration. Many of us—in particular the white, privileged members of our delegation—agreed that we had gained a deeper sense of empathy and solidarity with our migrant neighbors, a stronger understanding of the toxic effects of militarization on our border communities, and a more profound conviction than ever that we must all fight for a nation that receives immigrants with open hearts and open doors.

This experience also served to demonstrate what "militarization of the border" truly means. My friend and fellow Jewish Voice for Peace member Elaine Waxman put it well when she wrote about our experience on her Facebook page:

"What has stuck with me most in the last 24 hours is a deeply uncomfortable sense of what that border surely looks like when the witnesses are gone, the journalists are not taking pictures, and the encounters are with migrants instead of documented (and often white) community leaders. Because what we saw yesterday looks like a police state."

Indeed, when we stood up to the line of armed border patrol officers, I couldn't help but flash back to my very similar experience in a direct action with Youth Against Settlements during the summer of 2006 in Hebron, a Palestinian city located in the Southern West Bank of Israel. In both cases we faced heavily armed soldiers, the loud screaming of orders, and the use of the threat of violence to intimidate and deter those who do not yield to state control.

I also noticed another, more specific similarity between these two experiences. When I stood in front of the border guards on the beach, I noticed familiar tear gas canisters belted across their chests. I'd seen the same on soldiers throughout the West Bank and Gaza: silver cylinders with blue writing manufactured by Combined Tactical Systems in Jamestown, Pennsylvania.

Seeing those same canisters at the U.S.-Mexico border reminded me of the multiple intersections between systems of state violence and corporate profit—and of the need for a movement that will expose and dismantle them once and for all.

Brant Rosen is the rabbi of Tzedek Chicago and the Midwest regional director of the American Friends Service Committee.

—*Truthout*, December 14, 2018

<https://truthout.org/articles/i-witnessed-the-horror-of-border-militarization-and-vow-to-fight-it/>

**...what we saw
yesterday looks like
a police state...**

Thieves Like Us

The violent theft of land and capital is at the core of the U.S. experiment

BY ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ

The United States has been at war every day since its founding, often covertly and often in several parts of the world at once. As ghastly as that sentence is, it still does not capture the full picture. Indeed, prior to its founding, what would become the United States was engaged—as it would continue to be for more than a century following—in internal warfare to piece together its continental territory. Even during the Civil War, both the Union and Confederate armies continued to war against the nations of the Diné and Apache, the Cheyenne and the Dakota, inflicting hideous massacres upon civilians and forcing their relocations. Yet when considering the history of U.S. imperialism and militarism, few historians trace their genesis to this period of internal empire-building. They should. The origin of the United States in settler colonialism—as an empire born from the violent acquisition of indigenous lands and the ruthless devaluation of indigenous lives—lends the country unique characteristics that matter when considering questions of how to unhitch its future from its violent DNA.

The United States is not exceptional in the amount of violence or bloodshed when compared to colonial conquests in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America. Elimination of the native is implicit in settler colonialism and colonial projects in which large swaths of land and workforces are sought for commercial exploitation. Extreme violence against noncombatants was a defining characteristic of all European colonialism, often with genocidal results.

The privatization of land is at the core of the U.S. experiment, and its military powerhouse was born to expropriate resources. Apt, then, that

we once again have a real estate man for president.

Rather, what distinguishes the United States is the triumphal mythology attached to that violence and its political uses, even to this day. The post-9/11 external and internal U.S. war against Muslims-as-“barbarians” finds its prefiguration in the “savage wars” of the American colonies and the early U.S. state against Native Americans. And when there were, in effect, no Native Americans left to fight, the practice of “savage wars” remained. In the twentieth century, well before the War on Terror, the United States carried out large-scale warfare in the Philippines, Europe, Korea, and Vietnam; prolonged invasions and occupations in Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic; and counterinsurgencies in Columbia and Southern Africa. In all instances, the United States has perceived itself to be pitted in war against savage forces.

Appropriating the land from its stewards was racialized war from the first British settlement in Jamestown, pitting “civilization” against “savagery.” Through this pursuit, the U.S. military gained its unique character as a force with mastery in “irregular” warfare. In spite of this, most military historians pay little attention to the so-called Indian Wars from 1607 to 1890, as well as the 1846–48 invasion and occupation of Mexico. Yet it was during the nearly two centuries of British colonization of North America that generations of settlers gained experience as “Indian fighters” outside any organized military institution. While large, highly regimented “regular” armies fought over geopolitical goals in Europe, Anglo settlers in North America waged deadly irregular war-

fare against the continent’s indigenous nations to seize their land, resources, and roads, driving them westward and eventually forcibly relocating them west of the Mississippi. Even following the founding of the professional U.S. Army in the 1810s, irregular warfare was the method of the U.S. conquest of the Ohio Valley, Great Lakes, Southeast, and Mississippi Valley regions, then west of the Mississippi to the Pacific, including taking half of Mexico. Since that time, irregular methods have been used in tandem with operations of regular armed forces and are, perhaps, what most marks U.S. armed forces as different from other armies of global powers.

By the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829–37), whose lust for displacing and killing Native Americans was unparalleled, the character of the U.S. armed forces had come, in the national imagination, to be deeply entangled with the mystique of indigenous nations—as though, in adopting the practices of irregular warfare, U.S. soldiers had become the very thing they were fighting. This persona involved a certain identification with the Native enemy, marking the settler as Native American rather than European. This was part of the sleight of hand by which U.S. Americans came to genuinely believe that they had a rightful claim to the continent: they had fought for it and “become” its indigenous inhabitants.

Irregular military techniques that were perfected while expropriating Native American lands were then applied to fighting the Mexican Republic. At the time of its independence from Spain in 1821, the territory of Mexico included what is now the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and

Texas. Upon independence, Mexico continued the practice of allowing non-Mexicans to acquire large swaths of land for development under land grants, with the assumption that this would also mean the welcome eradication of indigenous peoples. By 1836 nearly 40,000 Americans, nearly all slavers (and not counting the enslaved,) had moved to Mexican Texas. Their ranger militias were a part of the settlement, and in 1835 became formally institutionalized as the Texas Rangers. Their principal state-sponsored task was the eradication of the Comanche nation and all other Native peoples in Texas. Mounted and armed with the new killing machine, the five-shot Colt Paterson revolver, they did so with dedicated precision.

Having perfected their art in counterinsurgency operations against Comanches and other Native communities, the Texas Rangers went on to play a significant role in the U.S. invasion of Mexico. As seasoned counterinsurgents, they guided U.S. Army forces deep into Mexico, engaging in the Battle of Monterrey. Rangers also accompanied General Winfield Scott's army and the Marines by sea, landing in Vera Cruz and mounting a siege of Mexico's main commercial port city. They then marched on, leaving a path of civilian corpses and destruction, to occupy Mexico City, where the citizens called them Texas Devils. In defeat and under military occupation, Mexico ceded the northern half of its territory to the United States, and Texas became a state in 1845. Soon after, in 1860, Texas seceded, contributing its Rangers to the Confederate cause. After the Civil War, the Texas Rangers picked up where they had left off, pursuing counterinsurgency against both remaining Native communities and resistant Mexicans.

The Marines also trace half of their mythological origins to the invasion of Mexico that nearly completed the continental United States. The opening

lyric of the official hymn of the Marine Corps, composed and adopted in 1847, is "From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." Tripoli refers to the First Barbary War of 1801–5, when the Marines were dispatched to North Africa by President Thomas Jefferson to invade the Berber Nation, shelling the city of Tripoli, taking captives, and blockading key Barbary ports for nearly four years. The "Hall of Montezuma," though, refers to the invasion of Mexico: while the U.S. Army occupied what is now California, Arizona, and New Mexico, the Marines invaded by sea and marched to Mexico City, murdering and torturing civilian resisters along the way.

So what does it matter, for those of us who strive for peace and justice, that the U.S. military had its start in killing indigenous populations, or that U.S. imperialism has its roots in the expropriation of indigenous lands?

It matters because it tells us that the privatization of lands and other forms of human capital are at the core of the U.S. experiment. The militaristic-capitalist powerhouse of the United States derives from real estate (which includes African bodies, as well as appropriated land.) It is apt that we once again have a real estate man for president, much like the first president, George Washington, whose fortune came mainly from his success speculating on unceded Indian lands. The U.S. governmental structure is designed to serve private property interests, the primary actors in establishing the United States being slavers and land speculators. That is, the United States was founded as a capitalist empire. This was exceptional in the world and has remained exceptional, though not in a way that benefits humanity. The military was designed to expropriate resources, guarding them against loss, and will continue to do so if left to its own devices under the control of rapacious capitalists.

When extreme white nationalists make themselves visible—as they have for the past decade, and now more than ever with a vocal white nationalist president—they are dismissed as marginal, rather than being understood as the spiritual descendants of the settlers. White supremacists are not wrong when they claim that they understand something about the American Dream that the rest of us do not, though it is nothing to brag about. Indeed, the origins of the United States are consistent with white nationalist ideology. And this is where those of us who wish for peace and justice must start: with full awareness that we are trying to fundamentally change the nature of the country, which will always be extremely difficult work.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is the author of An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/11/23/thieves-like-us-the-violent-theft-of-land-and-capital-is-at-the-core-of-the-u-s-experiment/>

The origin of the United States in settler colonialism—as an empire born from the violent acquisition of indigenous lands and the ruthless devaluation of indigenous lives—lends the country unique characteristics that matter when considering questions of how to unhitch its future from its violent DNA.

One Job Should Be Enough

San Diego Marriott housekeepers win 40 percent pay increase

By PETER TURNER

Housekeepers at Marriott-Westin in San Diego will receive a 40 percent pay increase, stronger protections against sexual harassment and, for the first time, a pension.

The news was announced by their union, Unite Here.

Marriott surpassed Hilton as the world's largest hotel chain in 2016 after it bought Starwood Hotels.

After previous contracts ended earlier this year, the union has been bargaining separate agreements with Marriott hotels in eight cities.

This was the first time the hospitality workers' union has conducted a multicity job action against a single company.

All the strikes have now been settled under terms that vary from city to city.

In San Diego, for example, housekeepers had been earning \$14.25-an-

hour, significantly below their peers at other San Diego union hotels.

Under the terms of the new agreement, their pay will increase to \$18 an hour next July and at intervals until 2022, up to a level of \$20.

The strikers' battle cry was "One job should be enough."

Although Marriott is the largest hotel chain in the world and one of the most profitable—the company recently reported that its net income for the second quarter of 2018 was up 25 percent over the previous year—many employees have to work two or even three jobs to make ends meet.

Now Westin employees in San Diego will also be eligible for a pension to which the company will contribute 40 cents for each hour worked.

The Boston agreement, reached after workers spent more than six weeks on the picket lines, marching and chanting in the wind, rain and snow, includes a roughly 20 percent increase in wages over four-and-a-half years, a 37 percent increase in pension contributions, and six weeks of paid maternity leave, plus two weeks for spouses.

Across all the hotels, Unite Here won agreements from Marriott to equip employees who work directly with guests, like housekeepers and room service attendants, with GPS-enabled panic buttons that will let them call for help if they feel unsafe.

In addition, there is a provision that requires guests be removed mid-visit and banned from the hotel for three years if they're believed to have been sexually harassing an employee.



Hotel workers represented by Unite Here Local 30 went on strike early last month for better wages and working conditions at the Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter Hotel in downtown San Diego. They ratified an agreement Sunday, December 9, 2018.

Why Do Our Schools Seem Broke?

New report shows that subsidies handed out to corporations cost U.S. school districts more than \$1.8 billion last year

BY SCOTT KLINGER

Early this year, teachers in “red” states such as West Virginia and Oklahoma walked off the job to protest declining pay and insufficient classroom resources. Shoppers at office supply stores often run into teachers with carts full of classroom supplies that their school districts say they can’t afford. Last winter, Baltimore City had to close many of its schools for lack of heat, and again near the end of the year, for lack of air conditioning.

In September, a *TIME* magazine cover captured the nation’s attention; one said: “I have a master’s degree, 16 years of experience, work two extra jobs and donate blood plasma to pay the bills. I’m a teacher in America.”

When confronted with these issues, state and local leaders commonly throw up their hands and proclaim: “There’s no money!”

In a just-published report that I co-authored, Good Jobs First examines the annual financial reports of nearly half of the nation’s 13,500 school districts. We found that subsidies handed out to corporations cost school districts more than \$1.8 billion last year.

The report, “The New Math on School Finance,” was made possible by a new

accounting rule issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), the body that sets accounting standards used by all states and most local governments. The new rule, known as GASB Statement 77, requires state and local governments to disclose how much revenue they lose each year to tax abatements granted to corporations.

The new rule is especially important for our nation’s schools. School boards are rarely given a vote when subsidies are granted and yet are usually the most impacted, since they are the costliest local public service and rely heavily on property taxes, those most commonly abated.

The losses are widespread and in some places quite large. Ten states, led by South Carolina and New York, collectively lost \$1.6 billion. If these subsidies were cut and the revenue restored to hiring more teachers and reducing class size, these ten states could collectively hire more than 28,000 new educators.

Subsidies cost 249 school districts in 22 states more than \$1 million each. Four school districts—Hillsboro (in Oregon), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Ascension Parish (Louisiana) and St. Charles Parish (Louisiana)—each lost more than \$50

million to corporate tax giveaways. Hillsboro’s enormous handouts, mostly to data centers owned by Internet giants, cost its students \$96.7 million in classroom resources.

We also found that more than half of the school

districts we looked at had nothing to say about the new reporting rule. There can be legitimate reasons for this, but in most cases the new rule appears to have simply been ignored.

With this new information in hand, it’s time for citizens, parents, teachers and students themselves to start asking questions. In districts that have failed to report, school board members and school business officers should be asked about the omissions. In school districts that have reported significant losses, city and county elected officials should investigate whether poorly-funded schools may be impeding economic development efforts.

Local legislators claim that tax breaks are necessary to attract business investment and create jobs. Yet the availability of a well-educated workforce is the #1 criterion when companies make investment and siting decisions. In today’s tight labor market, that’s especially true. In order to support sustained economic development, state legislators should consider legislation banning abatement of taxes that fund schools.

It is time for a robust reconsideration of corporate subsidies that undermine school finance.

New data made possible by the new GASB Statement 77 accounting rule provides the data to make that conversation possible.

—Common Dreams, December 4, 2018

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/12/04/why-do-our-schools-seem-broke?cd->



In March of 2018, teachers and other public employees in Oklahoma rallied ahead of the State House of Representatives voting down the Step Up Oklahoma proposal that would have raised taxes in order to give teachers a raise.

HIV Epidemic Persists

The guardians of public health have betrayed the fight against HIV

By DR. NAYVIN GORDON

The scientific public health approach to preventing and controlling sexually transmitted diseases has been well established for some 70 years. Why is it then that the HIV epidemic has continued to claim 40,000 new victims every year for the past 30 years? What was the role of the government as “guardians of the public interest?” The Supreme Court ruled in 1905 that there is a governmental and societal interest in preventing the spread of disease.¹

The historical record demonstrates that the U.S. Government has, for political and financial reasons, not only refused to take the necessary well known steps to end the HIV epidemic, they have also cut funding to the major institutions responsible for bringing the epidemic to an end. Today the HIV epidemic rages across the nation disproportionately affecting Black and Latin people—almost half are unaware that they are infected.

In 1981 the HIV epidemic began and by 1985 a blood test was developed. A sustained public health prevention policy includes universal screening, partner identification, treatment and prevention. These strategies could have been put into effect if priorities and funding had allowed an expanded public health workforce to take the necessary actions to end the epidemic. Tragically this was not allowed to happen. From 1992 through 2017, the HIV epidemic has continued to claim 40,000 new victims yearly.

During the 1980’s while the HIV epidemic accelerated, the administration under President Reagan was focused on making cutbacks in federal health spending.²

Huge cuts to the public health services were made as extra billions of dollars were poured into a massive military buildup.³

In New York State the people had to fight for an HIV partner notification law (1999), a key component for eliminating sexually transmitted diseases and crucial to protecting the public health.⁴

In 2008-9 cuts were made to public health funding as billions more were given to bail out banks and corporations.⁵

In 2018 there were \$1.3 billion in cuts to prevention and public health funds, while \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts were given, by the Trump Congress, to bankers, corporations and the rich.⁶

The grim reality is that now over one million live with HIV. To this date, a complete public health prevention strategy for combating HIV has not been introduced as a comprehensive national program. The Institute of Medicine declared in 1988 that the American public health system had fallen into disarray.⁷

Another way to conceptualize these failures is to understand that our economic system has been shown to place

corporate profits and war above protecting the public from disease, especially the most vulnerable. It is time to think about an economic system that puts the people’s health first.

Dr. Nayvin Gordon is a California Family Physician. He has written many articles on politics and disease.

1 <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/197/11/>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK218212/>

3 <https://timeline.com/reagan-trump-health-care-cuts-8cf64aa242eb>

4 https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1506&context=lawreview_

5 <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-report-funding-for-public-health-has-declined-significantly-since-the-great-recession-300606063.html>

6 <https://www.the-scientist.com/daily-news/cuts-to-prevention-and-public-health-fund-puts-cdc-programs-at-risk-30298>

7 <https://timeline.com/reagan-trump-health-care-cuts-8cf64aa242eb>

**GETTING TO
ZERO**



Rule of the Uber-Rich Means Either Tyranny or Revolution

BY CHRIS HEDGES

At the age of ten I was sent as a scholarship student to a boarding school for the uber-rich in Massachusetts. I lived among the wealthiest Americans for the next eight years. I listened to their prejudices and saw their cloying sense of entitlement. They insisted they were privileged and wealthy because they were smarter and more talented. They had a sneering disdain for those ranked below them in material and social status, even the merely rich. Most of the uber-rich lacked the capacity for empathy and compassion. They formed elite cliques that hazed, bullied and taunted any nonconformist who defied or did not fit into their self-adulatory universe.

