

CounterPunch

TRUMP AND THE AMERICAN DARKNESS BY CHRIS FLOYD

THE FUTURE OF IDENTITY POLITICS BY YVETTE CARNELL

WHITEWASHING IMPERIAL CRIMES BY JASON HIRTHLER

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GRIZZLY BY JOSHUA FRANK

REFUGEES AT THE GATE BY DANIEL RAVENTOS AND JULIE WARK



CounterPunch

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"Here's Donny!" by Nick Roney

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In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941—2012

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Straight Nuke Talk

Just a note of appreciation for Alan Nasser's valuable article in the most recent issue of the magazine, "How Clinton Could Make Nuclear War." Thank you. Worth more than the cost of my subscription right there.

*David Gigante
Lawrence, Kansas*

Keeping it Real

Know why I gave to CounterPunch? Besides that it is quality material, CounterPunch is the only one of the left-wing sites that hasn't thrown all principles overboard for the Clinton campaign. Moveon.org, Daily Kos, the AFL-CIO, Huffington Post, and many others are prettifying Clinton, covering up her pro-Big Business policies, and generally whoring themselves out to Clinton. CounterPunch still gives you the straight scoop.

*Best Wishes,
Glenn Sacks*

Planet CounterPunch

Dear Deva;

Looking at the numbers: ..tens of thousands of daily readers..

..For the 3,000 of you that have donated.. (after several days of fund drive)

Seems such a ratio's rather disturbing in regard of what's going on.

But I firmly don't think that the 99% of the American people is thrilled by this mind blowing tunneled 'choice' between a self-serving stuffed clown and a female gremlin, considering the fact that these two are just dealing with career concerns, kneejerking with deep deference in front of the

same true bosses, aka walls street, aipac, cfr and a few others, which are sometime unveiled in some catching CP's reports. For instance, I observe that the NYTs clearly not thinktanked on the same planet as the one of CP.

So, yes, it's blatantly clear that CP is a capital mean of sanity control in regard of the magnetude of the farce carrying that massive endless flow of engineered garbages directed to the brains of the 99%.

I remember a novel from the 50's in which the real mafia (the 1% of the 1%) finally take control of the country. For all I know, the only difference between the novel and nowadays are ground details such as hi-selected gamers riding their drones from the inside of all-comfort trailers based in the middle of nowhere, instead of unshaved thugs squizzing the trigger of some greasy sub-precise cal 45 Thomson.

Finally, yes, save some bandwidth: take me off the list. Not because the enlightenment from CP is at stake. But because what will follow is so predictable.

But I will be there for a modest handout for the next fund drives, even between when possible. Keep the good job alive as long as possible.

*Best regards,
Patrick*

Baby Boomer Doom

Hi Joshua Frank, thank you for this article after the election results. I believe the Baby Boomer generation will be the final undoing of our country if not the entire world. With the trillions of dollars they helped

generate during their lifetimes of hard work, and now all this "paid for" retirement time to do nothing but consume and ignore the realities on the ground. What will happen when we all pass on from this world? Their homes, their toys? The Baby Boomer generation, being the largest ever in the history of modern world, will inevitably consume what is left of the planet before they are done. In some weird way, I am glad Hillary lost. I agree, she was by far the most pathetic candidate put forth by the Democrats. The two parties seem to be closely aligned. Don't see much difference. The Baby Boomers will be the undoing of our country if not the world. Again, thank you.

*Sincerely, with no regrets,
Thomas William Baxter*

Hope in Dark Times

Thank you for your excellent and encouraging, "perhaps progressives will be awakened under Trump's reign and fill the streets in disgust at every turn."

Hope to live long enough to help fill the streets. Await that day.

Elizabeth Sempadian

Strange Victory

Mr St. Clair,
Let me start out by saying, without rancor, that in general I'm opposed to most of your political positions. Nevertheless, I regard you as an honest progressive with whom it is possible to actually have a discussion. But, I'm not writing to belabor you with political talk. I noticed you are reading Marc Bloch's 'Strange

Defeat'. This is a worthwhile book as I suspect you have already discovered. I recommend highly a book, 'Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France', that undertakes much the same examination that Bloch did with a different emphasis. The author, Ernest May, is primarily a diplomatic and intelligence historian and reveals fascinating things in those areas. Since I bring a military historian's outlook, the outcome of the campaign isn't as surprising to me as it is to others. But, if you are interested in the campaign, adding 'Strange Victory' to your reading is a rewarding effort. Since the author is more experienced and interested in areas other than military history he includes, perhaps without realizing the significance, several episodes which explain the result of the campaign quite well.

Guy Ferraiolo

DNC Downer

You have made me laugh hysterically while crying - repeatedly—since your first commentary on DNC. Just so fun and right on.

Also, today's "CounterPunch" line up is so powerful I won't need your weekend edition. Yes, I am already a small time monthly contributor. Will be seeking NorCal fellows to join up.

*Phil Baldwin,
Ukiah, CA*

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ROAMING CHARGES

Algorithm and Blues

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

When I wrote on election night that the Clinton campaign had forsaken class politics for “politics by algorithm,” I had no idea that they really had such an “app” or that they had named it after Lord Byron’s daughter, the brilliant Ada Lovelace, the real brains behind the first computer. (Ada would have run a better campaign.) Apparently, Clinton campaign gameboy Robbie Mook ran 500,000 simulations of the election on his Xbox. How many of them had 90,000 Michigan voters leaving their choice for president blank? How many results showed her losing the white women vote by 10 percent? How many showed the vote in union households split nearly 50-50?

As we know from the Wikileaks dumps, Clintonian paranoia extended far beyond her decision to set up a private email server and began to infect the campaign itself. Nargiza Gafurova was an analytics specialist for one of the database companies doing contract work for the Clinton campaign. “Our company worked with her campaign on their data needs - they’ve been extremely secretive about the data and algorithms they use,” Gafurova told me. “Secrecy was so deep that we couldn’t help them effectively as they didn’t even tell us who they want to target.”

The Clinton brain trust made a fatal decision three years ago to run a campaign based on identity politics powered by deep demographic analytics and an almost unlimited reservoir of money from Wall Street and Silicon Valley. How could they lose? This wasn’t a case of corrupt data, but of the campaign programmers, from Bill Clinton to John Podesta, being biased. Illusions in, delusions out.

What Mook and company still can’t fathom is that almost every national election is ultimately about economics or, more properly, how people feel about their economic security. Here the writing was on the wall and only politicians, like the Clintons, who stubbornly live in their own virtual reality could have missed it. For decades there has been one key chart that seasoned political observers have used as a kind of Ouija board to commune with the mood of the electorate. It’s called Wrong Track/Right Direction. On the eve of the 2016 elections, the Wrong Track number stood at a lethal 65.2 percent. Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump both registered the sour mood of the country and the darkening economic malaise afflicting most Americans, regardless of race or gender: stagnant wages, rising home foreclosures, crippling consumer and student loan debt, vanishing manufacturing jobs. By contrast, only 29 percent of eligible voters felt the country was moving in the right direction, a sure sign the Democrats were going down in flames. Hillary blindly shackled herself to Obama’s failed neoliberal economic policies and paid the ultimate price.