It was impossible to build a friendship with most of the sons of the uber-rich. Friendship for them was defined by “what’s in it for me?” They were surrounded from the moment they came out of the womb by people catering to their desires and needs. They were incapable of reaching out to others in distress—whatever petty whim or problem they had at the moment dominated their universe and took precedence over the suffering of others, even those within their own families. They knew only how to take. They could not give. They were deformed and deeply unhappy people in the grip of an unquenchable narcissism.

It is essential to understand the pathologies of the uber-rich. They have seized total political power. These pathologies inform Donald Trump, his children, the Brett Kavanaughs, and the billionaires who run his administration. The uber-rich cannot see the world from anyone’s perspective but their own. People around them, including the women whom entitled men prey upon, are objects designed to gratify momentary lusts or be manipulated. The uber-rich are almost always

amoral. Right. Wrong. Truth. Lies. Justice. Injustice. These concepts are beyond them. Whatever benefits or pleasures them is good. What does not must be destroyed.

The pathology of the uber-rich is what permits Trump and his callow son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to conspire with *de facto* Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman, another product of unrestrained entitlement and nepotism, to cover up the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, whom I worked with in the Middle East. The uber-rich spend their lives protected by their inherited wealth, the power it wields and an army of enablers, including other members of the fraternity of the uber-rich, along with their lawyers and publicists. There are almost never any consequences for their failures, abuses, mistreatment of others and crimes. This is why the Saudi crown prince and Kushner have bonded. They are the *homunculi* the uber-rich routinely spawn.

The rule of the uber-rich, for this reason, is terrifying. They know no limits. They have never abided by the norms of society and never will. We pay taxes—they don’t. We work hard to get into an elite university or get a job—they don’t. We have to pay for our failures—they don’t. We are prosecuted for our crimes—they are not.

The uber-rich live in an artificial bubble, a land called Richistan, a place of Frankenmansions and private jets, cut off from our reality. Wealth, I saw, not only perpetuates itself but is used to monopolize the new opportunities for wealth creation. Social mobility for the poor and the working class is largely a myth. The uber-rich practice the ultimate form of affirmative action, catapulting white, male mediocrities like Trump, Kushner and George W. Bush into elite schools that groom the

plutocracy for positions of power. The uber-rich are never forced to grow up. They are often infantilized for life, squalling for what they want and almost always getting it. And this makes them very, very dangerous.

Political theorists, from Aristotle and Karl Marx to Sheldon Wolin, have warned against the rule of the uber-rich. Once the uber-rich take over, Aristotle writes, the only options are tyranny and revolution. They do not know how to nurture or build. They know only how to feed their bottomless greed. It’s a funny thing about the uber-rich: No matter how many billions they possess, they never have enough. They are the Hungry Ghosts of Buddhism. They seek, through the accumulation of power, money and objects, an unachievable happiness. This life of endless desire often ends badly, with the uber-rich estranged from their spouses and children, bereft of genuine friends. And when they are gone, as Charles Dickens wrote in *A Christmas Carol*, most people are glad to be rid of them.

C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite*, one of the finest studies of the pathologies of the uber-rich, wrote:

“They exploited national resources, waged economic wars among themselves, entered into combinations, made private capital out of the public domain, and used any and every method to achieve their ends. They made agreements with railroads for rebates; they purchased newspapers and bought editors; they killed off competing and independent businesses and employed lawyers of skill and statesmen of repute to sustain their rights and secure their privileges. There is something demonic about these lords of creation; it is not merely rhetoric to call them robber barons.”

“The power of the uber-rich”

Corporate capitalism, which has destroyed our democracy, has given unchecked power to the uber-rich. And once we understand the pathologies of these oligarchic elites, it is easy to chart our future. The state apparatus the uber-rich controls now exclusively serves their interests. They are deaf to the cries of the dispossessed. They empower those institutions that keep us oppressed—the security and surveillance systems of domestic control, militarized police, Homeland Security and the military—and gut or degrade those institutions or programs that blunt social, economic and political inequality, among them public education, healthcare, welfare, Social Security, an equitable tax system, food stamps, public transportation and infrastructure, and the courts. The uber-rich extract greater and greater sums of money from those they steadily impoverish. And when citizens object or resist, they crush or kill them.

The uber-rich care inordinately about their image. They are obsessed with looking at themselves. They are the center of their own universe. They go to great lengths and expense to create fictional personas replete with non-existent virtues and attributes. This is why the uber-rich carry out acts of well-publicized philanthropy. Philanthropy allows the uber-rich to engage in moral fragmentation. They ignore the moral squalor of their lives, often defined by the kind of degeneracy and debauchery the uber-rich insist is the curse of the poor, to present themselves through small acts of charity as caring and beneficent. Those who puncture this image, as Khashoggi did with Salman, are especially despised. And this is why Trump, like all the uber-rich, sees a critical press as the enemy. It is why Trump and Kushner’s eagerness to conspire to help cover up Khashoggi’s murder is ominous. Trump’s incitements to his supporters, who see in him the omnipotence they

lack and yearn to achieve, to carry out acts of violence against his critics are only a few steps removed from the crown prince’s thugs dismembering Khashoggi with a bone saw. And if you think Trump is joking when he suggests the press should be dealt with violently you understand nothing about the uber-rich. He will do what he can get away with, even murder. He, like most of the uber-rich, is devoid of a conscience.

The more enlightened uber-rich, the East Hamptons and Upper East Side uber-rich, a realm in which Ivanka and Jared once cavorted, look at the president as gauche and vulgar. But this distinction is one of style, not substance. Donald Trump may be an embarrassment to the well-heeled Harvard and Princeton graduates at Goldman Sachs, but he serves the uber-rich as assiduously as Barack Obama and the Democratic Party do. This is why the Obamas, like the Clintons, have been inducted into the pantheon of the uber-rich. It is why Chelsea Clinton and Ivanka Trump were close friends. They come from the same caste.

There is no force within ruling institutions that will halt the pillage by the uber-rich of the nation and the ecosystem. The uber-rich have nothing to fear from the corporate-controlled media, the elected officials they bankroll or the judicial system they have seized. The universities are pathetic corporation appendages. They silence or banish intellectual critics who upset major donors by challenging the reigning ideology of neoliberalism, which was formulated by the uber-rich to restore class power. The uber-rich have destroyed popular movements, including labor unions, along with democratic mechanisms for reform that once allowed working people to pit power against power. The world is now their playground.

In “The Postmodern Condition” the philosopher Jean-François

Lyotard painted a picture of the future neoliberal order as one in which “the temporary contract” supplants “permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family and international domains, as well as in political affairs.” This temporal relationship to people, things, institutions and the natural world ensures collective self-annihilation. Nothing for the uber-rich has an intrinsic value. Human beings, social institutions and the natural world are commodities to exploit for personal gain until exhaustion or collapse. The common good, like the consent of the governed, is a dead concept. This temporal relationship embodies the fundamental pathology of the uber-rich.

The uber-rich, as Karl Polanyi wrote, celebrate the worst kind of freedom—the freedom “to exploit one’s fellows, or the freedom to make inordinate gains without commensurable service to the community, the freedom to keep technological inventions from being used for public benefit, or the freedom to profit from public calamities secretly engineered for private advantage.” At the same time, as Polanyi noted, the uber-rich make war on the “freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of meeting, freedom of association, freedom to choose one’s own job.”

The dark pathologies of the uber-rich, lionized by mass culture and mass media, have become our own. We have ingested their poison. We have been taught by the uber-rich to celebrate the bad freedoms and denigrate the good ones. Look at any Trump rally. Watch any reality television show. Examine the state of our planet. We will repudiate these pathologies and organize to force the uber-rich from power or they will transform us into what they already consider us to be—the help.

—Common Dreams, October 22, 2018

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/10/22/rule-uber-rich-means-either-tyranny-or-revolution>

U.S. Military's Vision for State Censorship

BY ANDRE DAMON

In March 2018, the United States Special Operations Command, the section of the Defense Department supervising the U.S. Special Forces, held a conference on the theme of “Sovereignty in the Information Age.” The conference brought together Special Forces officers with domestic police forces, including officials from the New York Police Department, and representatives from technology companies such as Microsoft.

This meeting of top military, police and corporate representatives went unreported and unpublicized at the time. However, the *Atlantic Council* recently published a 21-page document summarizing the orientation of the proceedings. It is authored by John T. Watts, a former Australian Army officer and consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security.

The *Atlantic Council*, a think tank with close ties to the highest levels of the state, has been a key partner in the social media companies’ censorship of left-wing views. Most notably, *Facebook* acted on a tip from the *Atlantic Council* when it shut down the official event page for an anti-fascist demonstration in Washington on the anniversary of last year’s neo-Nazi riot in Charlottesville.

Confident that none of the thousands of journalists in Washington will question, or even report, what he writes, Watts lays out, from the standpoint of the repressive apparatus of the state and the financial oligarchy it defends, why censorship is necessary.

The central theme of the report is “sovereignty,” or the state’s ability to impose its will upon the population. This “sovereignty,” Watts writes, faces “greater challenges now than it ever has in the past,” due to the confluence

between growing political opposition to the state and the internet’s ability to quickly spread political dissent.

Watts cites the precedent of the invention of the printing press, which helped overthrow the feudal world order. In the *Atlantic Council’s* estimation, however, this was an overwhelmingly negative development, ushering in “decades, and arguably centuries, of conflict and disruption” and undermining the “sovereignty” of absolutist states. The “invention of the internet is similarly creating conflict and disruption,” Watts writes.

“Trust in Western society,” he warns, “is experiencing a crisis. The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer has tracked this erosion, showing a 30 percent drop in trust in government over the last year in the United States.”

Watts notes that this collapse in support for the government cannot be explained merely by the rise of social media. This process began in the early 2000s, “at the dawn of the social media age but before it had become mainstream.” Left out are the major reasons for the collapse of popular support for government institutions: the stolen election of 2000, the Bush administration’s lies about weapons of mass destruction, unending war and the impact of the 2008 financial crisis.

However, while it is “hard to argue that the current loss of trust results solely from the emergence of social media,” Watts writes, there “can be little doubt that it acted as a critical amplifier of broader trends.”

He continues: “Technology has democratized the ability for sub-state groups and individuals to broadcast a narrative with limited resources and virtually unlimited scope.” By contrast, “In the past, the general public had limited sources of information, which

were managed by professional gatekeepers.”

In other words, the rise of uncensored social media allowed small groups with ideas that correspond to those of the broader population to challenge the political narrative of vested interests on an equal footing, without the “professional gatekeepers” of the mainstream print and broadcast media, which publicizes only a pro-government narrative.

When “radical and extremist views” and “incorrect ideas” are “broadcast over social media, they can even influence the views of people who would not otherwise be sympathetic to that perspective,” Watts warns. “When forwarded by a close friend or relation, false information carries additional legitimacy; once accepted by an individual, this false information can be difficult to correct.”

People must be isolated, in other words, from the “incorrect” ideas of their friends and family, because such ideas are “difficult to correct” by the state once disseminated.

But how is this to be done? The growth of oppositional sentiment cannot be combatted with “facts” or the “truth,” because “facts themselves are not sufficient to combat disinformation.” The “truth” is “too complex, less interesting, and less meaningful to individuals.”

Nor can the growth of political opposition, for the time being, simply be solved by “eliminating” (*i.e.*, killing or jailing) political dissidents, because this only lends legitimacy to the ideas of the victims. “Eliminating those individuals and organizations will not be sufficient to combat the narrative and may in fact help amplify it.” He adds, “This is also the case for censorship as those behind the narrative can use the attempt to

repress the message as proof of its truth, importance, or authenticity.”

Enter the social media companies. The best mechanism for suppressing oppositional viewpoints and promoting pro-government narratives is the private sector, in particular “technology giants, including *Facebook*, *Google*, *YouTube*, and *Twitter*,” which can “determine what people see and do not see.”

Watts adds, “Fortunately, shifts in the policies of social media platforms such as *Facebook* have had significant impact on the type and quality of the content that is broadcast.”

The private sector, therefore, must do the dirty work of the government, because government propaganda is viewed with suspicion by the population. “Business and the private sector may not naturally understand the role they play in combating disinformation, but theirs is one of the most important ...In the West at least, they have been thrust into a central role due to the general public’s increased trust in them as institutions.”

But this is only the beginning. Online newspapers should “consider disabling commentary systems—the function of allowing the general public to leave comments beneath a particular media item,” while social media companies should “use a grading system akin to that used to rate the cleanliness of restaurants” to rate their users’ political statements.

Strong-arm tactics still have a role, of course. Citing the example of *WikiLeaks* editor Julian Assange, Watts declares that “governments need to create consequences” for spreading “disinformation” similar to those meted out for “state espionage”—which can carry the death penalty.

What Watts outlines in his document is a vision of a totalitarian social order, where the government, the media, and technology companies are united in suppressing oppositional viewpoints.

The most striking element of the document, however, is that it is not describing the future, but contemporary reality. Everything is in the present tense. The machinery of mass censorship has already been built.

The *Atlantic Council* report, based on high-level discussions within the military and state, is a confirmation of everything the *World Socialist Web Site* has said about the purpose of changes in the algorithms of Internet and social media companies over the past year-and-a-half.

**“In the past,
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On August 25, 2017, the *WSWS* published an open letter to *Google* alleging that the company is “manipulating its Internet searches to restrict public awareness of and access to socialist, antiwar and left-wing websites.” It added, “Censorship on this scale is political blacklisting.”

Over the subsequent year, key details of the open letter have been indisputably confirmed. At congressional hearings and in other public statements, leading U.S. technology companies have explained that they reduced the propagation of political views and statements targeted by U.S. intelligence agencies, and did so in secret because they feared a public outcry. At the same time, they have explained the technical means by which they promoted pro-government, pro-war news outlets, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

But the *Atlantic Council* document presents the most clear, direct and unvarnished explanation of the regime of state censorship.

The struggle against censorship is the spearhead of the defense of all democratic rights. The most urgent task is to unify the working class, which is engaged in a wave of social struggles all over the world, behind the struggle against censorship as a component of the fight for socialism.

—*The Unz Review*, October 5, 2018

<http://www.unz.com/article/the-us-militarys-vision-for-state-censorship/>



Midterm Results: the War Party Rules

BY DANNY HAIPHONG

There is no doubt who won the midterm elections: the War Party, which for generations has been virtually unopposed in the U.S..

Forget the midterms. The “blue wave” was a low tide. The Democrats took the House but lost the Senate, and badly. The good news is that another excessively hyped election is over. Let’s talk instead about how, under U.S. imperialism, war is a constant. Republican and Democratic Party officials are members of the War Party. U.S. imperial wars rage on regardless of whether a Democrat is elected for President or Congress. The War Party follows the dictates of Wall Street and the war machine. Party membership not only includes Democratic and Republican officials but also the corporate media.

Democratic Party officials described last week’s midterm elections as the most important electoral moment in U.S. history. So-called “blue wave” politicians such as Stacy Abrams and Beto O’Rourke were deemed the “new” face of the Democrat side of the War Party. Democrats have promised their base that they will protect Obamacare, institute immigration reform, and “resist” Trump. These empty promises lacked the substance necessary to improve the conditions of poor and oppressed peo-

ple. Beyond empty promises and corporate gesturing, Democrats gave a wink and a nod to the military industrial complex by remaining silent on the question of war.

The War Party planted military and intelligence candidates in midterm electoral races throughout the country. Stacy Abrams colluded with billionaires like Oprah but said nothing about war in her failed bid to become Governor of Georgia. Beto O’Rourke went a step further in his losing effort to the despicable Ted Cruz by promising the military industrial complex that he would shore up the resources necessary to “win” the six wars that his campaign identified in the global War on Terror. Corporate media outlets such as *MSNBC* and *CNN* further silenced the question of war by speaking non-stop about the elections as a “referendum” against Trump. What the corporate media and the Democrats didn’t say was that their “resistance” to Trump has always been a pro-war project.

The midterm elections were a partial success for the Democrat side of the War Party, especially in the House. However, people all over the world will feel no relief. Not one candidate running for War Party seats campaigned to close the eight hundred U.S. military bases that occupy nearly every nation

on the planet. The U.S.-backed Saudi war on Yemen continues to starve and murder the people of Yemen with only scant and ineffectual coverage emanating from the *New York Times* and other corporate media outlets. In fact, the *New York Times* has made it clear that its opposition to Trump’s plan to increase troop levels at the U.S.-Mexico border is rooted in the principle that those troops should be fighting in wars in the Middle East or elsewhere. Thus, the Democrats do not oppose much of what the Trump Administration stands for, but rather how the Administration implements its policies.

The War Party has opposed Trump based on the billionaire’s proposed reforms to the imperial war machine. These proposed reforms have been less a product of Trump the individual and more the consequence of an imperialist system on the decline. The War Party exhausted its bipartisan war consensus under the Great Compromiser, Barack Obama. Obama solidified the war machine and expanded domestic and international counterinsurgency campaigns beyond the wildest dreams of the military industrial complex. Ukraine fell to fascists, Libya fell to head-chopping jihadists, and Syria became the prime location of one of the greatest refugee catastrophes in recent human history—all thanks to Obama. This made Israel and the U.S.’ band of fascist allies smile, regardless of how much they disliked his skin color.

The War Party fell into instant crisis under Donald Trump, which it hopes to rectify in the 2020 Presidential race. Trump campaigned on cordial relations with Russia and anti-free trade rhetoric. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), multinational capital’s plan to strangle China, was instantly thrown away with the stroke of a pen. NATO trembled at the



thought that Trump would speak to Putin in a fraternal manner and possibly discuss the de-escalation of its military arsenal from the Russian border. The War Party could care less about Trump's racist epithets and policies toward undocumented immigrants. Its mission since Trump came into office has been to stabilize the imperialist system by marginalizing Trump where it matters and aligning with him when doing so maximizes the profits of the global capitalist elite.

Such is the game of bourgeois politics. This round of midterm elections is no different. The War Party does not preside over a democracy. Even mainstream observers have labeled the U.S. electoral system an oligarchy. Corporations and their armed guards reign supreme. The wars raging on in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America are set to expand regardless of which side of the corporate duopoly rules Congress.

This is evident in the political debates that have dominated the midterm elections. Trump has blown the racist dog whistle over the thousands of Central American migrants making their way from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. However, Trump would have no whistle to blow were it not for over a century's worth of U.S. imperial policy in the region. The War Party is responsible for the violence in Honduras. When Obama was at the helm, the War Party supported the overthrow of leftist President Manuel Zelaya. The *coup* made Honduras one of the most dangerous places to be an environmental or trade union activist in the world.

Under Obama, the Democratic Party solidified its allegiance to the War Party. In the spirit of Lyndon Johnson's massacre of the Vietnamese people, Obama committed resources to proxies that committed massacres in Libya and Syria. He authorized ten

times the number of drone strikes on civilian populations as George W. Bush. Under Obama, the military budget ballooned even as discussions among both sides of the War Party ensued about a "Grand Bargain" to cut Social Security and Medicare. The War Party made it clear under Obama that the masses would have to starve for the war machine to be fed.

Not much has changed with the War Party under the Trump Administration. However, what has changed is the progress that the people of the world have made to counter U.S. imperialist hegemony. Imperialist propaganda mill, *Voice of America*, has complained that China and Russia have developed deeper ties to nations in Latin America. Korea is working toward real and lasting peace. Cuban President Diaz-Canel is traveling through the DPRK, China, Vietnam, Laos, and Russia to further develop ties of solidarity. Amid much hardship and struggle, the people of the world are maintaining their resolve against imperialism.

This has infuriated the War Party. Members of the War Party know that Donald Trump cannot deliver what it seeks: permanent global hegemony. The War Party and the imperialist system it governs is no longer able to achieve its own interests. Imperialism is at a dead-end. Trump is merely the most acute indicator. The fake "resistance" hopes to right the War Party's sinking ship.

In this midterm election and for U.S. elections to come, victory for the War Party is guaranteed. The War Party will continue its assault on oppressed people and exploited people, at home and abroad. Black Americans will continue to fill prison beds and graveyards at the hands of the police. Poor people will continue to struggle to find work, healthcare, and housing. Civilian populations in every corner of the globe will be maimed by U.S. bombs and military operations.

These are the fruits of the War Party. The core of every one of these fruits is rotten. This is a dangerous time and not because Trump is a Nazi in the White House. Economic crisis and world war are on the horizon. It is time to dump the War Party and build an independent organization comprised of all that the War Party has forsaken.

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 14, 2018

<https://blackagendareport.com/mid-term-results-war-party-rules>

Republican and Democratic Party officials are members of the War Party. U.S. imperial wars rage on regardless of whether a Democrat is elected for President or Congress. The War Party follows of the dictates of Wall Street and the war machine. Party membership not only includes Democratic and Republican officials but also the corporate media.

Midterm Elections

Corporate Democrats vs. the monster they empowered

BY GLEN FORD

Only transformational programs, like single payer healthcare, can erode the coherence of the White Supremacist Bloc, and at the same time galvanize the numeric majority of the nation.

Tuesday's midterm elections put Democrats back in control of the U.S. House while strengthening the Republican hold on the Senate. The big picture is that, two years after Donald Trump replaced the GOP's old arsenal of racial code words and dog whistles with blaring white supremacist bullhorns, majorities of U.S. whites are firmly committed to an openly white nationalist political program under the leadership of a billionaire huckster who speaks their vile language. Although the GOP remains a minority party—Democrats outpolled them in House races by seven to nine percent—white supremacists remain the largest bloc in the U.S. political spectrum. The 2018 midterms were a test, not of insurgent left-leaning Democrats—a disorganized and confused faction that was kept largely in check by the party's

corporate leadership—but of whether Donald Trump could continue to hold majorities of white Americans in thrall to his non-stop, red-meat racist political theater.

The actual corporate agenda is austerity and war, the only future the oligarchy envisions for the planet.

He could, and did, confirming the potency of the overt white supremacist strategy, which has succeeded in proving both the intransigence and coherence of racist white majorities, even as most of the ruling class and its media mounted an unprecedented offensive to restore the previous corporate political consensus: austerity and war cloaked in a *façade* of “diversity.” Trump made “me feel like an American again,” said a white West Virginia

hardware store worker quoted by the *New York Times*. The man felt restored in the belief that he still lives in a white man's country.

Republican gains in the Senate reflect both the solidity of the white supremacist bloc and the structural racism of the U.S. electoral system. The Democratic gain of up to 28 seats in the House is not unusual for presidential incumbent parties at midterm; Democrats lost 54 seats in 1994, under Clinton, the GOP dropped 39 seats in 2006, under Bush, and Obama's party lost a whopping 63 seats and both houses of Congress in 2010. The latest election has given the corporate Democrats leadership of one house of the national legislature, but did not break white supremacy's hold on majorities of white voters. The White Man's Party, as redefined and reinvigorated by Donald Trump, is still the nation's most formidable bloc, by far.

This was a rematch of the contest that corporate Democrats wished for and thought would allow them to win decisively back in 2016. Democratic leaders sought to set the terms of electoral battle as a conflict between “deplorables,” as Hillary Clinton described white supremacist voters, and the rest of the electorate, the great bulk of whom the corporate Democrats believed could be corralled into Hillary's Big Tent, where big city and Deep South Black politicians, Rio Grand valley and East L.A. Hispanics, suburban white “moderates,” Silicon Valley and Wall Street oligarchs, scheming CIA operatives and warmongering generals would find common cause against the Orange Menace. Clinton campaign chief John Podesta urged his troops and their friends in media to do everything possible to boost Donald Trump's bid for the



Republican nomination, in the certainty that Clinton would beat him in a landslide—as incontrovertibly documented in the emails that were pilfered and delivered (not hacked) to *WikiLeaks* (not the Russians) and sent to the media. By March of 2016, corporate media—most glaringly *CNN*, but including the whole herd—had already given Trump’s GOP takeover gambit \$2 billion in free media, amounting to more exposure than all the other candidates from both corporate parties, combined, including Clinton. By the end of the general election campaign, corporate media had bestowed a total of \$5 billion in free media on Donald Trump—their criminally cynical contribution to the solidification and consolidation of the white supremacist bloc in the United States.

Trump is not their Frankenstein, but the Democrats and their media supplied most of the electricity that energized the monster. White supremacy is endemic to the U.S., part of its founding settler DNA, but the corporate media and Democratic Party’s strategy to help install Trump as a “straw man” presidential candidate who could be swept aside in the general election wound up giving white supremacists a champion around which to unite.

When the strategy failed, they blamed it on the Russians and launched a neo-McCarthyite campaign of slander against domestic dissidents—like *Black Agenda Report*—blaming the “far left and far right” for “sowing discord” on behalf of a foreign power. It was their own failed electoral strategy that had destabilized the corporate duopoly, simultaneously threatening the “corporate consensus” on foreign and domestic policy and giving new life to the Old Confederacy.

This is the big picture—much of the rest of the midterm results is clutter.

The white supremacist bloc flexes its muscles and fingers its triggers. The racist horde—a majority of whites—feels a renewed entitlement to primacy in the national life. Corporate Democrats, whose bungled schemes led us to this juncture, forge ahead with the same strategy as in 2016. Nancy Pelosi, who ordered the Congressional Black Caucus to downplay the crimes of Katrina the last time she was Speaker of the House, served up pabulum and called it a victory speech:

White supremacy is endemic to the U.S., part of its founding settler DNA, but the corporate media and Democratic Party’s strategy to help install Trump as a “straw man” presidential candidate who could be swept aside in the general election wound up giving white supremacists a champion around which to unite.

“We will strive for bipartisanship, with fairness on all sides. We have a responsibility to find our common ground where we can, stand our ground where we can’t, but we must try. We’ll have a bipartisan marketplace of ideas that makes our democracy strong. A Democratic congress will work for solutions that bring us together, because we have all had enough of division. The American people want peace. They want results. They want us to work for positive results for their lives.”

What crap. By “peace,” she means less rancor between the two corporate parties. The actual corporate agenda is austerity and war, the only future the oligarchy envisions for the planet. Trump shares this imperial vision—when he is thinking about subjects other than himself—but is glad to ride and stoke the white *revanchism* that is now part of his brand.

Only Big, Alternative Projects—transformational programs, like single payer healthcare, that actually shift power and resources from the ruling oligarchy to the masses—can erode the coherence of the White Supremacist Bloc, forcing significant numbers of them to abandon the prioritization of race, and at the same time galvanize the numeric majority of the nation: minorities of whites and majorities of everybody else. Nancy Pelosi’s job is to make sure that does not happen in her wing of the duopoly, despite the fact that—and 52 percent of Republicans—favor Medicare for All, with only 20 percent of Americans opposed. In other words, there is an overwhelming popular consensus in favor of single payer healthcare that is diametrically opposed to the corporate consensus. Corporate parties, in a duopoly system, cannot resolve that contradiction in favor of the people.

That’s why the struggle must be mainly in the streets, and to build non-corporate parties, including independent Black formations—which requires a split in the Democrats, the section of the duopoly that is not explicitly the White Man’s Party, but instead slavishly serves the oligarchy.

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 8, 2018

<https://blackagenda.com/mid-term-elections-corporate-democrats-versus-monster-they-empowered>

The Great Un-Blackening

The corporate project to erase Black people from politics

BY GLEN FORD

Corporate rule imposes a duopoly system in which one party is overtly white supremacist and the other party refuses to tackle racial oppression—but both pursue austerity and war.

While Donald Trump’s Republicans strive to maintain electoral majorities through blatant appeals to white supremacy and constant scapegoating of Blacks and browns, corporate Democrats masquerade as the sensible political “center,” around which most Americans—except for small, “polarizing” minorities at the extremes of the spectrum—can unite. The latest corporate attempt to paper over the nation’s class and race contradictions was launched earlier this month by an outfit called More in Common, which works closely with corporate media and think tanks in the U.S. and Europe. Its new report, titled “Hidden Tribes: A Study of America’s Polarized Landscape,” is an attempt to obscure the racism that animates majorities of white voters and to erase Black politics, entirely.

The More in Common study claims to have discovered seven “tribes” of political belief and behavior that comprise the American spectrum. None of these tribes revolve around race and class, yet, according to the authors, they each possess “distinctive beliefs, psy-

chology and levels of engagement.” The villains of this imagined tribal order, arrayed at opposite ends of the study’s poles, are Progressive Activists, who supposedly make up eight percent of the population, and Devoted Conservatives, at six percent. “Although they comprise just 14 percent of the population, their voices dominate public debate in the digital age,” the More in Common folks lament. “They are more ideologically dogmatic, more hostile towards the other side, and more active in elections and on social media.” This is considered a very bad thing.

A national political consensus can supposedly be found among the middle groups: Traditional Liberals (11 percent), Passive Liberals (15 percent), Politically Disengaged (26 percent), Moderates (15 percent), and Traditional Conservatives (six percent). When you subtract the disputatious and “highly ideological” Progressive Activist and Devoted Conservative “tribes,” according to the authors, “most Americans—including both liberals and conservatives—are actually more reasonable than people on the other side are made to think.” More in Common claims to have found that, once a person can be located among its seven previously “hid-

den” tribes “their views on a wide range of current issues could be predicted more accurately than by referring to their visible traits such as race, gender or income.”

This is utter nonsense, with no grounding in race, class, or history. Stark differences have long separated Blacks and whites on issues of living wages and union rights (Black women are the group most in favor of unions, white men the least;) war and peace (Blacks are most opposed to U.S. military adventures abroad, whites most warlike, Hispanics in between, as usual;) and the fairness of the criminal justice system, of which Blacks are near-universally skeptical.

Majorities of white people, across class and gender lines, voted for the virulently white supremacist Donald Trump—with Trump piling up supermajorities in the Deep South. The GOP has thrived as the White Man’s Party since 1968, supplanting the southern Democrats (Dixiecrats) precisely because white supremacy is the most dependable mass organizing principle for a rightwing corporate electoral party in the United States.

Race works like a charm for making white folks forget about class in the United States, which is why the moneyed classes have constructed a duopoly electoral system that gathers the most racist whites in one party, while Blacks and other despised peoples are corralled in the other corporate party—with both parties supporting global U.S. Empire and warfare. Class has been effectively suppressed, except as racialized euphemisms and code words of American politics: “middle class,” meaning “hard working, salt-of-the-earth, patriotic white folks,” versus “the underclass,” signifying “predato-



ry” and criminal Blacks and other darker people, who need to be kept under surveillance and containment.

The More in Common outfit would have us believe that most of the anger and rancor in the U.S. polity is caused by the 14 percent of the population described as Progressive Activists, on the left, and Devoted Conservatives, on the right, who are determined not to get along, and that an “exhausted majority” of 67 percent of the people are ready for “compromise” on most issues. This is in synch with the aims of leadership of the Democratic Party, dominated by Wall Street and the high-tech oligarchs in Silicon Valley. The party’s corporate leadership has no intention of yielding to demands for living wages, job security, single payer healthcare, and free universal college tuition, nor are they willing to lift the state of siege that has been imposed on Black America by the mass incarceration regime. The Democrats depend on the votes of Blacks and other minorities, and those whites that haven’t thrown in with Trump’s brand of white nationalism, but offer no programs that would substantially ameliorate deteriorating economic and social conditions—nothing but more austerity and war. Therefore, the political crisis must be blamed on strident voices of the “far left and far right”—like “Progressive Activists” and “Devoted Conservatives,” the political categories invented by the More in Common political conjurers. Race must be erased as a demographic marker, along with class, on the theory that if you don’t recognize racial and class conflicts, they will disappear.

Reinforcing the corporate “center”

Corporate Democrats believe they can attract enough disaffected Republicans to their side to make up for the leftish voters that abandon the party in disgust. The More in Common study is designed to encourage such an alignment. It urges traditional “moderates” of

both parties to unite and form an effective electoral majority from the “center.”

This is all about reinforcing the corporate “center,” which has been destabilized, not only by Donald Trump’s takeover of the GOP and surprise election victory, but most fundamentally by the collapse of wages and job security and the general demoralization caused by endless austerity and war—the core policies of both corporate parties. Americans must be made to reject the “extremes” if the corporate consensus is to be reestablished. But racial oppression cannot be tackled without massive, and expensive, transformations of society, requiring whole new layers of democratization. To the extent possible, therefore, race must be eliminated from the conversation (except to avow that America loves all races.) The More in Common brand of race-less and classless social science, which claims to more accurately describe Americans’ political views “than by referring to their visible traits such as race, gender or income,” is a perfect tool for corporate consensus-makers. The rulers won’t have to do anything for anybody, because real demographics cease to exist.

The assault on “extremes of left and right” by the oligarchs that control the Internet—most of them Democrats—is another front in the escalating corporate war to reestablish the hegemony of the ideological “center” by purging those that cause “dissension” in society—with or without a Russian connection.

Corporate pollsters have already largely disappeared the Black demographic from their surveys, which nowadays often neglect to break down public opinion by race. Some surveys even lump all “minorities” together, despite the fact that Hispanic opinion is most often somewhere near the middle of the chasm that separates whites and Blacks. This, in a nation whose currently ruling political party, controlling all three branches of government and most state

legislatures, shouts its white supremacy to the world.

The result is a two-corporate party system in which half of the duopoly is overtly white supremacist while the other half appeals to most of the nation’s non-white voters but doesn’t have the vocabulary to even begin to discuss the dismantling of racial oppression.

—*Black Agenda Report*, October 25, 2018

<https://blackagendareport.com/great-un-blackening-corporate-project-erase-black-people-politics>

**Race works like a charm
for making white folks
forget about class in the
United States, which is
why the moneyed classes
have constructed a
duopoly electoral system
that gathers the most
racist whites in one
party, while Blacks and
other despised peoples
are corralled in the other
corporate party—with
both parties supporting
global U.S. Empire and
warfare.**

Obama's Great Tower of Nothing: Gentrification on a Presidential Level

BY HUGH IGLARSH

In Chicago, a low but persistent rumbling is heard these days, especially on the South Side. It is Frederick Law Olmsted, America's greatest landscape architect and the planner of what would become the city's Jackson Park, turning in his grave and muttering Victorian imprecations against Barack Obama and his eponymous foundation.