Of course, it is common wisdom now on the Left to blame the Clintons for selling the Democratic Party out to Wall Street in 1992. But that is another kind of scapegoating that only serves to occlude the real systemic problems that have led working class people to abandon the Democrats over the last 30 years. The Party was put on the neoliberal futures market during the Carter administration. By the time the Clintons came along it was already being openly traded on the political equivalent of the NASDAQ exchange.

There’s certainly no evidence that the Democrats have learned anything from this debacle. Instead, they are doubling down on their big money strategy. Wall Street bag man Chuck Schumer has been tapped to lead the Democrats in the senate, replacing the retiring Harry Reid (the last working class senator. Here’s the smug Schumer on the eve of the Democratic Convention, gloating at running blue collar people out of the party: “For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in Western Pennsylvania, we pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs. And you can repeat that in Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin.” Is it any wonder they lost?

A week after Trump’s triumph, these professional losers continued their political Death March, leaving the wounded behind on the battlefield, by rushing to billionaires George Soros and Tom Steyer with a desperate pitch to replenish their coffers in order to “take back power.” Protests, protests everywhere, except where they’d do the most good: DNC HQ.

I look to my home turf of Indiana, a rust belt state more conservative than Ohio. Still Obama carried Indiana in 2008, captivating voters by campaigning against the Iraq war and NAFTA, which had pulverized manufacturing and farm-related jobs across the state. Hillary supported both and Obama ended neither. People don’t forget. Look at Vigo County, along the Wabash River, in western Indiana. The home of the great socialist Eugene Debs, the returns from Vigo County have predicted every election since 1956. Obama carried Vigo County by 16 points in 2008 and 328 votes in 2012. Trump slaughtered Hillary here by 14 percentage points. The results in Vigo County have nothing to do with sexism or racism. They are a fierce rejection of the politics of economic betrayal. And perhaps one more factor: Mike Pence. Most of my fellow Hoosiers would have done almost anything to evict Pence from the governor’s mansion, though inflicting him on the rest of the nation was a rather extreme solution. **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

Darkness Visible

BY CHRIS FLOYD

"Hello darkness, my old friend..."

There has been great consternation in the world over the fact that Donald Trump, runner-up in the 2016 vote ("Weak! Loser!"), will soon be president of the United States, thanks to the Rube Goldberg contraption set up by white elites in the 18th century to prevent the despised rabble from directly choosing their leaders. (And just to be sure, the Southern slaver-owners and their Northern compatriots also disenfranchised the vast majority of the populace while they were at it. Only white men of property—like them—were to be allowed to choose the electors who would do the choosing for all the scum out there.)

Much of the handwringing over Trump focuses on the "unprecedented" nature of his candidacy and his presidency. Here, for example, is Bill Moyers (yes, the same Bill Moyers who serviced Lyndon Johnson while he was raining napalm on the civilians of Vietnam): "America died on Nov. 8, 2016, not with a bang or a whimper, but at its own hand via electoral suicide. We the people chose a man who has shredded our values, our morals, our compassion, our tolerance, our decency, our sense of common purpose, our very identity—all the things that, however tenuously, made a nation out of a country."

Putting aside the fact that "we the people" actually chose Hillary Clinton (by a razor-thin margin, but still) on November 8 ("Trump! Loser! Weak!"), the LBJ factotum—now seen as the iconic conscience of American liberalism—seems to have forgotten the entire presidency of another dimbulb celebrity spinning lies and fantasies and racist tropes, appointing nutty extremists to

important posts and unleashing ugly forces in society.

Yes, we speak of rouge-cheeked Ronnie Reagan. Those of us of a certain age remember his screwball appointments—like James Watt, Secretary of the Interior, who told Congress there was no need for conservation programs, because Jesus was coming back in our lifetime. We remember how Reagan, like Trump, made racism the centerpiece of his campaign, which began with a Jim Crow dogwhistle about "states rights" at the site of the "Mississippi Burning" murders and featured lurid fantasies about a big, black "welfare queen" scamming taxpayers to feed her brood of black bastards. We remember how this weird, vacuous celeb (whose wife set his schedule by consulting an astrologer) destroyed unions, escalated the nuclear threat, armed and bankrolled Islamic terrorists (to hotfoot the Commies), supported right-wing terrorism and genocidal murder rampages in Central America, backed brutal tyrants (like Saddam Hussein), rolled back environmental protections and facilitated countless other crimes and sinister follies.

So yes, Trump is a loathsome toad, but he's no surprise, no unprecedented, out-of-the-blue eruption of a new dark turn in American politics. That darkness has always been there, and it has to be fought, again and again and again. We fought Reagan, and we survived him. We'll fight Trump, and we'll survive him too.

But in the immortal words of Kruhulik the Janitor, don't let's be naïve. The idea that the American darkness resides solely on the right, occasionally surging up (Goldwater, Reagan, Bush II, Trump) then reverting to a default

mode of basic decency, is one of the most persistent—and pernicious—of the many myths that "progressives" pull around themselves like a security blanket. The American state itself is deeply, inherently, horribly corrupt, and all those who wield its power are drenched in blood. They are all, without exception, beyond the pale of human decency, of law, of morality. It is not a normal system; as Thoreau said, no decent person can be associated with it.

Consider a system whose top leaders acknowledge that their brutal blockade of an already defeated enemy has taken the lives of 500,000 innocent children—and proclaim these murders are "worth it." A system that launches a war of aggression that kills a million innocent people and plunges the world into endless carnage and ruin. A system whose president sits in his office each week ticking off names of people to be arbitrarily murdered, and who gives his minions carte blanche to kill complete unknowns (including children) engaging in alleged terrorist "signature" behaviour—such as loading shovels into a truck on their farm. A system where armed and armored police gun down hundreds of unarmed citizens each year.

The notion that such a system—which has taken the lives of millions of innocent people within the last generation alone—has only now, with the election of Trump, lost "its compassion, its decency," is obscene. I do think the election of Trump is a calamity; but the mere continuation of this insanely depraved system—whether under the temporary management of a sinister clown like Trump or a "super-competent" imperial technocrat like Clinton—is also a calamity.