Why? Before we get to that, let's see what Olmsted wrote back in 1871 (the year of the Great Chicago Fire,) when Hyde Park, Woodlawn, South Shore and other southern lakefront precincts—what would now be classified as inner-city neighborhoods—were still remote, barely settled suburbs of a fast-growing city:

“There is but one object of scenery near Chicago of special grandeur or sublimity, and that, the lake, can be made by artificial means no more grand or sublime. By no practical elevation of artificial hills, that is to say, would the impression of the observer in overlooking it be made more profound. The lake may, indeed, be accepted as fully compensating for the absence of sublime or picturesque elevations of land.

“There are three elements of scenery however, which must be regarded as indispensable to a fine park to be formed on your site, the first being turf, the second foliage, the third still water. For each of these you are bound, at the outset, to make the best of your opportunities, because if you do not, posterity will be likely to lay waste to what you have done, in order to prepare something better.”

Prophetic words. The Obama Foundation, together with city government and the University of Chicago, is now indeed laying waste to one of Olmsted's major urban landscaping accomplishments, and not in order to replace it with something better.

If Obama, the U. of C. and City Hall have their way, a large chunk—two square blocks, to be exact—of Jackson Park, one of the jewels of Chicago's 19th century park and boulevard system, will be repurposed, denuded and rendered unrecognizable. If the deal goes through as planned, the private and unaccountable Obama Foundation will be allowed to lease 19.3 acres of prime lakefront land forever for the grand total of one dollar. This stolen public space will house the Obama non-Library, formally dubbed the Obama Presidential Center. (Breaking news: On Wednesday, October 31, 2018, the Chicago City Council unanimously approved the deal transferring control of the parkland to the Obama Foundation and committing the city to costly “road and pedestrian improvements.” The foundation plans to break ground in 2019, pending federal approval and resolution of lawsuits filed by park protectors, as described below.)

The centerpiece of the OPC, hereafter referred to as the Great Tower of Nothing, is a 235-high foot high structure (that's 50 feet taller than Rockefeller Chapel, the reigning monument to money and ego in Hyde Park) that is as cold and ugly as avarice itself. Although originally marketed as a presidential archive, the huge and handsomely endowed OPC will house no papers or artifacts of the Obama administration and, for reasons not fully elucidated, will have no connection to the National Archives and Records Administration. The actual presidential papers will be stored, at least temporarily, in an abandoned furniture store in a distant and uninviting suburb of Chicago, which apparently will not be open to the public.

The bunker-like edifice, towering over a newly enlarged golf course, will instead serve the Obama Foundation as

“an ongoing project where we will shape, together, what it means to be a good citizen in the 21st century.” It is becoming abundantly clear that in the Age of Trump, useful citizenship training will center on theory and practice of civil disobedience and mass resistance. But this is not the sort of “ongoing project” the Obama Foundation seems to have in mind. There is talk about “cultivating the next generation of leaders,” which suggests a long-term goal of using corporate largesse to churn out more triangulating Wall Street Democrats in the Clinton-Obama mold. To skeptics, it is not readily apparent how this content-free non-library, really just a big clubhouse sheltering the vaguely purposed foundation and fundraising apparatus of an ex-president who rarely speaks up on public issues, will secure our rights and liberties in an era of encroaching fascism.

Aware perhaps of the project's political and historical irrelevance, the Obama Foundation insists that the Great Tower of Nothing will bring new life and energy to a comatose neighborhood. The OPC will be a “new landmark for the Southside and an economic engine for the city of Chicago, drawing hundreds-of-thousands of visitors every year, creating thousands of jobs—and will help to continue the revitalization of historic Jackson Park.”

Privatizing the commons

These claims are typical pie-in-the-sky developer talk. Yes, the Obama unlibrary may well turn out to be an engine of development, but not in a way that will benefit the 99 percent—quite the contrary, as we will see. And as for redeveloping Jackson Park: “No matter how they describe it, they're taking away parkland,” says the redoubtable Herb Caplan, whose tiny

Protect Our Parks group is suing to stop construction of the project, charging that it's an "institutional bait-and-switch" designed to privatize the commons. This sets a terrible precedent for Chicago's public lakefront, which by a city mandate going way back to 1836 is pledged "to remain forever open, clear and free of any buildings, or other obstruction whatever."

So what is the underlying purpose of this over-scaled, oddly empty complex, which may end up costing as much as \$1.5 billion to build and endow, all to convert a rare spot of green in an under-parked city into yet another heavily trafficked, highly paved, tightly controlled space? I think it's pretty clear, if you look at the players, history and trends. It's all about gentrification, *i.e.*, ethnic cleansing, which is already taking place in Chicago at a pace never before seen.

I contend that the plutocrat-funded Obama Foundation and Presidential Center play the same role in the long-term transformation of the city's southern lakefront that the Obama presidency did in American politics: that of putting a faux-progressive smiley face on the ugly underlying realities of institutionalized inequality, capitalist skullduggery and white privilege. As others have noted, this white elephant on the lake is actually a Trojan horse, using understandable but misplaced racial pride and identity politics and a fuzzy do-gooder mission statement to mask a real estate scheme that is all about neighborhood flipping and displacement of the poor.

A little historical context will help clarify things. In 1980—about when Harold Washington was contemplating his historic mayoral run—Chicago's Black population peaked at nearly 1.2 million. The Urban Institute estimates that by 2030, that number will drop to 665,000—an astonishing 45 percent decline over 50 years. According to journalist and researcher Alden Lousy,

"The restrictive covenants, red lining and white flight of yesterday have been replaced by stiff resistance to affordable housing, high-cost housing that effectively prices out some people of color, and disinvestment in communities of color regardless of their economic heft." The result is that the 20th century's Great Migration of African-Americans from the South has become the 21st century's Great Exodus from Chicago, a shift in direction driven by the same virulent, undying racism.

The University of Chicago, which engineered the Jackson Park non-library bid, is the institutional driving force of the Great Tower of Nothing. The University, which used federal urban renewal (or as James Baldwin liked to say, "Negro removal") funds to boot thousands of mostly minority families out of Hyde Park and nearby Kenwood during the 1960s, no doubt sees the Jackson Park complex as an outpost of its own campus, projecting its identity southward and creating a larger buffer zone for its intensively policed, bubble-like neighborhood. It also serves to reinforce the university's deep and marketable connection to the Obamas (Barack taught at the law school; Michelle had an executive position at the medical school) and to the neoliberal wing of the Democratic Party they personify. But there is more at stake here: Since the OPC project was launched, the U. of C. has announced its intentions of building a 1,200-bed student housing complex nearby, as well as a "boutique hotel." These ventures would be an unthinkable risk for the cautious institution were it not for the billionaire-funded and city-subsidized boondoggle anchoring the site.

It's all about property values, tax revenues and "desirable" demographics. Rahm Emanuel, Barack Obama's one-time chief of staff and currently Chicago's notorious Mayor One Percent, speaks no other language. But what does Obama, Rahm's old boss and staunch friend, say about all this?

What Obama has to say about it

At a community meeting this past winter, Obama commented: "We've got such a long way to go in terms of economic development before you're even going to start seeing the prospect of significant gentrification. Malia's kids might have to worry about that."

If you can get past the dripping condescension of that remark, you encounter its Trump-like disingenuousness. Gentrification has long since begun oozing south of the Midway, the wide boulevard that once formed the university's southern border. Woodlawn, south of Hyde Park, was declared the third hottest neighborhood in the nation for the first half of 2017, with median housing values rising 18 percent in that time, according to the City Lab website.

If it wished to, the Obama Foundation could make a strong statement regarding the evils of gentrification and displacement. But that's not what the Foundation is about.

What it is about is raising money, great gobs of cash, principally by tapping the obscenely rich. In 2017, the Obama Foundation solicited no less than \$232.6 million. Million-dollar donations have come from such checkered sources as financier Ken Griffin (Illinois' richest man, who also gave \$20 million to the campaign of Bruce Rauner, the state's reactionary Republican governor,) Goldman Sachs, Bill Gates and George Lucas—whose own attempt to blot the lakefront with a monument to self only recently went down to defeat, as I hope this one does too.

Why the super-wealthy are so eager to contribute to a paper-free "library" and artifact-free "museum" in a part of Chicago they are unlikely to visit is a question that invites speculation. One possible answer is that Obama is redeeming his chits from eight years of meritorious service to the ruling class, including his unstinting if unsuccessful devotion to the Trans-Pacific

Partnership, an arrangement that would have transferred huge amounts of what was once quaintly known as national sovereignty to our transnational corporate overlords. It was just about the only piece of legislation that Obama was willing to get on the mat and fight for. No wonder he's expecting and receiving concrete manifestations of gratitude, especially from the tycoons who went unindicted and fully bonused-up after the 2008 meltdown, winding up bigger and stronger and more arrogant than ever.

What we do know is what the oligarchs paying the bills don't want or like. This includes attacks on the economic and political forces of gentrification, which they view as progress, or advocacy for affordable housing, or acknowledgment of systemic inequality and injustice, or demands for radical change on behalf of—among others—the many poor and disenfranchised people on the South Side. This fundamental class bias—this need to be, as the professional fundraisers say, “donor-friendly”—explains the most puzzling gaffe so far by the Obama Foundation: its failure to negotiate a community benefits agreement with local organizations, which would increase consultation with neighbors and ensure that at least some needs are met and some fears allayed. This is one of the project's multiple ironies: that Barack Obama, the one-time South Side community organizer, is now thwarting a South Side community from empowering itself and taking part in decisions that will affect it for generations. No longer needing the community's votes, Obama plays the paternalistic benefactor, giving the neighborhood what he and his rich friends and expert staff know it really needs, and who cares what the non-degreed riff-raff think.

If billionaires want to throw their money away on a gold-plated cultural non-asset like the Obama Presidential Center, who am I to say nay? It is, after

all, a free country, especially for those who own it. But let the fat cats put the non-library where, if it can't do actual good, it will at least do less harm. There are hundreds and thousands of empty lots on the South and West Sides of Chicago, places where construction of any kind would be a plus, bringing some measure of hope and attention to depleted and forgotten neighborhoods. Jackson Park is literally the worst possible location for job creation, despite the Foundation's claims. There can be no spin-off construction on what technically remains public parkland, no next-door retail or restaurants or residences. Yes, there will be some jobs attached, but they will be classic examples of what author David Graeber terms “bullshit jobs,” PR and legal and security and administrative sinecures that are at best unnecessary and at worst pernicious and/or absurd: *e.g.*, well-paid fundraisers raising funds to hire more fundraisers to raise more funds, *ad infinitum*. The Obama Foundation and other Establishment-blessed philanthropies of its type are expressly designed to manufacture a certain kind of liberal bullshit. By turning stark social and economic conflicts into fundable, non-threatening “programming,” they lubricate the squeaky gears of the social order rather than confronting its stubborn contradictions. The astronomical salaries paid to Obama Foundation leadership—in 2017, the executive director and CEO earned a combined \$1.48 million—suggest that the organization is unlikely to pit itself against the capitalist inequities that shred the social fabric and are the bottom line in the South Side's racialized poverty equation.

I earlier described the Obama Foundation's Jackson Park follies as a Trojan horse, but perhaps Potemkin village is the better metaphor. The proposed complex is a spectacle that symbolizes community life and culture and memory and scholarship and public purpose without actually containing

anything of historical value—just as the Obama administration symbolized progressive politics and racial advancement, concealing its chronic and self-neutering passivity, dead-centrist philosophy and unquestioned allegiance to the powers that be behind a façade of faux-populist rhetoric and wispy good intentions.

Chicago doesn't need this hollow monument to gentrification, elitism and privatization on its lakefront. We as a nation don't need more crumbs from the tables of the billionaires who choke and starve us, or more tainted foundation dollars turning angry activists into tame “social entrepreneurs.”

What we do need is tough, radical, grassroots democracy—which is to say, the community itself, and not self-appointed champions with their own agenda, taking on the strategic neglect and cancerous disinvestment that constitute slow-motion ethnic cleansing. In the unlikely event that Barack Obama really wants to make life better for all on the South Side of Chicago, he will need to come down from his skyscraping glass and concrete fortress and join those on the ground, listening to what they say. If Obama could do that, which at this point he cannot, he might come to the sobering conclusion that his world is not their world, his friends are not their friends, and his hopes and dreams, as embodied in his fraudulent and destructive non-library, are built on their despair.

Hugh Iglarsh is a Chicago-based writer and editor who loves libraries and museums, but not fake ones. This essay began as a soapbox rant he gave at the annual Bughouse Square Debates, sponsored by the Newberry Library.

—CounterPunch, November 2, 2018

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/11/02/barack-obamas-great-tower-of-nothing-gentrification-on-a-presidential-level/>

Pittsburgh: The Dead End of Racist Violence

BY HUGO MARIN GONZALEZ

On Saturday, October 27, 2018, Pittsburgh was the sad scenario of a ruthless crime: the hate-driven racist Tree of Life synagogue murders of 11 members of the city's Jewish community in the historic Squirrel Hill neighborhood. In a small-sized city with almost 70 percent of the population white Caucasian, a tendency to legitimize equal rights seems to distort their collective sense of proportion when self-defining the boundaries of racism.

The world was astonished by the tragic events that took place inside the Tree of Life that Saturday. Now, we should take time to reflect on the impact a city's own culture of acceptance and tolerance for white supremacy and hate are influential in perpetuating systemic racism.

In recent years, Pittsburgh has become a hip destination for young professionals for its solid economy and affordable cost of living. It is home to a vibrant arts and music scene, overall a far cry from the city's steel mill industrial past. It is a sports-loving town with a blue-collar pride. The media portrays the city as an example of what the United States of America truly represents.

Yet inside a local hot dog shop near Squirrel Hill, a paper sign taped on a wall tells residents to be aware of a violent group of neo-Nazi skinheads. According to the sign, this group has been physically attacking people and also actively recruiting new members around the city. They are the Pittsburgh chapter of the Keystone State Skinheads, a Pennsylvania-based white supremacist group. Unlike faceless hooded Ku Klux Klan members, skinheads in Pittsburgh are not afraid or ashamed to show their swastika armbands. On the contrary, they seem to wear them with pride. Some members are staple customers at taverns and bars associated

with the punk rock scene. The word on the street is that their goal is to intimidate and drive away customers of color to maintain "safe white spaces."

A few years ago, while I was living in Pittsburgh's South Side, I was more than shocked to witness how it is socially acceptable to be a neo-Nazi identified by swastika armbands or t-shirts. Somehow they managed to comfortably get normal service at regular bars and restaurants all over the neighborhood. Ironically, including at a Mexican-themed restaurant called Iguana Grill.

One random night, on my way to have an after-work drink, I walked to a popular neighborhood bar in close proximity to my house called the Smiling Moose. As I approached the place, I saw a group of about six swastika-wearing skinheads walk into the bar. When I got to the door and concerned about my safety (dark brown skin and Puerto Rican with an accent,) I inquired the bouncer about the presence of skinheads. He explained to me how neo-Nazis were hard working-class citizens who have the right to be served there. I turned around and slowly walked away, having just learned that in this city, the Nazi right to express their beliefs by intimidating imagery representative of violent death and racial hatred was more important than my personal safety.

Although many white residents share a collective progressive notion, which rejects racism, there is also a validation for the right to the freedom of speech and artistic expression—allowing an open space for white supremacy and racism to become rationally acceptable.

Pittsburgh's real soul?

In an attempt to modernize their image by recognizing the LGBTQ com-

munity, every June 12 Pittsburgh celebrates what they call "Sharon Needles Day." Since 2012 the day is dedicated to honor the career of drag queen performer Aaron Coady, better known by the stage name, Sharon Needles. Needles gained national notoriety after their participation on the popular TV show "Drag Race." Along with their success outside the TV show, Sharon's career has been tainted by use of swastikas during stage performances, constant racist remarks and the repeated use of the "N" word. Despite the controversy and under heavy criticism from local members of the LGBTQ community who felt Needles was not representative of them, the city council made "Sharon Needles Day" an official event. Today, it is still a common occurrence for trans people to be the target of violence and harassment from conservative white male residents.

In the heart of the trendy, hipster neighborhood of Lawrenceville, right on a corner wall at the intersection of 46th Street and Butler Street, a sign says that immigrants are criminals. For



A Pittsburgh community warning sign that Neo-Nazis are in town.

the people of Pittsburgh, seeing this kind of sign is as normal as seeing a Pepsi ad, a regular part of everyday life oftentimes ignored. This sign however was not to be overlooked. At the bottom of the sign, taking credit for the propaganda, was the organization “Blood and Soil,” a part of the “Patriot Front,” a solid national network of anti-Semitic white supremacists.

For years, I have been a city correspondent for *La Jornada Latina*, the only newspaper reporting in Spanish for Pittsburgh’s Latino community. Last month, before the Squirrel Hill tragedy, I published an article making the Spanish-speaking community aware of the existence of these threatening campaign signs. For that story, I interviewed a city police officer who told me that he did not find the signs threatening.

Those words still stick to me today, after Squirrel Hill.

Pittsburgh is trying to heal and it deserves to heal. However, the city should learn how to eradicate any practice that re-centers white people in conversations about racism. We face unique issues that go unaddressed in a city that fails to acknowledge the disadvantages of vulnerable groups. In the end, this city continues to reinforce racism by further blurring the marginalization of those of us who are not white.

That needs to stop.

Hugo Marín González is a Puerto Rican linguist and a journalist. A regular correspondent for La Jornada Latina in Pittsburgh, he holds a B.A. in Hispanic Linguistics from the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico in San German.

—*Latino Rebels*, November 3, 2018

<http://www.latinorebels.com/2018/11/03/pittsburghracism/>

U.S. “Values”

BY GLENN GREENWALD

Donald Trump on Tuesday, November 20, 2018 issued a statement proclaiming that, notwithstanding the anger toward the Saudi Crown Prince over the gruesome murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, “the United States intends to remain a steadfast partner of Saudi Arabia to ensure the interests of our country, Israel and all other partners in the region.” To justify his decision, Trump cited the fact that “Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producing nation in the world” and claimed that “of the \$450 billion [the Saudis plan to spend with U.S. companies], \$110 billion will be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and many other great U.S. defense contractors.”

This statement instantly and predictably produced pompous denunciations pretending that Trump’s posture was a deviation from, a grievous violation of, long-standing U.S. values and foreign policy rather than what it actually and obviously is: a perfect example—perhaps stated a little more bluntly and candidly than usual—of how the U.S. has conducted itself in the world since at least the end of World War II.

The reaction was so intense because the fairy tale about the U.S. standing up for freedom and human rights in the world is one of the most pervasive and powerful prongs of western propaganda, the one relied upon by U.S. political and media elites to convince not just the U.S. population but also themselves of their own righteousness, even as they spend decades lavishing the world’s worst tyrants and despots with weapons, money, intelligence and diplomatic protection to carry out atrocities of historic proportions.

After all, if you have worked in high-level foreign policy positions in

Washington, or at the think tanks and academic institutions that support those policies, or in the corporate media outlets that venerate those who rise to the top of those precincts (and which increasingly hire those security state officials as news analysts,) how do you justify to yourself that you’re still a good person even though you arm, prop up, empower and enable the world’s worst monsters, genocides, and tyrannies?

Simple: by pretending that you don’t do any of that, that such acts are contrary to your system of values, that you actually work to oppose rather than protect such atrocities, that you’re a warrior and crusader for democracy, freedom and human rights around the world.

That’s the lie that you have to tell yourself: so that you can look in the mirror without instantly feeling revulsion, so that you can show your face in decent society without suffering the scorn and ostracization that your actions merit, so that you can convince the population over which you have ruled that the bombs you drop and the weapons with which you flood the world are actually designed to help and protect people rather than slaughter and oppress them.

That’s why it was so necessary—to the point of being more like a physical reflex than a conscious choice—to react to Trump’s Saudi statement with contrived anger and shock rather than admitting the truth that he was just candidly acknowledging the core tenets of U.S. foreign policy for decades. The people who lied to the public and to themselves by pretending that Trump did something aberrational rather than completely normal were engaged in an act of self-preservation as much as propagandistic deceit, though both motives were heavily at play.

The *New York Times* Editorial Page, as it so often does, topped the charts with pretentious, scripted moral outrage. “President Trump confirmed the harshest caricatures drawn by America’s most cynical critics on Tuesday when he portrayed its central objectives in the world as panting after money and narrow self-interest,” belittled the paper, as though this view of U.S. motives is some sort of jaded fiction invented by America-haters rather than the only honest, rational description of the country’s despot-embracing posture in the world during the lifespan of any human being alive today.

The paper’s editorial writers were particularly shocked that “the statement reflected Mr. Trump’s view that all relationships are transactional, and that moral or human rights considerations must be sacrificed to a primitive understanding of American national interests.” To believe—or pretend to believe—that it is Mr. Trump who pioneered the view that the U.S. is willing and eager to sanction murder and savagery by the regimes with which it is most closely aligned as long as such barbarism serves U.S. interests signifies a historical ignorance and/or a willingness to lie to one’s own readers so profound that no human language is capable of expressing the depths of those delusions. Has the *New York Times* Editorial Page ever heard of Henry Kissinger?

So extensive is the active, constant and enthusiastic support by the U.S. for the world’s worst monsters and atrocities that comprehensively citing them all, in order to prove the ahistorical deceit of Tuesday’s reaction to Trump’s statement, would require a multi-volume book, not a mere article. But the examples are so vivid and clear that citing just a few will suffice to make the point indisputable.

In April of this year, General Efraín Ríos Montt, the dictator of Guatemala during the 1980s, died. The *New York*

Times obituary, noting that he had been convicted of genocide for “trying to exterminate the Ixil ethnic group, a Mayan Indian community whose villages were wiped out by his forces,” explained that “in the panoply of commanders who turned much of Central America into a killing field in the 1980s, General Ríos Montt was one of the most murderous.” The obituary added: “In his first five months in power, according to Amnesty International, soldiers killed more than 10,000 peasants.”

The genocide-committing General Ríos Montt was a favorite of President Ronald Reagan, one of the closest figures the U.S. has to a secular saint, after whom many monuments and national institutions are still named. Reagan not only armed and funded Ríos Montt but heaped praise on him far more gushing than anything Trump or Jared Kushner has said about the Saudi Crown Prince. The *Washington Post’s* Lou Cannon reported in 1982 that “on Air Force One returning to Andrews Air Force Base [from South America], [Reagan] said Ríos Montt had been getting ‘a bum rap’ and ‘is totally dedicated to democracy in Guatemala.’”

At a press conference standing next to the mass murderer, Reagan hailed him as “a man of great personal integrity and commitment,” who really “wants to improve the quality of life for all Guatemalans and to promote social justice.” What about all those unfortunate acts of mass slaughter against Guatemalan peasants? That, said President Reagan, was justified, or at least understandable, because the General was “faced with a challenge from guerrillas armed and supported from those outside Guatemala.”

Trump’s emphasis November 20th on the Saudis’ value in opposing Iran provoked particular anger. That anger is extremely odd given that the iconic and notorious photograph of Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam Hussein took place in 1983, when Rumsfeld was dispatched to Baghdad to provide arms and other weapons to the Iraqi regime in order to help them fight Iran.

This trip, *Al Jazeera* noted when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, all happened while “Iraq was at war with Iran and was using chemical weapons. Human rights abuses were practiced on large



U.S. President Obama pays respect to King Salman of Saudi Arabia in January of 2015 just hours after lecturing India on tolerance and women’s rights. (The current Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman is King Salman’s son.)

sections of the Iraqi population.” The U.S. nonetheless “renewed the hand of friendship [with Saddam] through the special envoy Rumsfeld” because “Washington wanted Iraq’s friendship to stymie Iran”—exactly the rationale cited yesterday by Trump for continuing friendly relations with Riyadh (The Saudis “have been a great ally in our very important fight against Iran,” said Trump.)

As for the Saudis themselves, they have long been committing atrocities on par with and far worse than the Khashoggi killing both within their borders and outside, and their partnership with U.S. Presidents has only flourished. As the Saudis beheaded dissidents and created the planet’s worst humanitarian crisis by slaughtering Yemeni civilians without mercy or restraint, President Obama not only authorized the sale of a record amount of weapons to Saudi tyrants, but also cut short his visit to India, the world’s largest democracy, where he was delivering lectures about the paramount importance of human rights and civic freedoms, in order to travel to Riyadh to meet with top U.S. leaders from both political parties to pay homage to the murderous Saudi King who had just died (only in the last month of his presidency, with an eye toward his legacy, did Obama restrict some arms to the Saudis after allowing those weapons to freely flow for eighteen months during the destruction of Yemen.)

UK Prime Minister David Cameron—perhaps Obama’s only worthy competitor when it came to simultaneously delivering preening speeches about human rights while arming the world’s worst human rights abusers—actually ordered UK flags flown at half-mast in honor of the noble Saudi despot. All of this took place at roughly the same time that Obama dispatched his top officials, including his Defense Secretary Robert Gates, to pay homage to the rulers of Bahrain after they and the Saudis

crushed a citizen uprising seeking greater freedoms.

In 2012, Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa came to Washington—fresh off of massacring his own citizens seeking greater freedoms—and, in the words of Foreign Policy, “he left with hands full of gifts from the U.S. State Department, which announced new arms sales to Bahrain today.” How did the Obama administration justify all of this? By invoking exactly the same rationale Trump cited yesterday for his ongoing support of the Saudis: that although the U.S. did not approve of such upsetting violence, its “national security interests” compelled its ongoing support. From Foreign Policy (*italics added*):

“The crown prince’s son just graduated from American University, where the Bahraini ruling family recently shelled out millions for a new building at AU’s School of International Service. But while he was in town, the crown prince met with a slew of senior U.S. officials and congressional leaders, including Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, Senate Armed Services Committee ranking Republican John McCain, as well as several other Washington VIPs.

“On Friday afternoon, the State Department announced it was moving forward on a host of sales to the Bahraini Defense Forces, the Bahraini National Guard, and the Bahraini Coast Guard. The State Department said the decision to move forward with the sales *was made solely in the interest of U.S. national security, but outside experts see the move as meant to strengthen the crown prince in his struggle inside the ruling family.*

“We’ve made this decision, I want to emphasize, on national security grounds,” a senior administration official told reporters on a Friday conference call. “We’ve made

this decision mindful of the fact that there remain a number of serious, unresolved human rights issues in Bahrain, which we expect the government of Bahrain to address.”

In 2011, Americans gathered around their TV sets to cheer the inspiring Egyptian protesters gathering in Tahir Square to demand the ouster of the brutal Egyptian tyrant Hosni Mubarak. Most TV announcers neglected to remind excited American viewers that Mubarak had managed to remain in power for so long because their own government had propped him up with weapons, money and intelligence. As Mona Eltahawy *put it in the New York Times* last year: “Five American administrations, Democratic and Republican, supported the Mubarak regime.”

But in case anyone was confused about the U.S. posture toward this incomparably heinous Egyptian dictator, Hillary Clinton stepped forward to remind everyone of how U.S. officials have long viewed such tyrants. When asked in an interview about how her own State Department had documented Egypt’s record of severe, relentless human rights abuses and whether this might affect her friendship with its rulers, Secretary Clinton gushed: “I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family. So I hope to see him often here in Egypt and in the United States.”

How can anyone pretend that Trump’s praise for the Saudis is some kind of aberration when Hillary Clinton literally heralded one of the planet’s most murderous and violent despots as a personal friend of her family? A *Washington Post* Editorial at the time proclaimed that “Clinton continues to devalue and undermine the U.S. diplomatic tradition of human rights advocacy” and that “she appears oblivious to how offensive such statements are to the millions of Egyptians who loathe Mr. Mubarak’s oppressive government and blame the United States for propping it up.”

But this just shows the repetitive, dreary game U.S. elites have been playing for decades. Newspaper editorialists and think tank scholars pretend that the U.S. stands opposed to tyranny and despotism and feigns surprise each time U.S. officials lend their support, weaponry and praise to those same tyrants and despots.

And lest anyone try to distinguish Trump's statement yesterday on the ground that it was false—that it covered up for bad acts of despotic allies by refusing to admit the Crown Prince's guilt for Khashoggi's murder—let us recall when Clinton's successor as Secretary of State, John Kerry, defended Mubarak's successor, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, by denying that he had implemented "a *coup*" when he overthrew Egypt's elected President in 2013. Instead, proclaimed Kerry, the Sisi-led Egyptian generals, by removing the elected leader, were simply attempting to "restore democracy"—the exact same lie told by the *New York Times* Editorial Page when right-wing Venezuelan generals in 2002 removed that country's elected President, Hugo Chávez, only for that paper to hail that *coup* as a restoration of democracy.

In 2015, as the human rights abuses of the Sisi regime worsened even further, the *New York Times* reported: "with the United States worried about militants in Sinai and Libya who have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, American officials also signaled that they would not let their concerns with human rights stand in the way of increased security cooperation with Egypt."

Sound familiar? It should: it's exactly the rationale Trump invoked to justify ongoing support for the Saudis. In 2015, the Egyptian dictatorship—as it was murdering dissidents *en masse*—openly celebrated the flow of U.S. weapons to the regime.

None of this recent, ugly history—and this is only a tiny excerpt of it (excluding, just to name a few exam-

ples, U.S. support for the 20th Century's greatest monsters from Indonesia's Suharto to death squads in El Salvador and U.S. killing of its own citizens to U.S. support for Israeli occupation and apartheid)—justifies what Trump did on Tuesday. But what it does do is give the lie to the flamboyant claims that Trump has somehow vandalized and degraded U.S. values and U.S. foreign policy rather than what he actually did: upheld their core tenets and explained them to the public with great candor and clarity.

This episode also exposes one of the great scams of the Trump era. The very same people who have devoted their careers to supporting despotism, empowering tyranny, cheering on atrocities, and justifying U.S. imperialism are masquerading as the exact opposite of what they are in order to pave their path back to power where they can continue to pursue all of the destructive and amoral policies they now so grotesquely pretend to oppose.

Anyone who objects to exposure of this deceit—anyone who invokes empty *clichés* such as "whataboutism" or "hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue" in order to enable this scam to go undetected—has no business staking moral claim to any values of truth or freedom. People who demand that this deceit go unnoticed are revealing themselves as what they are: purely situational opponents of tyranny and murder who pretend to hold such values only when doing so undermines their domestic political opponents and enables their political allies to be restored to power where they can continue the same policies of murder, tyranny-support and atrocity-enabling that they have spent decades defending.

If you want to denounce Trump's indifference to Saudi atrocities on moral, ethical or geo-political grounds—and I find them objectionable on all of those grounds—by all means do so. But pretending that he's done something that is

at odds with U.S. values or the actions of prior leaders or prevailing foreign policy orthodoxies is not just deceitful but destructive.

It ensures that these very same policies will endure: by dishonestly pretending that they are unique to Trump, rather than the hallmarks of the same people now being applauded because they are denouncing Trump's actions in such a blatantly false voice, all to mask the fact that they did the same, and worse, when they commanded the levers of American power.

—*The Intercept*, November 21, 2018

<https://theintercept.com/2018/11/21/trumps-amoral-saudi-statement-is-a-pure-and-honest-expression-of-decades-old-u-s-values-and-foreign-policy>

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Black Internationalists Demand Closure of U.S. Military Bases

BY BLACK ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

The Black Alliance for Peace (BAP), a founding member of the Global Campaign Against U.S./NATO Military Bases, joined 300 attendees from 36 countries at a historic conference that re-committed antiwar activists to closing U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military bases throughout the world.

The Global Campaign Against U.S./NATO Military Bases held its first international conference November 16-18 at Liberty Hall in Dublin, Ireland. The conference's Unity Statement was endorsed by more than 700 individuals and organizations.

The Dublin conference convened several months after the U.S.-based Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases held its first conference in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States. Ireland was chosen because of its neutral position, having never joined NATO.

The United States operates more than 1,000 military facilities on six continents. This enormous presence embodies the U.S. policy of Full Spectrum Dominance, which threatens

democracy and self-determination for other nations.

BAP reaffirms our commitment to this worldwide initiative and to our recently launched campaign, U.S. Out of Africa!, to shut down U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). This military program is present in 53 out of 54 African countries. BAP is circulating an online petition that makes these demands:

1. The complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Africa,
2. The demilitarization of the African continent,
3. The closure of U.S. bases throughout the world, and
4. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) must oppose AFRICOM and conduct hearings on AFRICOM's impact on the African continent.

After the recent U.S. midterm elections, the Democratic Party now makes up the majority of the U.S. Congress and owes that status to Black U.S. voters. As colonized subjects on stolen land, the U.S.-based Black diaspora

wants the nations of their ancestral continent to live freely and independently, which means AFRICOM must be dismantled.

BAP reaffirms our commitment to this worldwide initiative and to our recently launched campaign, U.S. Out of Africa!, to shut down U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

The BAP petition calls on CBC members to act as true representatives of their constituents, who are among the most peace loving in the country.

There can be no peace or democracy when a group of nations and their proxies can wage violent action against people around the world. BAP's mission to re-capture and re-develop the historic antiwar, anti-imperialist and pro-peace positions of the radical Black movement will play a crucial part in the Global Campaign Against U.S./NATO Military Bases.

U.S. out of Africa!

Shut down AFRICOM!

Close all U.S. and NATO foreign bases!

The Joint Communiqué adopted by participants at the First International Conference Against U.S./NATO Military Bases can be found here:

<https://blackallianceforpeace.com/movement-news/firstconferenceagainstusnatomilitarybases>.

Black Alliance for Peace can be reached at info@blackallianceforpeace.com. This story first appeared on their website, BlackAllianceforPeace.com.

—San Francisco Bay View, December 3, 2018

<https://sfbayview.com/2018/12/black-internationalists-demand-closure-of-hundreds-of-u-s-military-bases/>



Turnaround is fair play. Usually, the trainers are American, training African soldiers. Here, the trainer is Ghanaian, showing a U.S. soldier with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) how it's done in Africa.

Your Commander-In-Chief Is Lying to You

Veterans issue open letter to active duty U.S. soldiers



To All Active Duty Soldiers:

Your Commander-in-chief is lying to you. You should refuse his orders to deploy to the southern U.S. border should you be called to do so. Despite what Trump and his administration are saying, the migrants moving North towards the U.S. are not a threat. These small numbers of people are escaping intense violence. In fact, much of the reason these men and women—with families just like yours and ours—are fleeing their homes is because of the U.S. meddling in their country's elections. Look no further than Honduras, where the Obama administration supported the overthrow of a democratically elected president who was then replaced by a repressive dictator.

These extremely poor and vulnerable people are desperate for peace. Who among us would walk a thousand miles with only the clothes on our back without great cause? The odds are good that your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, *etc.*, lived similar experiences to these migrants. Your family members came to the U.S. to seek a better life—some fled violence.