Trump didn't "shred" the values and identity of the American system; he held the mirror up to it and showed us all its true, hideous face. No amount of self-righteous, self-congratulatory self-delusion on the part of our progressives—who have countenanced enormous crimes against humanity committed by its heroes—will change this sickening truth. **CP**



EXIT STRATEGIES

Obama's Failure, Hillary's Loss

BY YVETTE CARNELL

President Obama was supposed to bring 'change we can believe'. He was supposed to pass the baton to his heir apparent—Hillary Clinton. Instead of clearing a path for Clinton, however, Obama seeded it with landmines that blew up as Clinton clumsily sought to plant her neoliberal flag in not-so fertile ground. So what happened?

Even before Donald Trump's election victory on Tuesday, Democrats had already lost over 900 state legislature seats, 12 governors, 69 House seats and 13 Senate seats during Obama's tenure. Under President Obama, Congressional Democrats walked the plank in the 2010 midterms after voting for an unpopular and conservative health care plan. And instead of throwing a lifeline to these Democrats, Obama selfishly hoarded what was left of his political capital and used it for his own 2012 reelection campaign.

Thus, laying the blame for this election solely on Donald Trump's nativism or Hillary Clinton's awkwardness as a candidate, or even her corruption, would be a mistake. In an attempt to galvanize African-American voters, Hillary Clinton intentionally framed her candidacy as building on Obama's two successful terms. As it turns out, most Americans, especially those in the rust belt, didn't view Obama's tenure as successful at all.

Obama has worked harder to pick up support for the Trans Pacific Partnership which, according to The Economic Policy Institute's estimates, would result in the U.S. losing more than 130,000 jobs to Vietnam and Japan alone, than he worked to promote single

payer health care.

This election wasn't about Obama's inability to connect with white working class voters. It was about his refusal to do anything for working class voters of any race during his eight years in the White House.

Some will point to gay marriage as a victory for Obama, but much as I'm in favor of marriage equality, rights are not redistribution. The heroin epidemic sweeping white communities, decreasing life expectancies, and the increasing number of suicides point to a reduction

The landmines that Hillary Clinton set off were buried by Obama.

in the quality of life for ordinary white Americans. While their lives were imploding, black Obama apologists were accusing any white person who dared criticize Obama of being a racist.

It's even deeper than that though. In 2004, while giving the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention, Obama said there is not a blue America and a red America, but that there is only one America.

This central thesis has been proven a lie. Americans have learned the hard way that there really is a them versus us; the ruling elite and the rest of us. For 8 years, Obama worked for the wrong side. He allowed Citibank to map out

his cabinet, then began bailing out Wall Street while foreclosing on Main Street.

So the tweet from Upshot's Nate Cohn, revealing that "Clinton suffered her biggest losses in the places where Obama was strongest among white voters" should come as no surprise.

The landmines that Hillary Clinton set off were already buried by Obama.

The nativism buttressing Trump's election has triggered a wave of hysteria in the black community, with social media provocateurs sharing each racial or xenophobic incident with melodramatic fervor. This fails to address Trump receiving a larger share of the black and Hispanic vote than Mitt Romney. NBC news reports that Trump won 29 percent of the Hispanic vote on election day, compared to Mitt Romney's 27 percent in 2012. Trump won 8 percent of the black vote, compared to Romney's 6 percent. Viewing Trump's victory solely through the lens of white nationalism is lazy thinking that doesn't benefit anyone. In fact, it's how we got here.

Trump's election isn't all bad either. People beat money. The black misleadership functionaries who red-baited Bernie Sanders during the primaries have no sway with this administration. The Clintons have been vanquished. The identity politics that worked so well for Obama held far less sway for Clinton. Now, our challenge is to not be led by our fear. Our reaction matters. African-Americans voted for Hillary Clinton out of fear. Let's not be driven by our fear at this critical juncture as well. **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

Trumponomics: More Trickle-down

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Donald Trump's economic plan is beginning to take shape and it looks like it could be a real doozy. What we know so far is that the emphasis appears to be on three things: Tax cuts, deregulation and fiscal stimulus. And while the details remain sketchy, Trump has proposed the largest tax cuts since Ronald Reagan, which means tax receipts will shrink, deficits will widen, and the USG will slip deeper into the bottomless pit of red ink. The GOP's voodoo economists will dispute this point, but the facts are clear; putting more money in the hands of wealthy people that are more likely to save than spend, does not boost activity, increase hiring or grow the economy.

Trump wants to reduce the top rate from 39.6% to 33%, and while he intends to make modest reductions to the other brackets, the greatest windfall will go to his core constituents, the 1 percent. Under the Trump plan, "a taxpayer who makes between \$48,000 to \$83,000 a year would save about \$1,000 (while) people in the top 0.01%, making \$3.7 million or more in a year, would receive \$1 million in annual tax savings."

So, the average working slob will save \$1,000 while a multi-billionaire, like Trump, will net a cool \$1 million on every \$4 million income. How is this different from the standard Reaganomics of the past?

Another one of Trump's pro-growth remedies involves the so-called repatriation of funds. As it so happens, many of the world's wealthiest corporations keep their cash stashed overseas to avoid paying taxes in the U.S. Trump has proposed reducing the tax in a one-time "holiday" with a 10% penalty

for companies that agree to bring their cash back to the U.S. In other words, these giant mega-corporations will be rewarded for their tax evasion by paying a smaller percentage on their earnings than the average factory worker. Trump believes that, by pandering to the corporate sector, more CEOs will increase their business investment in the U.S. putting more people to work and expanding operations. But the theory ignores the fact that the real reason companies are not investing is because the economy remains weak a full eight years after the Crash of '08.

What we know so far about Trump's prospective economic team is also not encouraging. There are no Keynesians in the bunch and only one economist, Peter Navarro. The only conclusion one can draw, is that Trump feels the henhouse will be best guarded by the foxes which—judging from past experience—is a plan that does have its drawbacks. Here are some of the names that Trump provided in August: Tom Barrack, Colony Capital, Andy Beal, Beal Bank, Stephen Calk, Federal Savings Bank, Steve Feinberg, Cerberus Capital Management, Dan Kowalski, Howard Lorber, Vector Group, David Malpass, Encima Global, Stephen Moore, Heritage Foundation, John Paulson, Paulson & Co., Steve Roth, Vornado Realty.

As you can see, the entire list of candidates is skewed towards the wealthy and powerful, in fact, these are the only people in the running. Missing from the list, are the names of academics and Nobel prize-winning economists who have criticized the GOP economic dogma of the last 40 years or who

warned that free market "trickle down" mumbo jumbo would precipitate the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression. Clearly, Trump is not seeking the advice of anyone outside his small circle of corporate kingpins and Wall Street muck-a-mucks.