Consider this as you are asked to confront these unarmed men, women and children from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. To do so would be the ultimate hypocrisy.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, in part because it has exploited countries in Latin America for decades. If you treat people from these countries like criminals, as Trump hopes you will, you only contribute to the legacy of pillage and plunder beneath our southern border. We need to con-

front this history together, we need to confront the reality of America's wealth and both share and give it back with these people. Above all else, we cannot turn them away at our door. They will die if we do.

By every moral or ethical standard it is your duty to refuse orders to "defend" the U.S. from these migrants. History will look kindly upon you if you do. There are tens-of-thousands of us who will support your decision to lay your weapons down. You are better than your Commander-in-chief. Our only advice is to resist in groups. Organize with your fellow soldiers. Do not go this alone. It is much harder to punish the many than the few.

In solidarity,

Rory Fanning

Former U.S. Army Ranger, War-Resister

Spenser Rapone

Former U.S. Army Ranger and
Infantry Officer, War-Resister

—*Common Dreams*, November 1, 2018

[https://www.commondreams.org/
views/2018/11/01/your-commander-
chief-lying-you-veterans-issue-open-let-
ter-active-duty-us-soldiers](https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/11/01/your-commander-chief-lying-you-veterans-issue-open-letter-active-duty-us-soldiers)



Members of the Arizona national guard listen to instructions in Phoenix. The additional troops would bolster national guard forces already at the border.

Six-Trillion-Dollar Price Tag of Endless U.S. War

By JULIA CONLEY

While the human costs will remain impossible to calculate, a new analysis shows that the Pentagon barely scratched the surface of the financial costs of U.S. wars since September 11, 2001 when it released its official estimate last August regarding how much the U.S. has spent on fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere.

The Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs reports¹ that by the end of the 2019 fiscal year, the U.S. will have spent \$5.9 trillion on military spending in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other countries, as well as veterans' care, interest on debt payments, and related spending at the Homeland Security and State Departments.

The figure far exceeds the Pentagon's estimate of \$1.5 trillion in total spending since September 11—a number that does not even account for combined State Department spending and the Pentagon's war fund, which totals \$1.8 trillion according to the Watson Institute.

"We were told to expect wars that would be quick, cheap, effective and beneficial to the U.S. inter-

est," said Neta Crawford, the author of the study, at a news conference hosted by Senator Jack Reed (D-R.I.) on Tuesday. "The U.S. continues to fund the wars by borrowing, so this is a conservative estimate of the consequences of funding the war as if on a credit card, in which we are only paying interest even as we continue to spend."

Veterans' healthcare, benefits, and disability spending alone has cost the U.S. \$1 trillion, as nearly three million Americans have deployed to countries including Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, many for numerous tours.

With spending continuing at its current level, the study reads, Americans can expect their government to spend more than \$6.7 trillion on war by the end of 2023—not including future interest costs.

"Moreover, the costs of war will likely be greater than this because, unless the U.S. immediately ends its deployments, the number of veterans associated with the post-9/11 wars will also grow," Crawford wrote in the report.

The Watson Institute's latest report comes days after another study detail-

ing the estimated death toll of the so-called "War on Terror." The Defense Department reported on about 500 civilian deaths in 2017 in various U.S. wars earlier this year and its website reports several thousands of deaths of U.S. soldiers since 2001—numbers the Watson Institute also found to be severely underestimated as it reported about half-a-million deaths in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan as a result of the U.S. invasions and prolonged occupations of those countries.

"It's important for the American people to understand the true costs of war, both the moral and monetary costs," Senate Armed Services Committee ranking member Senator Reed said in a statement.

"In sum, high costs in war and war-related spending pose a national security concern because they are unsustainable," reads the Watson Institute's report. "The public would be better served by increased transparency and by the development of a comprehensive strategy to end the wars and deal with other urgent national security priorities."

—*Common Dreams*, November 15, 2018

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/11/15/new-study-details-staggering-6-trillion-and-counting-price-tag-endless-us-war?cd>



Total U.S. spending on war and all of its related costs will hit nearly \$6 trillion by the end of 2019, according to the Watson Institute.

1 Costs of War, November 14, 2018

https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Crawford_Costs%20of%20War%20Estimates%20Through%20FY2019%20.pdf

Billionaires Are the Leading Cause of Climate Change

BY LUKE DARBY

This week, the United Nations released a damning report. The short version: We have about 12 years to actually do something to prevent the worst aspects of climate change. That is, not to prevent climate change—we're well past that point—but to prevent the worst, most catastrophic elements of it from wreaking havoc on the world's population. To do that, the governments of Earth need to look seriously at the forces driving it. And an honest assessment of how we got here lays the blame squarely at the feet of the one percent.

Contrary to a lot of guilt-tripping pleas for us all to take the bus more often to save the world, your individual choices are probably doing very little to the world's climate. The real impact comes on the industrial level, as more than 70 percent of global emissions come from just 100 companies. So you, a random American consumer, exert very little pressure here. The people who are actively cranking up the global thermostat and threatening to drown 20 percent of the global population are the billionaires in the boardrooms of these companies.

There are probably no individuals who have had a more toxic impact on public and political attitudes about climate change than the Koch brothers, and it would take an absurd amount of space to document all the money and organizations they've scraped together for that purpose. (Investigative reporter Jane Mayer's groundbreaking *Dark Money* does basically that.) And they have every reason to: In her book, Mayer notes that "Koch Industries alone routinely released some 24 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere a year."

But the scope goes far beyond merely sowing dissent and skepticism. While billionaires and the companies they run have spent years insisting that climate change either doesn't exist or is overblown, they've known the reality of the situation for a long time. PayPal cofounder Peter Thiel, for example, used to donate to the Seasteading Institute, which aimed to build floating cities in order to counteract rising sea levels. And Exxon Mobil allegedly knew about climate change in 1977, back when it was still just Exxon and about 11 years before climate change became widely talked about. Instead of acting on it, they started a decades-long misinformation campaign. According to *Scientific American*, Exxon helped create the Global Climate Coalition, which questioned the scientific basis for concern over climate change from the late '80s until 2002, and successfully worked to keep the U.S. from signing the Kyoto Protocol, a move that helped cause India and China, two other massive sources of greenhouse gas, to avoid signing.

Even when Republican lawmakers show flashes of willingness to get something done, they're swiftly swatted down. There are myriad examples, but one example comes via *Dark Money*, where Mayer describes an incident in April 2010 when Lindsey Graham briefly tried to support a cap-and-trade bill: A political group called American Solutions promptly launched a negative PR campaign against him, and Graham folded after just a few days. American Solutions, it turns out, was backed by billionaires in fossil fuel and other industries, including Trump-loving casino magnate Sheldon Adelson.

In recent years, fossil-fuel companies have tried to cast themselves as being on the same side of the general public. Just this month, Exxon pledged \$1 million to fight for a carbon tax, a stopgap measure that charges a fee of \$40 per ton of carbon produced and increases as production goes up. At a glance, that may seem magnanimous, but the truth is that Exxon can afford the tax. Not only is the oil and gas industry experiencing a serious boom right now, companies know that the only real solutions to climate change will hurt them even more than a measly tax.

That's largely because there is no "free market" incentive to prevent disaster. An economic environment where a company is only considered viable if it's constantly expanding and increasing its production can't be expected to pump its own brakes over something as trivial as pending global catastrophe. Instead, market logic dictates that rather than take the financial hit that comes with cutting profits, it's more reasonable to find a way to make money off the boiling ocean. Nothing illustrates this phenomenon better than the burgeoning climate-change investment industry. According to Bloomberg, investors are looking to make money off of everything from revamped food production to hotels for people fleeing increasingly hurricane-ravaged areas. A top JP Morgan Asset investment strategist advised clients that sea-level rise was so inevitable that there was likely a lot of opportunity for investing in sea-wall construction.

Even today, after literally decades of radical libertarian billionaires fostering disbelief in climate change and skepticism about the government, three out of five Americans believe climate

change affects their local community. That number climbs to two-thirds on the coasts. Even the Trump administration now admits that climate change is real, but their response to it is dead-eyed acceptance. If popular support actually influenced public policy, there would have been more decisive action from the U.S. government years ago. But the fossil-fuel industry's interests are too well-insulated by the mountains of cash that have been converted into lobbyists, industry-shilling Republicans and Democrats, and misinformation. To them, the rest of the world is just kindling.

—GQ, October 11, 2018

<https://www.gq.com/story/billionaires-climate-change>

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Spain to Close Most Coal Mines

Agreement with unions includes early retirement for miners, re-skilling and environmental restoration

BY ARTHUR NESLEN

Spain is to shut down most of its coalmines by the end of the year after government and unions struck a deal that will mean €250 million (\$285,611,500.00) will be invested in mining regions over the next decade.

Pedro Sánchez's new leftwing administration has moved quickly on environmental policy, abolishing a controversial "sunshine tax" on the solar industry, and announcing the launch of Spain's long-delayed national climate plan next month.

Unions hailed the mining deal—which covers Spain's privately owned pits—as a model agreement. It mixes early retirement schemes for miners over 48, with environmental restoration work in pit communities and re-skilling schemes for cutting-edge green industries.

Teresa Ribera, the minister for ecological transition, said: "With this agreement, we have solved the first urgent task we had on the table when we came to government. Our aim has been to leave no one behind. We also want to go further, we want to innovate. That is why we offer the drawing up of 'Just Transition' contracts, with the aim of helping the regions to consolidate the employment of the future."

More than a thousand miners and subcontractors will lose their jobs when ten pits close by the end of the year. Almost all of the sites were uneconomic concerns that the European commission had allowed Spain to temporarily keep open with a €2.1 billion (\$2.4 billion) state aid plan.

Montserrat Mir, the Spanish *confederal* secretary for the European Trades Union Congress, said the "just transition" model could be applied elsewhere.

"Spain can export this deal as an example of good practice," she said. "We have shown that it's possible to follow the Paris agreement without damage [to people's livelihoods]. We don't need to choose between a job and protecting the environment. It is possible to have both."

About 600 workers in Spain's northern mining regions—Asturias, Aragón, and Castilla y León—are set to benefit from social aid under the scheme, while about 60 percent of the miners will be able to opt for early retirement.

Laura Martin-Murillo, a government negotiator, described the pact as "the end of a process of restructuring for many communities that has been going on for decades. It had to be done sensitively to bring hope to places that sometimes have lost faith that it could work. A lot of young people abandoned these areas, and they experienced a change in identity."

Negotiations with the last few hundred miners employed in publicly owned mines would begin now, she added. "We will look at the same just transition plans for those workers," she said.

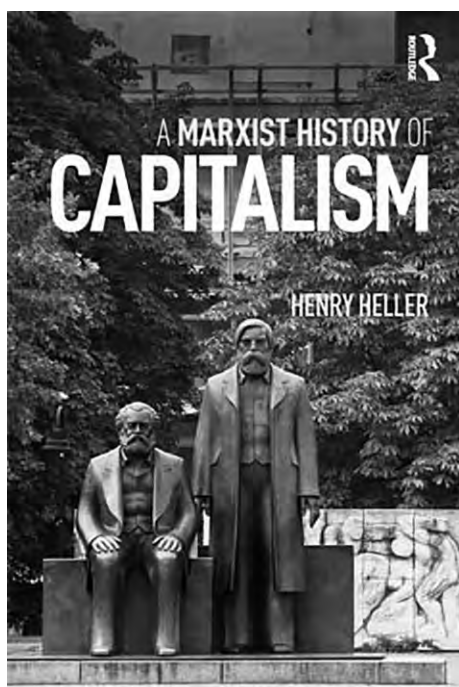
Spain's coal industry employed more than 100,000 miners in the 1960s, but its energy dominance was eroded by cheap imports and increasing awareness of the industry's environmental, health and climate costs. National coal provides just 2.3 percent of Spain's electricity.

—*The Guardian*, October 26, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/26/spain-to-close-most-coal-mines-after-striking-250m-deal>

A Marxist History of Capitalism

BOOK REVIEW BY IAN ANGUS



A Marxist History of Capitalism

By Henry Heller

Routledge, 2018

An important work of Marxist history and theory restores class struggle to central place in explaining how capitalism arose and grew, and can eventually be overcome.

Since the 1970s, Marxist discussion of how and when capitalism was born has been dominated by two competing academic currents. World-System Theory, first enunciated by Immanuel Wallerstein, locates the origin of capitalism in the expansion of world trade and the plunder of the new world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Political Marxism, developed by Robert Brenner, says the transition took place somewhat earlier, and only in rural England, where feudal lords converted themselves into capitalist landlords.

While each school has produced important and worthwhile historical

studies, both are ultimately one-sided and mechanical, arguing either that there is no capitalism unless wage-labor has replaced all other relations of production, or that the presence of any capitalism at all overrides all other modes, including slavery and hunter-gatherer. The Marxist view that capitalism developed dialectically, incorporating and exploiting pre-capitalist societies, and that it was not fully formed until the rise of factory production, plays little or no role in either approach.

Though very different in analysis and implication, both approaches hold that capitalism was fully formed by the 1500s, either as a “world-system” or as a new rural economy in England. As a result, they deny that the Dutch, English and French revolutions and the U.S. Civil War can be viewed in any sense as “bourgeois revolutions,” and they have little to say about what Marx and Engels said is the motive force of history, class struggle.

By contrast, for some time historian Henry Heller has been deepening the class struggle interpretation of capitalist history, building on the work of earlier Marxists while incorporating the latest historical research. In *The Bourgeois Revolution in France* (Berghahn Press, 2006) and *The French Revolution and Historical Materialism* (Brill, 2017) he reasserted the Marxist view that what happened in France between 1789 and 1815 was indeed a bourgeois and capitalist revolution, driven by class conflict and the intervention of the masses. In *The Birth of Capitalism* (Pluto Press, 2011) he offered a critique of and alternative to both World-System theory and Political Marxism, making four central arguments:

- “that capitalist development was drawn out over a long period, three centuries and counting;
- “that class struggle and changes in the relations of production were historically decisive in their emergence and evolution;
- “that home and world markets developed simultaneously; and
- “that the territorial state was, and remains, an integral component of capitalism.”

The early changes identified by the leading schools of thought were just beginnings, what Marx called capitalism’s “rosy dawn.” Centuries of primary accumulation, social upheavals, mass dispossession of small farmers, and political revolutions were required before “the Industrial Revolution [which] constitutes the climactic moment in the development of capitalism” was even possible. It was not until the 1800s that “the introduction of machinery and the reorganization of production into centralized factories released the full productive potential of social labor organized by capital.”

These books are important contributions to Marxist theory and history, but they assume some familiarity with academic debates. If you don’t have that background (even if you do!) Heller’s latest book, *A Marxist History of Capitalism*, is the place to start. He wrote it “for the general public and university students,” and, although he does address debates among Marxists, his main concern is to counter non-Marxist arguments that aim “somehow to recuperate capitalism in the belief that it is still reformable.”

The result is a rigorous but accessible account of five hundred years of capital-

ism, from merchant capitalism through industrialization and capitalism's golden age to monopoly capitalism, neoliberalism and the possibility of revolutionary change in our time. Capitalism, he argues, has now "hit a brick wall," and "a sense of overall crisis is manifest in the growing ecological contradictions of the system but also in its political dysfunction and its increasing illegitimacy in the eyes of the populace."

He concludes with a chapter—unusual in a history book—that looks to the future and the challenges that will confront us in the transition from capitalism to socialism, which he says will involve "the triumph of economic and political democracy, continued belief in reason and science, the multiplication of use values as against exchange values, and an end to ecologically destructive growth." While refusing to speculate on when and how such a transition will begin, or "what exactly a future socialism or socialisms might look like," he presents a valuable overview of such issues as workplace democracy, economic planning,

the role of markets and of socialist parties, technology, and more.

I found his extended discussion of socialist environmentalism particularly interesting. Drawing on the work of Istvan Mészáros, he argues that rather than simply rejecting growth, a socialist society must redefine growth as "the expansion of ecologically benign use values rather than an unlimited increase in merely quantifiable material outputs."

"It is not sufficient to speak about socialist society as an ecologically minded society. Rather, as one student of the subject puts it, it is necessary to create an ecologically realized order of things. This suggests that socialism ought not to be simply an improved version of the present based on equality. Rather it should be a society in increasingly conscious symbiosis with the natural environment."

Heller is optimistic about the possibility of "overthrowing capitalism and creating the institutions of a new democratic and socialist order." That optimism reflects his judgment that the

current system is in crisis, but more than that, it flows from his view that throughout history the direct intervention and creativity of ordinary people—the masses so despised by the ruling class and ignored by many academics—has again and again played a decisive and transformative role.

"Without the intervention of the mass of peasants, craftsmen and workers the bourgeoisie by themselves could not have overthrown feudalism and established capitalism. ...Likewise revolution from below by workers will of course be a prerequisite to the transition from capitalism to socialism."

Although the book is short (148 pages) it is densely written and packed with information and insights about how capitalism arose, grew, and can eventually be overcome. Its ambition means that some parts are stronger than others, and the "Towards Socialism" chapter in particular will generate debates and disagreements even among readers (like me) who agree with Henry Heller's overall approach. But that's a strength, not a weakness. A *Marxist History of Capitalism* deserves to be widely read and discussed by all radicals, and especially by the new generation of socialists whose emergence is now unnerving the ruling class.