At present, the frontrunners for Treasury Secretary are J.P. Morgan's chief, Jamie Diamond, former Goldman Sachs executive, Steven Mnuchin, and Texas congressman, Jeb Hensarling. Both Diamond and Mnuchin are multi-millionaires and Wall Street insiders, which seems at odds with Trump's promise to "replace the failed and corrupt political establishment". Hensarling on the other hand, is a staunch proponent of the free market who has worked tirelessly to roll back the set of bandaid reforms laid out in the 2010 Dodd-Frank law. Trump is committed to repealing the toothless bill which curtailed some of the banks more abusive activities while forcing them to increase their capital cushion. Typically, bankers don't like to keep much capital on hand since they make bigger profits by maximizing their leverage. The problem is that less capital means more risk for the public, which is invariably forced to provide bailouts when these insolvent financial institutions blow themselves up. Trump's choice of candidates puts him squarely in Wall Street's corner on this issue.

Trump also wants to dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) which recently imposed a \$100 million fine on Wells Fargo for using bank employees to create more than 2 million unauthorized accounts to meet sales quotas. The action was applauded by consumer groups across the board which is why Trump will make every effort to defang the watchdog agency.

These early signs indicate that Trump is not the revolutionary his supporters think he is. He's not really draining the swamp, he's just filling it with a different cast of slimy characters. **CP**

Hearth-breaking” is an extremely understated word to describe the photo of the little body of the refugee child, Aylan Kurdi. How much heartbreak does it represent? How much pain? Most people who wept for the boy washed up on a Turkish beach knew that the tragedy was infinitely greater, engulfing his mother and brother, hundreds of children, hundreds more families snatched away or broken by death, and all the traumas they faced on reaching unwelcoming shores. The UNHCR estimates that more than a million people reached Europe in 2015 (approximately 0.13% of the rejecting continent’s population) but nearly 4,000 drowned in the Mediterranean. Worldwide, refugees number 21.3 million and 65.3 million people have been displaced. These rough figures add up to unimaginable suffering, of those who left and those who remain behind in famine- and war-devastated countries, or places where brutishness rules. It’s so shattering to think about that the mind balks long before it can take on any contemplation of the other, really important side of this sorry story, namely the depravity of some members of our species in causing this distress to other members of the species. Who inflicts this pain? Why? Basically, the responsibility lies with the so-called 1%, the Davos people (widely and non-ironically dubbed “masters of the universe” in the mainstream press, as if to prepare us for something) who, behind closed doors, create their horrible world order.

The people we pity must be abstract, never real, because this means serious commitment. The distance between “us” and “them” is underscored by the crassness of celebrity charity, as practiced by Amal Clooney, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. It’s not that celebrity antics matter per se, but this contrast between the sickeningly wealthy and the wretched of the earth subliminally conjures up, in beauty-and-the-beast imagery, hints of another denizen of

EUROZONE NOTES

Refugees in Europe: Zombies at the Gate

BY DANIEL RAVENTÓS AND JULIE WARK

popular culture, the excluded, threatening zombie. The zombie is the logical corollary of the 1%. If you are so revoltingly rich then obviously you must exclude and demonize the incredibly numerous “other”. James Baldwin is succinct: “The civilized have created the wretched, quite coldly and deliberately, and do not intend to change the status quo.” Needless to say, not everybody accepts it. There are admirable initiatives like the European project “Solidarity Cities” proclaiming that refugees are welcome, plus many public and private attempts to respond to their immediate needs, but the urgency and immensity of the task also distracts attention from the cause of their distress—the work of the 1%.

The term “surplus population” used to be understood as being synonymous with the “industrial reserve army”, a grim fact of industrialization but at least it held out the hope that the redundant ones might find work at some point. Climate change, financialized economies, robotization of work, and land grabs around the world have put paid to that. Nowadays, we are closer to a sentiment Dickens put in the mouth of Ebenezer Scrooge, “If they would rather die, they had better do it [...]”.

And they do die, out of sight and out of mind, unseen, voiceless, surplus populations, including commoditized humans in the sex and organs trade; whole populations that simply don’t matter (Rwandans, Rohingya, Kurds, Palestinians, Chagos islanders, Libyans, Somalis, South Sudanese,

the San in Botswana, Yazidis...); nomads (Aborigines, Roma, Tuareg, Mongolians, Inuit...); slaughtered in outright or near genocide (West Papua, Syria, Darfur, Iraq, Central African Republic, East Timor...); women (femicide, Chibok girls...); prisoners (in the U.S., Dominican Republic, Burundi, Guantánamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, and other “black holes”); refugees spirited away by Australia to the desolate islands of Nauru and Manus; drone “bugsplats” (Yemen, Pakistan, Waziristan, Afghanistan...); “basket-case” (Kissinger) populations (Somalia, Bangladesh, Chad...); “collateral effects” of invasions and minefields...; the bomb-tested (Nagasaki, Hiroshima, the Pacific islands and the Australian desert); the “missing” (especially street kids); victims of ethnic cleansing (you can buy the computer game!), deportation, forcible displacement, massacres...; urban pariahs, hidden by ghettos, refugee camps, walls, slums...; the displaced in land grabs (Ethiopia, the Amazon, Kalimantan, Papua New Guinea...); victims of natural disasters (and the unnatural one of neoliberal “humanitarianism” nosing out repressive and extractive opportunities in Haiti, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran...); and the “disappeared” by government design (Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Indonesia, the Kingdom of Spain...). This list of junked people is by no means exhaustive but it may give some idea of the magnitude of the problem.

Many human beings don’t even have the wherewithal to risk their lives

as refugees, don't even get to drown in the Mediterranean, or be hunted down by Hungarian vigilantes ("catch 'em all", like Pokemons), or shunted around refugee camps with names like the "Jungle". The thing about refugees is that—while most of the world's redundant people have been ignored, denied a voice, denied rights, denied a presence—they are visible. They are the zombies coming to our shores, crowding at our gates. The "waiting for the barbarians" coming to assault the limes of empire is over.

In his path-breaking work on demodystopias, the Catalan demographer Andreu Domingo has studied the World Economic Forum "Global Risks" reports and their shift of emphasis from prevention of catastrophes to "resilience" (the dubious privilege of a few) in the light of the fast-rising popularity of the zombie genre in films, books, comics, computer games, and even a "World Zombie Day" held in London on 8 October. The global risks identified by the WEF are all about the dangers for governability in the form of redundant populations. This isn't a mere Ehrlich-style "population bomb" but the proclamation of a plan of action. The 2016 Global Risks Report, identifying "large-scale involuntary migration" as first among the top five risks (for the 1%), suggests a calamitous future in which, "The world divides into islands of order in a sea of disorder [...] still-functioning states seek to protect themselves, often deploying private military and intelligence apparatus [... By] 2030 the world resembles medieval times, when the citizens of thriving cities built walls around them to protect themselves from the lawless chaos outside" (p. 31). As far back as 2012 the WEF announced "a constellation of fiscal, demographic and societal risks, signalling a dystopian future for much of humanity" (p. 10). By 2013, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was recommending entomophagy (Edible Insects, 2013) as a food security strategy. Or is this diet of insects

meant to ease poor people's pressure on resources claimed by rich people?

The mega-rich are worried about surviving the apocalypse largely caused by the mega-rich. Their man-made catastrophes don't raise questions of better, more enlightened, more democratic social, economic, and political systems but of control, distribution (i.e. exclusion) and composition of populations. The zombie genre is a ghastly metaphor and even model for governability in an age of human redundancy, of millions of living dead. The apocalypse version of this entertainment has zombies laying siege to walled refuges for privileged humans, and these zombies are a thinly disguised portrait of displaced, dispossessed people who are "threatening" the state. In fact, after 9/11, audiences have been fed appropriately "instructive" zombie films through the filter of terrorist threats. Then again, there is an old racist streak in the Hollywood genre, going back to the American occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. The zombie, then, was resuscitated for an existence stripped of all dignity to work like an unfeeling machine, a thing furthering the ends of capital, detritus of slavery, a product of colonial encounters in which dehumanization was an essential means for gaining control over valuable resources. The "resilient" ones, the overlords, then and now, are white and powerful, like the blonde Brad Pitt, hero of the film *World War Z*.

What Domingo calls the demodystopia is a feature of zombie literature, comic strips, B-series films and video games. The besieged house of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) has expanded to become the besieged country, continent, world. Zombies threaten to devour not just resources protected by the resilient (which they contaminate anyway), but the resilient ones themselves. They, not the perpetrators of the catastrophe, are the beasts lurking in a dark, worse-than-Hobbesian, state of nature in which nature is all but destroyed. The mission of the perps is to con-

struct their bunkerdome, a perpetual state of exception based on the utmost violence against the non-resilient. The conveniently criminalized victim-zombies are made to usher in the new anti-ethics because the leadership of the new society must befit the dystopia. Isn't this the "walled city" of the WEF reports? Don't we already have it?

Impunity is the order of the day. Mass murderers become Nobel Peace laureates. Obama (the one who boasted, "I'm really good at killing people") shamelessly low-balls his drone murders. Militarized police kill African-Americans. Saudi Arabia, helped by its western chums, is bombing Yemen out of existence. The British government wants to exempt its soldiers from humanitarian law and Theresa May has just told the Conservative Party conference that, "we will never again in any future conflict let those activist left-wing human rights lawyers harangue and harass the bravest of the brave, the men and women of our Armed Forces". The treatment of refugees by most governments is in flagrant violation of international law. Who gives a damn? Armageddon is looming. Just one nuclear detonation "could destroy our way of life". In his new book *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*, William J. Perry couldn't be clearer. Dystopia is here but hardly anyone has noticed. We are in denial. Human beings are becoming mere beings, with little that might be called "human" remaining in the brave new life-form. We are losing our humanity and most of nature is well on the way to extinction. All the Enlightenment notions of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights, universalism and dignity are trampled upon or criminalized. In Lampedusa dead refugees get passports. The living ones are illegal. And the survivors in this world, even the "resilient", are doomed to wonder whether this is life, or whether they, too, having destroyed humanity, have become the living dead. **CP**

Dead Certainties Politics and the Torturable Class

BY JASON HIRTHLER

In Graham Greene's excellent foreign policy satire, *Our Man in Havana*, vacuum salesman and secret agent Jim Wormold plays checkers with known torturer Captain Segura. Segura explains that there are two classes of men, the torturable and the untorturable. The untorturable seem to be well-off white Europeans of good breeding. The torturable seem to be everybody else. This is largely the approach the Obama administration has taken in its foreign policy. Not only are elite Americans and their Western European cousins untorturable, they are also unblameable, innocent of accusations from unscrupulous outsiders. Everybody else—Slavs, Arabs, Persians, and Africans—belongs to the torturable class. Particularly the poor among them. They may be bombed, shot, slain, jailed, threatened, destabilized, sanctioned, and doused with chems. President Obama clearly identifies more with class than color; as author James Petras recently wrote, "Under Obama's historical black presidency, the US pursued seven wars against 'people of color' in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa."

Recently, establishment journal *Foreign Policy* gave us a glimpse behind the imperial curtain into the twisted worldview of this administration. Throughout, the views of our leaders appear to divide the world into two classes: noble-minded democracy promoters and aspiring despots. In its August issue, the magazine asks one former Clinton National Security Council (NSC), Aaron David Miller, to interview another former Clinton employee, his old pal and fellow NSC member Robert Malley, who now runs President Obama's Middle East, North Africa, and Persian Gulf portfolio. They have what passes in the mainstream for a 'frank' discussion of the issues of the day.

Blaming the Victim

The interview gets off to a rollicking start. Mr. Miller tells us from experience that the first goal in selling a policy is "...to be intellectually honest." After a miserable joke about the Israeli lobby, sure to elicit guffaws from the Zionist gallery, Miller proceeds to assure us that, despite what critics of President Obama's foreign policy may be:

"...an honest person would admit that regardless of the Obama administration's transgressions, the Middle East isn't primarily a mess of this president's making. Rather, it is largely the result of a broken, angry, and dysfunctional region in turmoil marked by failed or failing states and leaders and institutions unable to provide the kind of reforms needed to right itself: good, inclusive governance; accountability; trans-

parency; respect for human rights; and gender equality."

Thus an avowal of occupational integrity is instantly followed by a claim that is transparently false. Miller commits the cardinal error of blaming the victim. It is Arabs and Persians that must be held to account for their failure to build an inclusive societies from the rubble of blown infrastructures. For failing to enforce human rights among communities radicalized by the sight of dead relatives. For failing to adopt the mantle of colonialism with the obsequious grace of the comprador bourgeoisie, perhaps. Miller's claim is at once obtuse and obscene.

Given this ludicrous opening, Miller might have gone the full hog and dropped former Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn's phrase about Islam not having been through the "laundromat of the Enlightenment." I mean, if you're going to insult an entire culture... This shifting of the culpability onto the shoulders of the victim culture presents Western society, if only by contrast, as more tolerant and, let's just say it, more civilized, than MENA societies. In any case, Miller misses the chance to polish his prejudice. He then turns to the interview subject, Robert Malley, to get his views on the dreadful Middle East.

Threats and Obligations

Malley, perhaps at ease in a leather armchair or sipping a steaming latte, begins with the token act of humility, confessing, "...there are things the administration could have done differently, or better..." before dropping the pretense and concluding, "...much of what we've done will be judged to have been both effective and prudent."

One could perhaps argue that for Obama, wrapping Iran in a stranglehold of a needless nuclear inspection regime was prudent in the sense that punting a war with Iran to the next Clinton presidency was more sensible than opening an eighth front of aggression at the tail-end of his forlorn presidency. Fair enough.