—*Climate and Capitalism*, October 16, 2018

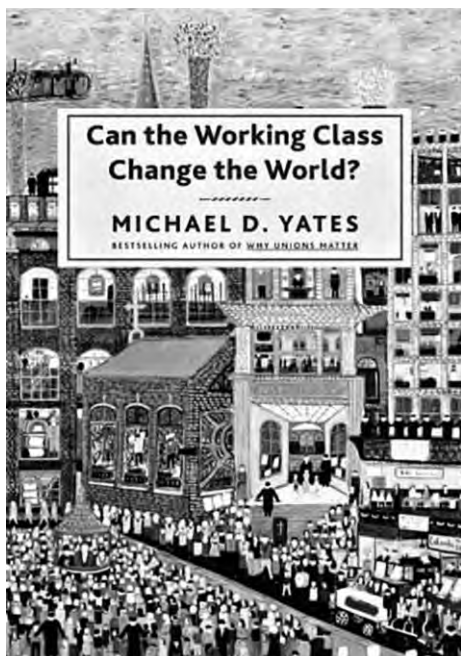
<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2018/10/16/a-marxist-history-of-capitalism/>

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Can the Working Class Change the World?

BOOK REVIEW BY IAN ANGUS



Can the Working Class Change the World?

By Michael Yates

Monthly Review Press, 2018

The title of Michael Yates' new book asks a question that every socialist has heard many times. We hear it from liberals who think changes can only be made by working inside the system. We hear it from radicals who simply can't imagine working people moving against the system. And if we are honest we will admit that when radical activity is in a lull and it is hard to get a hearing, we sometimes ask it of ourselves.

Is it really possible that people who voted for Trump or Clinton—two faces of global reaction—might one day overthrow capitalism?

If you are feeling that way, this book is the perfect antidote. In fewer than 200 clearly-written pages it shows how working people have already changed the world in profound ways, what remains to be done—a lot—and what must happen for the working class to fulfill its potential as a revolutionary force.

Yates presents his argument in six chapters, going from what the working class is, through why capitalism's deadly reign must be ended, to how working people must organize to win radical change. At each step he illustrates his case with concrete examples of real struggles around the world.

Chapter one argues that the formal definition of the working class—everyone who works for a wage or salary—is useless for determining who can change the world. Police and prison guards work for wages, but they are not on our side. Nor are politicians, corporate executives, and “other highly paid skills and apologists for business.” On the other hand, there are millions of people who don't get wages, but are part of the working class or potential allies—those whose full-time responsibility is raising children, the unemployed, workers in the informal economy, small farmers who live permanently on the brink of hunger.

“At any given time there are several billion people working, in the reserve army of labor, or peasants. Should ways be found to organize and unify, say, even 20 percent of them, they could surely change the world.”

Chapter two provides an analytical framework for understanding capitalism as “a hegemonic social system,” that is based on exploitation in the workplace, but that “seeks to dominate as many aspects of our lives as possible.” Yates shows that “working people are exploited and expropriated, making it impossible for them to achieve real freedom, autonomy, and unalienated lives in a capitalist society.”

Chapter three looks at exploitation and oppression concretely, explaining why Marxists see workers as the agents of social change. It considers not only the forces that unite workers against

the system, but the barriers—skill levels, nationality, race and gender, in particular—that pit them against each other and weaken the struggle.

Chapter four addresses a subject that even experienced socialists often neglect, the victories and changes that working class struggles have already won, over the determined opposition of bosses and capitalist governments. In that important sense, workers not only can change the world, but have already done so.

Chapter five demonstrates that despite those gains, the power of capital is still intact, and some important advances, including the successful revolutions in Russia and China, have been reversed. So long as capitalism remains globally dominant, no win for democracy and justice is permanent.

Like the book as a whole, Chapter six is titled, “Can the working class change the world?” The first word of that question is important—it is clear that working people can change the world, but will they? Getting from can to will isn't going to be easy or quick.

“Only radical thinking and acting have any chance staving off accelerating levels of barbarism. Newer instruments must be forged: radically democratic labor unions and political parties, a scaling-up of collective self-help activities, massive levels of ‘occupy, resist, produce.’... It will take time for a class riven with so many fundamental cleavages, by race, ethnicity, gender, and imperialism most importantly, to unify itself and destroy its class enemy.”

In this chapter, Yates discusses “multiple terrains of struggle” that will be central to building new organizations built on democracy and solidarity, that fight for immediate gains while never losing sight of the central objective.

“There is no reason for a working-class political project to exist unless its aim is the defeat of capital. Demands should be radical and principled, and they should be adhered to. Tactical compromise might sometimes be necessary, but this can never be a strategy.”

Michael Yates worked for many years as a labor educator, teaching working people in classrooms and union meetings across the U.S. Those years taught him something very important—how to express Marxist

ideas in everyday English, without condescension, without false bravado or illusions, and without any hint of dogmatism. The result is a superb popular account of what’s wrong with capitalism and what working people must do to get rid of it. Even if you think you know all this, you should read it to learn, by shining example, how to explain socialist ideas in clear, concise and convincing terms.

Can the Working Class Change the World? should be on every ecosocial-

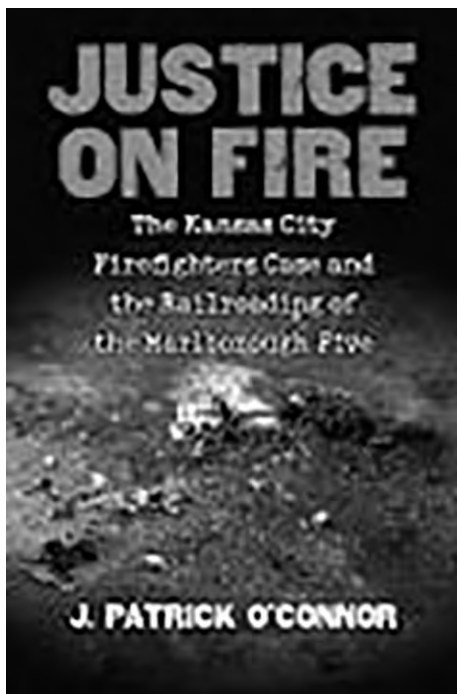
ist’s bookshelf. More than that, it should be in every radical worker’s hands. It’s a book to be read and discussed and argued over and acted on. Michael Yates has made an important contribution to building movements that not only can change the world, but must.

—*Climate and Capitalism*,
November 13, 2018

<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2018/11/13/can-the-working-class-change-the-world/>

Justice on Fire

BOOK REVIEW BY CAROLE SELIGMAN



Justice on Fire, The Kansas City Firefighters Case and the Railroading of the Marlborough Five

By J. Patrick O'Connor

University of Kansas Press

On November 29, 1988, a fierce explosion—clearly arson—at a construction site near the impoverished Kansas City Marlborough neighborhood killed six firefighters. This was the worst disaster in its history ever to befall the Kansas City Fire Department.

Five Marlborough residents were eventually indicted, tried, and in 1997 convicted of the crime.

This is a powerhouse of a book. It is a meticulous dissection of an historic, real case of a frame up, but it reads like a mystery. I was on pins and needles, especially near the end of the book, in which the last court appeal took place for the prisoner who was a juvenile at the time of the alleged crime. The book is a long one—346 pages with extensive endnotes, a full bibliography, a timeline, and a directory of the many people involved. Mr. O'Connor, the author, has done two kinds of research, which inform this book. He has extensively studied all the public records on the case—court transcripts, police logs, government reports, newspaper articles. He also got personally involved as he became thoroughly convinced of the innocence of the five men convicted. He interviewed every person (on all sides of the case) who was willing to talk to him—and there are scores of such people—“witnesses,” the accused and convicted, their family members, family members of the six firefighter victims, lawyers, police, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) officials, journalists, and others; and he attended court proceedings. Even at the very

end of the book new evidence has come to light this year pointing to the frame up.

The evidence that sticks in the craw, and is a theme throughout this prodigious piece of research, is evidence pointing squarely at other people who were on the scene at the time of the disastrous fire and explosions—people who had a motive to set the deadly fire, people who changed their own alibi stories many times. Besides the scrupulous attention to facts and details about this case, the author writes well and has exposed a cruel and persistent fact of life in the United States—the conviction and incarceration of the innocent for crimes they did not commit. This tragedy is not only exposed, but explained in detail. Like Bryan Stevens’ *Just Mercy*—about wrongful convictions of death row prisoners—this book makes the reader want to get involved and do something to correct this terrible wrong.

O'Connor has also published excellent books about other frame-ups—*The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal* and *Scapegoat: The Chino Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper*. Like the cases of the three remaining prisoners of the firefighter

Continued on page 67

Co-Pays in Prison to See a Doctor

Some California prisoners work more than 60 hours to afford a doctor visit.

BY NICHOLAS IBARRA

SANTA CRUZ—Inmates who seek medical care from inside California’s prisons and jails are required to pay a \$5 co-pay per visit—a cost that, on its surface, seems relatively low.

But with the minimum wage inside state prisons at just eight-cents-an-hour, inmates without financial support from the outside can be forced to work more than 60 hours to afford a single visit for medical, dental or mental healthcare.

By comparison, if minimum-wage workers outside prison walls had to work that long to see a doctor, they’d be shelling out co-pays of about \$650.

A bill introduced Monday, December 3, 2018, in the state legislature, Assembly Bill 45, would change that—scrapping the co-payments in response to advocacy from prisoners’ rights groups who say the fees lead to avoidance of medical care.

Authored by Assemblyman Mark Stone, D-Scotts Valley, the bill is backed by the ACLU and two prisoner advocacy groups, the California Coalition for Women Prisoners and Initiate Justice.

Continued from page 66

case—Richard Brown, Darlene Edwards, and Frank Sheppard (Skip Sheppard died in prison, Bryan Sheppard has been released)—Mumia Abu-Jamal and Kevin Cooper are innocent and still fighting, after decades in prison, for justice, for freedom. O’Connor’s journalistic work exposing the truth in all these important cases is so valuable for all who love justice and seek to bring it about.

In a news release, Stone said that while the fees may seem small to those outside of the prison system, the co-payments can have a real impact on inmates’ health.

“Limiting access to care in this way leads to unnecessary suffering, the development of more chronic conditions, and the spread of infectious diseases,” said Stone, who has authored a number of criminal justice reform bills since his election to the Assembly in 2012.

Healthcare co-pays are cited as one of inmates’ biggest concerns in recent surveys of thousands of Illinois inmates, where the same \$5 co-pay is in effect. More than half of those surveyed said they had avoided healthcare because they couldn’t afford to pay the fees.

Taylor Lytle, an organizer with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, has felt the impacts of the fees firsthand. Lytle, a former foster youth, spent time incarcerated as a teen and served a two-year stint in state prison as an adult, where she said she was forced to choose between buying basic hygiene products and seeing a doctor.

Coming up with \$5 for a medical visit is far from easy, Lytle said in a recent interview.

“It’s a huge challenge, trust me,” she said. “I was working in the kitchen and I made eight-cents-an-hour. There was never an opportunity where I saw \$5 in my account at the end of the month.”

Illinois lawmakers passed a bill earlier this year that would have eliminated the co-pays, but it was vetoed in August by Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, who cited unspecified “potential abuses of a free medical system,” that could lead to a backlog of medical services.

Most states have similar co-pays in place ranging from \$2 to \$8 per visit, according to the nonprofit Prison Policy Initiative. Federal prisoners pay \$2.

The co-pays are waived for screenings or medical emergencies, and state law already requires that medical care can’t be denied due to a lack of funds in an inmate’s account.

Prison officials have said the fees help offset high healthcare costs and deter frivolous medical visits—claims that advocates dispute.

“To me, I feel like proper medical care is a human right,” said Lytle, the organizer and former inmate. “We can’t say that, though, if we’re making people choose between proper medical care and choosing whether they want to get some deodorant or a bar of soap.”

—*Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 8, 2018

<https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2018/12/06/some-california-prisoners-work-more-than-60-hours-to-afford-a-doctor-visit/?fbclid=IwAR0aFL3h-qAEhqVlvGLrVTwjeAfB9eLh0J2Fk-fLx3TkP3tUEXEaS40NhEek>



In this February 20, 2014 file photo, prisoners from Sacramento County await processing after arriving at the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy.

Detained Immigrants Renew Call for Medical Attention

Tacoma, Washington—On Tuesday, December 11, up to 40 immigrants detained at the now infamous Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma began refusing meals, initiating a hunger strike in protest of the conditions they face. One detained activist listed the group's demands as follows:

"I am part of a group of detainees that are going to go on hunger strike as the only way to protest and shine a light on the abuses that we suffer here. We are going on strike because: 1) the abuse of the NWDC Director; 2) The abuse of the guards; 3) The lack of medical attention; 4) the bad food; 5) the salary of a \$1-per-day; and 6) that they rob our property."

This strike is the latest in a series of strikes protesting conditions inside the facility; the most recent mass strike began on August 21 in conjunction with a national prison strike.

This December strike follows the November 24th death of Amar Mergensana, who participated in the August strike and was hospitalized following 86 days of refusing meals. Though Mr. Mergensana asked for medical treatment repeatedly in the days before he was sent to St. Joseph's, his requests were ignored. His death follows a pattern of abuse, violence, callousness and death of detainees in ICE and GEO Group custody. One person currently on hunger strike reports that denial of medical care continues, with a fellow detained person brought to tears in his cell from pain and vomiting. The activist reports that "I don't know what happened to him because they took him out of the pod and placed him in solitary [confinement]." NWDC Resistance member Maru Mora Villalpando responded, "Rather than provide adequate medical care to detained immigrants, GEO

Group and ICE are placing them in solitary confinement. They have proven themselves incapable of providing even the most basic medical care to people detained." The multiple outbreaks of mumps and varicella in 2018 further point to the dangerous conditions for those detained.

overt racism, reporting that they feel threatened. One activist reports that the guards often "act like their fingers are guns and pretend to shoot us." These small acts carry weight in an immigration prison where armed guards have the power to confiscate food, clothes, and personal belongings. NWDC Resistance invited Tacoma residents to support detained activists at a vigil, December 11 calling on GEO Group not to retaliate with the use of solitary confinement, threats of force-feeding, or otherwise violating detainees' free speech rights. Likewise, the group renewed our call to Governor Jay Inslee to visit people detained in his state and hear their concerns firsthand. "If the City of Tacoma and State of Washington governments fail to take action, we fear that detained immigrants will continue to suffer unjust and deadly conditions," concluded NWDC Resistance member Andrea Marcos.

NWDC Resistance is a grassroots collective led by undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens located in Tacoma, Washington. It is an unincorporated association formed for the purposes of confronting human rights violations at the Northwest Detention Center and dedicated to ending the detention and deportation of immigrants.

Contact: Andrea Marcos: andrea.emily.marcos@gmail.com

(206) 681-7117

Maru Mora Villalpando: maru@latinoadvocacy.org

(206) 251-6658

For live updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/NWDCResistance/>

Detained hunger-strikers also decry the NWDC director and guards'



NWDC Resistance/Resistencia al NWDC

30 mins · 🌐

For Immediate Release:

December 11, 2018

Contact: Andrea Marcos, andrea.emily.marcos@gmail.com, 206 681 7117

Maru Mora Villalpando, maru@latinoadvocacy.org, 206 251 6658...

Continue Reading



NWDCRESISTANCE.ORG

NWDC Resistance – Supporting those facing deportation inside the...

Books That Keep Me Alive on Death Row

BY KEVIN COOPER

Someone once told me that reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. That someone was another death row inmate, an older Black man, who had seen enough in me as a person when I first came to this prison in 1985 to steer me away from gangs, drugs, gambling and all the other negativity in which a new inmate can get trapped and not escape.

So I have spent a great deal of time reading books, magazines, newspapers and damn near any other thing that I can get my hands on while living in this often unlivable place, trying to stay sane in what often appears to be an insane asylum, learning the truth about this world and its history and the many different types and kinds of people who make up both.

I have been doing so in a 4½-by-11-foot cage in which I am forced to live against my will, understanding that the sentences of death that I was given by a jury not of my peers have been administered to many people deemed to be different in this land, even before this land became a country.

These things and many, many more were discovered and learned by me after reading my very first book from cover to cover, then continuing to do the same with each book I subsequently read.

Somewhere in my reading early on, a light went on in my mind and I then began to understand why historically, certain people in power, did not want certain people with no power to read any type of book at all.

I then truly understood why slave owners and the laws that were passed during slavery were made to forbid a slave from even learning to read. They understood then, those slave owners and lawmakers who were sometimes the same people, what I was learning—

that to read is to learn, and to learn is to gain knowledge, and knowledge is power. There can be no greater power that comes from knowledge than the power of self. I also began to understand why certain slaves took the life-ending chance of learning to read to gain knowledge and the power that comes with it.

I also came to the conclusion that the history of this country is full of poor people having no schools, or inferior schools, especially if those poor people were Black, or other so-called minority peoples. I learned why *Brown v. Board of Education* had to happen, and why the law in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was wrong and had to be challenged. Separate but equal was a lie then and is a lie now.

In my reading books on my heritage and culture, I did find knowledge, and in that knowledge I found out who I am as a man, and as a person of African descent. I learned that I am not who you say I am, or tell the world that I am, nor am I your historical stereotype. I learned to tell my own story because no one else can, and when they try, they don't tell my story, they tell what they want to tell and how they want it.

I have traveled the world in the pages of my books, from being in the bottom of a slave ship during the transatlantic slave trade, to being sold on the auction block and forced to work as an animal on a plantation.

I have been with abolitionists as they worked to end chattel slavery, and I have been on the front line in the Civil War. In fact, I have been in every war that was on this land, in this country, and all because of my books.