But then Malley restates our supposedly core principle of foreign policy: to defend America's security and avoid, "actions that inadvertently expose us to greater threats." This is another obvious fatuity. Terrorism has risen sevenfold since we launched the War on Terror, making the entire West less secure, as any witness to 7/7 London attacks, Madrid train bombings, Charlie Hebdo or the Bataclan will confirm.

Malley does make a good point when he notes the "unsustainable" cast of 150,000 soldiers the U.S. had in Iraq when Obama ascended to the Oval throne. Those numbers have been reduced to some 5,000 (and growing). But then he commits three solecisms in a row. His moment of clear thinking vanishes beneath the avalanche of ideology that sustains his worldview.

1) "Iran was also steadily advancing its nuclear program, presenting the threat of a dangerous military confrontation." Malley nimbly dances past two observations that would

render this comment senseless. First, Iran has a civilian nuclear program; there was no military component of it. Hence, it only presented the threat of a “dangerous military confrontation” in the minds of pathological ideologues in Washington, who needed to demonize Iran in order to dismantle it. Second, since Washington saw an imaginary threat in Iran’s civilian nuclear program, it presented a real military threat itself by threatening pre-emptive war. Malley acts as though the threat was from Iran and that the nuclear deal averted it; it did nothing of the sort. Rather, the nuclear accord simply stalled a Western attack on Iran. Yet if history is any guide, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) only provides a future pretext for the next administration to use to undermine the peace and move toward military action. Look at Iraq. Scott Ritter among others details how the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and its successor, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), which were designed to oversee implementation of the dictates of United Nations Security Council Resolution(s) (UNSCR) 687 and 1441, were political manipulated by Washington to exert ever more onerous pressure of Baghdad, finally culminating in the completely predictable withdrawal of the Iraqis from compliance, which led to all-out war.

2) “...the region is more manageable than it was or could have been.” An interesting notion, given the fact that one would expect a completely fractured set of four states (Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan) produced by the Obama administration would be less manageable than the fractured set of two states (Iraq, Afghanistan) left behind by the Bush administration. Maybe not. If you consult the Yinon plan and the general divide-and-rule strategy, it becomes apparent that Washington and its Israeli deputies might actually prefer regional chaos to a nicely manicured yard of stable nation states. This has the advantages of enabling Israel to manage these failed states with considerable impunity since they would present no military threat. While a stable gang of authoritarian neoliberals might be preferable to chaos, the latter is perhaps easier to engineer.

3) “...the United States clearly has a central role and responsibility in the region, we shouldn’t exaggerate the extent to which it can shape the region’s destiny...” This is hubris and false modesty in a single cocktail of halfwit poison. First, the U.S. really has no responsibility in the region other than reparations and a hasty exodus. It should definitely fulfill that obligation. If that is what Malley had in mind, my apologies. Second, the idea that we shouldn’t overestimate our capacity to “shape the region’s destiny” is just a backhanded way of blaming the Arabs and Persians for colonialism. Or rather, for resisting it. As it is, we are obliged to teach these befuddled peoples how to live. With this so clearly on his mind, Malley might have served up a Kipling lyric on the white man’s burden. Alas...

Malley then gives us a stellar example of the guileful art that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton seem to have mastered: the ability to completely invert reality with a straight face. Malley says, “There is enough precedent of ill-fated Western interventions in the Middle East over the past hundred years to fill volumes.” Doubtless said without a trace of irony. One assumes the present compendium of crimes would be excluded from these volumes as Malley is probably unaware that Obama’s massive semi-covert shit storm in Syria counts as an intervention. And of course he surely believes the regime change war on Libya was defensible as an enlightened humanitarian endeavor. (Were volumes of Emerson’s Self-Reliance airdropped on the seething congeries?)

Whitewashing Crimes, Cribbing Credit

Malley then continues thumping away at his general theme of blaming the victim. He talks of the “manifold conflicts” in the region as essentially products of inequality, lack of political representation, and crucially, “conflict among various subnational groups, defined in ethnic, sectarian, geographic, or ideological terms; and a deep tension among regional powers, most prominently Saudi Arabia and Iran.” Malley calls this “...the backdrop, the starting point.”

This is what 21st century imperial racism looks like. Somehow our role in unearthing or exacerbating Sunni and Shia tensions in both Iraq and Syria; the West’s role in whipping up the region’s modern geographical boundaries atop the ruins of the Ottoman Empire; and our generation-long support for Islamic extremism, are written off as incidental to deeper issues that have everything to do with our rogue behavior in the region.

Against this curtain of chaos, the U.S. prevents the proliferation of WMDs by “ensuring that Iran would not be in a position to develop a nuclear weapon and ridding Syria of its vast chemical weapons arsenal.” Aside from the continuing bluster about Iran, Malley takes credit for relieving Syria of its chemical weapons when it was Russia that made it happen, just as Washington was on the cusp of bombing Damascus. True believers in American exceptionalism, such as Malley, aren’t allowed to depict Moscow in a positive light. They must be caricatured as a cunning imperialists dreaming of trampling Europe beneath their authoritarian jackboots. Not only does this depiction mock history, but it also erodes relations with Moscow and escalates the odds of conflict. Again, the aggressor is elided from the picture.

It is a testimony to the depth of indoctrination among beltway insiders that Mr. Miller seems to think he is challenging Malley by pointing out that the Iran deal would “strain relations with our traditional allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as give rise to the view that Washington wasn’t challenging Tehran in the region out of concern of upsetting the Iranians on the nuclear issue?”

Like a straight man in a comedy act, Malley replies, “It’s a

fair point.” (One can hear him shuffling about in his armchair, marshaling his wits to parry this broadside.) He says Israel would have been less secure with a nuclear-armed Iran. Note what’s of critical importance for Malley here: the security of Israel. Though it has hundreds of nuclear bombs and aggressively polices its borders, though it can attack Syria without fear of retaliation, its security is of paramount importance. The safety of Iran is not considered.

Peacemakers, Inc.

Having successfully warded off the suggestion of presidential weakness, Malley moves back to the more comfortable terrain of self-aggrandizement. His team has evidently pursued “peace processes in Syria, Yemen, and Libya (and)... credible Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.” This is perhaps the most laughable gaffe of the entire interview. Having bombed seven countries in eight years (Libya, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan), Malley would have us believe that the Obama’s is a peacemaking administration. As always, we initiate violence and then publicize feckless negotiations to provide a pretense of peacemaking. Could there be a more anti-peace policy platform than this?

Malley repeatedly comes back to defend the need to “be modest about what we can and cannot do.” By this he is addressing the right wing of Republicans who long for more, let’s be honest, visible military action of the boots on the ground variety. For some it seems that economic colonization just isn’t quite as satisfying as old-school permanent occupation with satraps and lieutenant’s clubs and curiously pregnant villagers (and the occasional Amritsar). But his repeated reference to Washington’s limited reach is an attempt to offset blame for the flaming dumpster fire his efforts have produced.

Notice how Malley has massaged the picture of the Obama administration. He paints it as a trustworthy mediator trying to pacify the conflict, and at the same time contrasts this perception with the more rabid sensibilities of Republican hawks like John McCain. He then completes the picture by contrasting this noble image with the aforementioned vision of a dangerously unhinged Russia. He says we are “testing” the Russians to see if “they mean what they say.”

Yet Malley undermines the very notion that Washington wants peace in the region when he seems to become slightly agitated and rigid, robustly proclaiming, “Let’s be clear: If Russia does not mean what [it says], or if [it] cannot get the regime to do what it must, we will not have sacrificed anything. Support for the opposition will go on, and the regime will not prevail.” He adds that Russia, “...could be sucked into an expanding war, with no shortage of weapons or support for the opposition...”

Here Malley finally concedes the end game. Without Bashar al-Assad’s stepping down—Washington’s precondition for serious negotiations—the war will go on. At the moment, Syria is pushing to take east Aleppo and perhaps bring the

conflict nearly to a close. This would preserve the integrity of the Syrian state and defeat a terrorist network that threatened to capsize it. Ah, but Washington will not permit peace in this way. For the West, peace is never the goal; it is merely a carrot dangled before a besieged enemy as a reward for regime change. In this case, as in most, the enemy is a democratically elected leader with more popular support than Barack Obama himself.

Creating Our Own Reality

Miller closes down the interview by having Malley reassure AIPAC that nothing untoward will happen to disrupt the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Obama won’t be “peddling illusions about resolving the conflict” as he prepares to descend from the throne. Of course, we should all be concerned (pay lip service) about Palestinian “aspirations,” “Israeli settlement activity,” and “the war in Yemen.” Nowhere is there a discussion of the anonymous dead, maimed, and exiled from the seven nations this administration has targeted, or the millions huddled in neighboring lands (Jordan, Turkey) or massed on Europe’s doorstep. They are, as Noam Chomsky called them, paraphrasing George Orwell, the “unpeople” of history.

This is the perspective of our foreign policy brain trust. Cold-blooded, cliché-ridden and convinced of a reality that defies the facts that create it. It is as though by a leap of hubris the Washington establishment decided to perpetrate its own vision of reality, believing that what it proclaimed would bear the stamp of actuality. This is no stretch of the imagination. It is near to what Bush advisor Karl Rove once explained to an aide, “We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.”

The point is the continuity of neoconservatism and a tortured vision of reality that has only gained momentum, despite eight years of halting leadership by a reluctant foot soldier in Barack Obama. We are still charting a course to global dominion, despite the cries of indigent Cassandras and smarting Jeremiads from temporary populists like Bernie Sanders. Whether fueled by a patriotic sense of exceptionalism, a class-based elitism, or blind racism, Washington’s view comes to the same—all for us and none for you. So long as we are led by people who live by a Manichean belief system, by some inflexible binary code, our world will be condemned to conflict and want. Bombs in the sky and blood in the soil. **CP**

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The Quest for Survival Of Grizzly Bears and Bureaucrats

BY JOSHUA FRANK

I've always been attracted to grizzly country, or in other words, I've always been drawn to wilderness. Perhaps there's no way around it, having grown up in Montana it's likely a key strain of my DNA. We don't call it real wilderness in Big Sky Country unless the place is inhabited by grizzlies, or at least what few still remain. Arguably America's greatest apex predator, no animal symbolizes the "wild" more than the grizzly bear, which thrives if given a roaming range of 70-300 square miles for females and up to 500 for males. Of course, humans (read colonial settlers) being attracted to the land of the grizzly is exactly what's put this majestic wandering creature on the verge of extinction today.

Take the case of the Southern California grizzly (*Ursus horribilis*), which up until the late 1800s dominated the state's long southern coastline, where for centuries the great bears scavenged along the region's sprawling rivers and wetlands hoping to snag the once abundant salmon and trout. As Mike Davis writes in *Ecology of Fear*, during a "national orgy" of killing between 1865-1890, upwards of 95% of California's "wild game" was slaughtered. California grizzlies all but vanished during this short span of 25 years, likely the largest wildlife kill-off in history. That's right, before orange groves and orchards began to dominate the dry California landscape, there were grizzlies. Tens of thousands since the Pleistocene age, supported by an abundant, healthy ecosystem.

"In this canyon were seen whole troops of bears; they have the ground all plowed up from digging it to find their sustenance in the roots, which the land produces," Pedro Fages, a Spanish soldier and explorer wrote in his diary in 1769. "They are ferocious brutes, hard to hunt ... They do not give up."

The last known grizzly in So Cal was shot in 1916 by Cornelius Birket Johnson, an industrious fruit farmer living at the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains in north Los Angeles. The hungry bear trampled the man's newly planted vineyard, chomping on his young grapes for three straight nights. Ol' Johnson wasn't about to let the pesky bear get away with such thievery and destruction, so one night he lured the grizzly with a slab of beef and snagged him in a trap, but like all feisty grizzlies, this young guy wouldn't go down easy. Johnson later shot the bear dead after finding it gravely injured, exhausted, bloodied and suffering, having dragged the metal trap far from where it was originally set. Thus, at the hands of Johnson, the extinction of the So Cal grizzly was complete.

It's the same sad story virtually everywhere one looks

across the West. Between the mid-1800s up until the 1920s, grizzlies were killed off in 95% of their native habitat by European settlers in the lower-48. The only bears that survived this period lived in remote, mountainous regions like the Montana wilderness. As David J. Mattson and colleagues write for the National Biological Service, "Unregulated killing of bears continued through the 1950s and resulted in a further 52% decline in their range between 1920 and 1970. Altogether, grizzly bears were eliminated from 98% of their original range in the contiguous United States during a 100-year period."

The numbers are startling. Scientists estimate there were at least 50,000 grizzlies living in the contiguous United States in the mid-1800s. Today that number has dropped to a measly 1,100. Certainly, it's a miracle any grizzlies are alive today at all, and the ones that are continue to live under constant assault. While over-hunting and obscene Western expansionism has worked in tandem to annihilate the grizzly, which was listed as threatened in 1975 by the federal government—climate change is just one of the latest obstacles the bear faces in its quest for survival, despite the fact that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) doesn't believe so.

"[We] conclude that the effects of climate change do not constitute a threat to the [Yellowstone grizzly bear population] now, nor are they anticipated to in the future," the FWS declared in the Federal Register in March, after concluding another "study" on the health of the grizzly in Yellowstone.