These are books that were and still are being sent to me by people who are helping to not only educate me, but to

keep me alive while on death row. I have walked down a road called freedom, seeking a thing called freedom in a land and country that, after emancipating me, re-enslaved me by another name and misused me in its prison leasing system.

I listened to Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, Joe Trotter and many others who were all fighting for and against the same things. I watched Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Thurgood Marshall, and many, many others fight for the right to be, to be as they are, what they are, what we are—human beings with the universal right to life.

I listened to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. say he read that we had the right to protest nonviolently for our rights, and I found that where he read this was in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

I have been everywhere in my books that they could take me, from *Little Big Horn* to the moon, from the slave master's house to the White House with President Obama. I have been at historical lynchings in my books, to being ten feet away from the death chamber here at San Quentin prison, and in both cases the mental, emotional, psychological and physical torture was present.

I have read about private slavery and all of its torturous ills of yesteryear, to public slavery and all of its torturous ills of these modern years.

Reading books has gotten me out of this cage, and in turning this cage into a classroom, I have educated myself in ways that I never thought I could, or in ways that anybody else thought I could. Many, or most, of the people who I

have met in books, I do not know or recall their names and probably never will. But I do know their stories and their fights and their plights, because in many ways their fight and plights are just like mine.

I now walk on the path that they made with their blood, sweat, tears and bodies. Why I was drawn to reading mostly about history, American history, which African-American history is, I don't know. But in doing so, I found an inner strength that I did not know that I had within me. I found a spiritual inner strength that I did not know that I had within me. I found a voice that I did not know I had within me. I found a reason not to quit, not to give up, not to surrender that I did not know that I had within me. I found a will and willpower that I did not know that I had within me.

All of these things and more that I found within myself I found in reading books about the lives of people through the history of this world and country. I found out by reading books that I am not alone in my quest for justice, for so-called freedom, for my humanity. I have learned from books that no one can take away your self-respect or dignity if you don't let them. I have found through books that not just the white man, but people of all cultures and of different races have contributed to the making and building and growth of this country.

I have been transported from this living hellhole in which I exist to living hellholes of the past. In doing so, I have learned much about our country and its people, both good and bad.

I know that no matter how often I hear people say, "Times have changed," in fact, some things and some people have not changed. I have learned that the evil and wickedness in people who enforced chattel slavery and its wrongs and crimes against humanity are alive today in people who are enforcing the death penalty and all of its proven

wrongs and crimes against humanity.

At the same time, I have learned that the goodness in those people of yesteryear that led them to abolish chattel slavery is alive and within the hearts of people today who are working to abolish the death penalty. I owe this real life-and-death understanding to the many different books I have read over the years.

In walking the *Trail of Tears* with my Native American sisters and brothers and their children and elders, I learned that no person is safe in this country, not even the people who never claimed this land as their own but who took care of it as a parent takes care of a child. Capitalism and greed are what reigns supreme in this country to the detriment of all. Without books, I would not have learned these truths about this country.

I will continue to read, study and learn as long as I am alive, but especially as long as I am in prison and on death row, where books have provided a genuine form of escapism from my hellish existence.

In no particular order, here are some of the books that I have read in the more than 33 years that I have spent on your death row (a partial list):

- *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild
- *A People's History of the United States 1492 to Present* by Howard Zinn
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley
- *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin
- *Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter by Malcolm X* by George Breitman
- *Malcolm X: The Man and His Ideas* by George Breitman
- *A Life of Reinvention—Malcolm X* by Manning Marable

- *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* by Manning Marable
- *Great Speeches by African Americans, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Barack Obama, and Others*, edited by James Dale
- *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup
- *There Is a River, The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* by Vincent Harding
- *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* by Edward E. Baptist
- *Just Mercy, A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson
- *Ella Baker, Freedom Bound* by Joanne Grant
- *The Bible*
- *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James W. Lowen
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *The Beautiful Struggle* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* by James Forman Jr.
- *The Condemnation of Blackness, Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban-American* by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- *The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom* by James Green
- *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead
- *Jailhouse Lawyer* by Mumia Abu Jamal
- *Slavery by Another Name* by Douglas Blackmon
- *The New Jim Crow: In the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander

—Truthdig, November 8, 2018

<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/the-books-that-keep-me-alive-on-death-row/>

Editors Note: Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin's Death Row in California who was framed for the brutal murder of the family in Chino Hills, CA. On Christmas Eve, 2018, in the last minutes of his term, Governor Jerry Brown ordered DNA testing on four pieces of evidence in Kevin's case. He appointed retired Judge Daniel Pratt as a special master to oversee the testing. This is a partial victory in the long struggle for exoneration, but it must be acknowledged that it is a very incomplete victory. Kevin had asked Governor Brown for a full investigation of his case based on these elements: the destruction, tampering, and falsification of physical evidence; hiding of exculpatory blood evidence; six Brady violations; six expert witnesses whose testimony has never been heard in court; and the unprecedented dissent of 11 federal judges (Judge Fletcher wrote that "California may be about to execute an innocent man.") None of these crucial points are part of Brown's executive order. Now, incoming Governor Gavin Newsom must expand the Executive Order to open a full innocence investigation.

Kevin continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S. Learn more about his case at: www.kevincooper.org.

Write to:

Kevin Cooper #C-65304 4-EB-82
San Quentin State Prison
San Quentin, CA 94974
www.freekevincooper.org

E-Carceration: The Newest Jim Crow

BY MICHELLE ALEXANDER

In the midterms, Michigan became the first state in the Midwest to legalize marijuana, Florida restored the vote to over 1.4 million people with felony convictions, and Louisiana passed a constitutional amendment requiring unanimous jury verdicts in felony trials. These are the latest examples of the astonishing progress that has been made in the last several years on a wide range of criminal justice issues. Since 2010, when I published "The New Jim Crow"—which argued that a system of legal discrimination and segregation had been born again in this country because of the war on drugs and mass incarceration—there have been significant changes to drug policy, sentencing and re-entry, including "ban the box" initiatives aimed at eliminating barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated people.

This progress is unquestionably good news, but there are warning signs blinking brightly. Many of the current reform efforts contain the seeds of the next generation of racial and social control, a system of "e-carceration" that may prove more dangerous and more difficult to challenge than the one we hope to leave behind.

Bail reform is a case in point. Thanks in part to new laws and policies—as well as actions like the mass bailout of inmates in New York City jails that's underway—the unconscionable practice of cash bail is finally coming to an end. In August, California became the first state to decide to get rid of its cash bail system; last year, New Jersey virtually eliminated the use of money bonds.

But what's taking the place of cash bail may prove even worse in the long run. In California, a presumption of detention will effectively replace eligibility for immediate release when the new law takes effect in October 2019.

And increasingly, computer algorithms are helping to determine who should be caged and who should be set "free." Freedom—even when it's granted, it turns out—isn't really free.

Under new policies in California, New Jersey, New York and beyond, "risk assessment" algorithms recommend to judges whether a person who's been arrested should be released. These advanced mathematical models—or "weapons of math destruction" as data scientist Cathy O'Neil calls them—appear colorblind on the surface but they are based on factors that are not only highly correlated with race and class, but are also significantly influenced by pervasive bias in the criminal justice system.

As O'Neil explains, "It's tempting to believe that computers will be neutral and objective, but algorithms are nothing more than opinions embedded in mathematics."

Challenging these biased algorithms may be more difficult than challenging discrimination by the police, prosecutors and judges. Many algorithms are fiercely guarded corporate secrets. Those that are transparent—you can actually read the code—lack a public audit so it's impossible to know how much more often they fail for people of color.

Even if you're lucky enough to be set "free" from a brick-and-mortar jail thanks to a computer algorithm, an expensive monitoring device likely will be shackled to your ankle—a GPS tracking device provided by a private company that may charge you around \$300 per month, an involuntary leasing fee. Your permitted zones of movement may make it difficult or impossible to get or keep a job, attend school, care for your kids or visit family members. You're effectively sentenced to an open-air digital prison, one that may

not extend beyond your house, your block or your neighborhood. One false step (or one malfunction of the GPS tracking device) will bring cops to your front door, your workplace, or wherever they find you and snatch you right back to jail.

Who benefits from this? Private corporations. According to a report released last month by the Center for Media Justice, four large corporations—including the GEO Group, one of the largest private prison companies—have most of the private contracts to provide electronic monitoring for people on parole in some 30 states, giving them a combined annual revenue of more than \$200 million just for e-monitoring. Companies that earned millions on contracts to run or serve prisons have, in an era of prison restructuring, begun to shift their business model to add electronic surveil-

lance and monitoring of the same population. Even if old-fashioned prisons fade away, the profit margins of these companies will widen so long as growing numbers of people find themselves subject to perpetual criminalization, surveillance, monitoring and control.

...a GPS tracking device provided by a private company that may charge you around \$300 per month, an involuntary leasing fee...

Who loses? Nearly everyone. A recent analysis by a Brookings Institution fellow found that “efforts to reduce recidivism through intensive supervision are not working.” Reducing

the requirements and burdens of community supervision, so that people can more easily hold jobs, care for children and escape the stigma of criminality “would be a good first step toward breaking the vicious incarceration cycle,” the report said.

Many reformers rightly point out that an ankle bracelet is preferable to a prison cell. Yet I find it difficult to call this progress. As I see it, digital prisons are to mass incarceration what Jim Crow was to slavery.

If you asked slaves if they would rather live with their families and raise their own children, albeit subject to “whites only signs,” legal discrimination and Jim Crow segregation, they’d almost certainly say: I’ll take Jim Crow. By the same token, if you ask prisoners whether they’d rather live with their families and raise their children, albeit with nearly constant digital surveillance and monitoring, they’d almost certainly say: I’ll take the electronic monitor. I would too. But hopefully we can now see that Jim Crow was a less restrictive form of racial and social control, not a real alternative to racial caste systems. Similarly, if the goal is to end mass incarceration and mass criminalization, digital prisons are not an answer. They’re just another way of posing the question.

Some insist that e-carceration is “a step in the right direction.” But where are we going with this? A growing number of scholars and activists predict that “e-gentrification” is where we’re headed as entire communities become trapped in digital prisons that keep them locked out of neighborhoods where jobs and opportunity can be found.

If that scenario sounds far-fetched, keep in mind that mass incarceration itself was unimaginable just 40 years ago and that it was born partly out of well-intentioned reforms—chief among them mandatory sentencing laws that liberal proponents predicted would reduce racial disparities in sen-



tencing. While those laws may have looked good on paper, they were passed within a political climate that was overwhelmingly hostile and punitive toward poor people and people of color, resulting in a prison-building boom, an increase in racial and class disparities in sentencing, and a quintupling of the incarcerated population.

Fortunately, a growing number of advocates are organizing to ensure that important reforms, such as ending cash bail, are not replaced with systems that view poor people and people of color as little more than commodities to be bought, sold, evaluated and managed for profit. In July, more than 100 civil rights, faith, labor, legal and data science groups released a shared statement of concerns regarding the use of pretrial risk assessment instruments; numerous bail reform groups, such as Chicago Community Bond

Fund, actively oppose the expansion of e-carceration.

If our goal is not a better system of mass criminalization, but instead the creation of safe, caring, thriving communities, then we ought to be heavily investing in quality schools, job creation, drug treatment and mental health care in the least advantaged communities rather than pouring billions into their high-tech management and control. Fifty years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that “when machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” We failed to heed his warning back then. Will we make a different choice today?

—New York Times, November 8, 2018

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/08/opinion/sunday/criminal-justice-reforms-race-technology.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

A growing number of scholars and activists predict that “e-gentrification” is where we’re headed as entire communities become trapped in digital prisons that keep them locked out of neighborhoods where jobs and opportunity can be found.

Kaddish for the Tree Of Life

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Kaddish, in Jewish ritual, is sung at the graveside of the departed.

It is a chant, a song, a psalm of life’s loss, which now, in the quiet city of Pittsburgh, must be sung almost a dozen times, after a white racist, armed with a semi-automatic rifle, entered a synagogue (a Jewish temple) during a naming ceremony for children, and left death in his wake.

This massacre occurred just hours and days after another man left over a dozen bombs to be mailed to several former presidents, and actors, and several prominent Black politicians.

What connects these two events besides time? Both men left messages online revealing hatred for immigrants, whom both called “invaders.”

Where have we heard that word recently?

At Trump rallies the U.S. President sends his audiences into wild frenzies

of applause when he damns people of Latin America as “invaders” of North America.

Yes, it must be said that Trump spoke out against anti-Semitism (perhaps it is correct to say he read someone else’s writing) recently. But I ask you, if you can, to listen again. You will hear silence—no applause, no yells or peals of agreement.

Just silence—“silence of the lambs.”

President Trump began his campaign by damning Mexicans, and flashed from there to immigrants.

And after his fateful embrace of white nationalists of Charlottesville, Virginia, who can be surprised at the flash-fire of hatred of Jews?

Trump has lit the flames of rhetoric with his tongue at rallies across the nation.

How can we be surprised when those who hear him send bombs, or open fire?

Write to Mumia at:
Smart Communications/PA DOC
SCI Mahanoy
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733



SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

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Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

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The Right to Rape

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It is difficult to use the title that this commentary bears, but upon reflection, it must be so, for the truth supports it.

For the truth is, this nation was born in rape. The rape of indigenous women (so called “Indians”) was considered but a spoil of war.

African women were ravished aboard slave ships, clad in rags and chains. Many women leaped into the dark, roiling sea, preferring death to how they were treated onboard by seamen.

Indeed, if the slave ships were a horror, American slave plantations were worse, for here women were raped systematically. Why? Because the more they became pregnant, the more wealth they produced for the master class.

Black male slaves also played a role in this tragedy, for by raping women, they also increased a slave-owners wealth. Such men were considered prize bucks for the wealth they created for masters.

Indeed, up until the dawn of the 20th century, it wasn’t considered a crime to rape Black women; it was considered a white rite of passage!

Could those days, which lasted for centuries, not have radiated into the ignoble present?

Consider the commonality of sexual harassment and sexual assault in modern American life. Does anyone remember the Tailhook Scandal, where U.S. servicemen took gross advantage of women in the ranks?

Everywhere we turn, we find evidence of clear misogyny against women, which, while expressed in rape, has its origins in an intense hatred and disregard of women.

One need look no further than the highest office in the land—the U.S. presidency.

We witnessed it in the recent senatorial so-called “hearings” in the Kavanaugh nomination, where women were ignored, unheard and dismissed—even by other women!

But I guess “boys will be boys,” huh?

—*San Francisco Bay View*, October 30, 2018

<https://sfbayview.com/2018/10/the-right-to-rape/>

Abu-Jamal Wins New Right to Appeal

BY RACHEL WOLKENSTEIN

On December 27, Court of Common Pleas Judge Leon Tucker granted Mumia’s petition for new appeal rights, over the opposition of “progressive DA” Larry Krasner.

This is the first Pennsylvania state court decision in Mumia’s favor since he was arrested on December 9, 1981.

In his decision Judge Tucker ruled former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille, who was the District Attorney during Mumia’s first appeal of his frame-up conviction and death sentence, “created the appearance of bias and impropriety” in the appeal process when he didn’t recuse himself from participating in Mumia’s appeals. Judge Tucker relied heavily on Ronald Castille’s public statements bragging that he would be a “law and order” judge, that he was responsible for 45 men on death row, that he had the political and financial support of

the Fraternal Order of Police, and new evidence of Castille’s campaign for death warrants for convicted “police killers.” The appearance of bias and lack of “judicial neutrality” exhibited by Castille warranted his recusal.

Judge Tucker’s order throws out the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decisions from 1998-2012 that rubber-stamped Mumia’s racially-biased, politically-motivated murder conviction on frame-up charges of the shooting death of police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Judge Tucker’s decision means that Mumia Abu-Jamal’s post-conviction appeals of his 1982 conviction, that he was framed by police and prosecution who manufactured evidence of guilt, suppressed the proof of his innocence and tried by racist, pro-prosecution trial Judge Albert Sabo who declared, “I’m gonna help them fry the nigger.” and denied him other due pro-

cess trial rights must be reheard in the Pennsylvania appeals court.

The new appeals ordered by Judge Tucker opens the door to Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom. Abu-Jamal’s legal claims and supporting evidence warrant an appeal decision of a new trial or dismissal of the frame-up charges that have kept him imprisoned for 37 years.

The international campaign for Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom has launched a new offensive. At the top of its actions is a call for letters and phone calls to DA Larry Krasner demanding he not appeal Judge Tucker’s order granting new appeal rights to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Tell DA Larry Krasner: Do NOT Appeal Judge Tucker’s Decision Granting Mumia Abu-Jamal New Appeal Rights!

Email: DA_Central@phila.gov, Tweet: @philaDAO, Phone: 215-686-8000

Mail: Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner
3 S. Penn Square, Corner of Juniper and S. Penn nSquare Philadelphia, PA 19107-3499



Maria Lila Meza Castro, center, a 39-year-old migrant woman from Honduras, runs away from tear gas with her daughters Saira Nalleli Mejia Meza, left, and Cheili Nalleli Mejia Meza at the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, in Tijuana on Nov. 25, 2018. Read *Tear Gassing Children Across the Border* on page 31.



Trapped in digital prisons and locked out of jobs and opportunity. Read *E-Carceration: The Newest Jim Crow* on page 71.

On the Front Cover: ►

“Pour le peuple, il y a toujours la misère!” (For the people there is always misery!) —Anonymous Gilet Jaune. Read *The Yellow Vests of France* on page 14.



Read *HIV Epidemic Persistson* page 39.



Attention Prison Mail Room:



Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”