Leave it to the paper-pushers at FWS to deny the fact that grizzlies are impacted by our warming climate. Indeed that's exactly what they are doing when it comes to Yellowstone's grizzly bear population. Over 10 years ago the grizzly's most important high-energy food source in Yellowstone, the whitebark pine nut (*Pinus albicaulis*), ceased to exist as winter temperatures rose. Warmer winters, a solid 2 degree rise since the 1970s, allowed pine beetle larva to survive the winter months and mature as summer approached. And we all know the devastation the pine beetle has wrought on Western forests—now these important high-altitude trees are essentially non-functioning and no longer a food source for hungry grizzlies that dig up and munch on these pine cones prior to hibernation. This so-called whitebark blister rust has devastated 143,000 acres in the Northern Rockies. Indeed, the whitebark pine is just one indicator that climate change is forever alternating the fragile Yellowstone ecosystem and the species that depend on it.

Today greater Yellowstone, which comprises of 31,000 square miles, sustains an estimated 600 grizzly bears. That's 1 bear per 52 square miles. FWS actually believes this is a healthy, steadfast number and is working hard to delist the bear, which they've attempted to do for two decades. FWS's own staff initially believed only 16 percent of Yellowstone's whitebark pines were infected by the pine beetle. Therefore, the FWS claimed, the little beetle served no real impediment to the survival of the grizzly. This estimate was later shat-



Photo by Chris Servheen, USFWS.

tered by Dr. Jesse Logan, a decorated entomologist who is the former head of the FWS's bark beetle research team, whose own study suggested that nearly 95 percent of Yellowstone's whitebark pine tree population was impacted. Following Logan's independent analysis, FWS subsequently altered their estimate to 74 percent.

"The whitebark pine is both a foundation and a keystone species," Jesse Logan tells *Scientific America*. "The health of the whitebark pine is very closely related to the health of the entire ecosystem."

When the whitebark pines die off, so does a vital food source for bears. And when grizzlies go for good, there is no returning. Perhaps that's ultimately FWS's intention, despite their claims to have the best interest of the grizzly at heart. If they did actually give a shit, they'd learn from their own past mistakes. In 2007 FWS delisted the Yellowstone grizzly and the move had devastating impacts. In 2008, 54 Yellowstone grizzlies died—37 of which were killed by hunters. It was likely the highest mortality rate of the Yellowstone grizzly in over 40 years.

"Known' mortality is, as a rule of thumb, generally about half of actual grizzly bears dead. A hundred dead bears per year, no matter if the total number in the ecosystem is 200 or 600, means the [Yellowstone grizzly] population is crashing

downhill," writes author and bear advocate Doug Peacock. "This is especially true for the grizzly, one of the world's slowest-reproducing mammals."

Fortunately, in 2009 U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy ruled that Yellowstone's grizzlies were not fully recovered, and cited the whitebark pine die-off as the reason the bears deserved to be protected by the Endangered Species Act once again. One major problem, noted Molloy, was there were no regulatory protections in place if the population began to decline, which clearly was happening.

"Even if the monitoring were enforceable, the monitoring itself does nothing to protect the grizzly bear population," Molloy wrote. "Instead, there is only a promise of future, un-enforceable actions. Promises of future, speculative action are not existing regulatory mechanisms."

Now, FWS argues that it's once again time to strip these bears of their frail legal protection. No matter that the whitebark pine epidemic is far worse than it was ten years ago. No matter that the bear population is essentially the same size as it was in 2007. The delisting a decade ago shows us that the government does not have the capability to manage the delicate balance of grizzlies and their diminishing habitat. In fact, as climate change continues to kill off one of these bear's main food sources, grizzlies will need more and more land to

survive, not less.

Of course bears have no idea humans have drawn arbitrary lines around them, dictating where they are allowed to roam and live. Whitebark pine trees are nearly gone in Yellowstone National Park and won't be returning in our lifetimes. Sure grizzlies are highly intelligent, and will work hard to survive under adverse conditions. But if delisted, FWS will be setting up a major impediment that will forever devastate the grizzly as they face the bloodlust of trophy hunters near the park's boundaries when they leave Yellowstone in search of food and new mates.

By denying that Yellowstone grizzlies are threatened by climate change (or greedy sport hunters for that matter),

FWS is turning its back on science. It's also turning its back on common sense, which it did a long time ago. Delisting the grizzly serves no decent purpose whatsoever. There is no question that history will repeat itself if these short-sighted bureaucrats can pull it off—in this case a history of avoidable extinction.

When we lose grizzlies, we lose wilderness, and when we lose wilderness we lose a piece of ourselves that can't ever be replaced. **CP**

Joshua Frank is the managing editor of *CounterPunch*. His new book, *Heat Stroke: Earth on the Brink*, is co-authored with Jeffrey St. Clair and will be published in early 2017.

A Half-Century of Health and Labor Advocacy

Dan Berman and the Struggles for Workplace Safety

BY SETH SANDRONSKY

Daniel M. Berman, 73, who lives in Davis, California, has been an organizer and writer about occupational safety and workers' rights for almost a half-century. Author of *Death on the Job* (1978) and co-author of *Who Owns the Sun?* (1996), he grew up comfortably just west of Boston. Berman's parents were psychiatrists who met at Bellevue Hospital in New York. His mother voted for Socialist Party of America presidential candidate Norman Thomas in 1936, and campaigned for Henry Wallace as a presidential nominee of the Progressive Party in 1948. He remembers a rally against The Bomb in 1957, and his commitment to social justice continues today. A new edition of *Death on the Job* is underway. This interview took place in-person, and by email and phone.

SETH SANDRONSKY: When did you become a social activist?

DAN M. BERMAN: I joined Freedom Summer in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1964, after graduation from Yale, which was about 97% white and still excluded women. In Mississippi, it was inspiring to see people standing up despite the risks. I worked in Meridian, helping organize meetings in churches and canvassing for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in black neighborhoods. The people we visited knew exactly who we were the second they opened the door.

SS: What impressed you most about the folks you met in Mississippi?

DMB: The true heroes, mostly unsung, were the local African-Americans who risked everything to fight for the freedoms to vote, to walk down the street without kowtowing, and to get their streets paved, to end segregation. When I asked 82-year-old Miss Iola Jones, who put up three of us

white summer volunteers, whether we had her permission to sit on her front steps, she said "I'm not afraid." She told me that when she and her daughter lived alone in the country she used to keep a pistol by her bed. Her neighbor across the street had put up Mickey Schwerner, whom the Klu Klux Klan assassinated, along with James Chaney and Andrew Goodman. Miss Jones was still working as a maid for a white couple, despite her age, because house servants couldn't collect Social Security (a legacy of the New Deal that barred agricultural and domestic workers).

I had wanted to make sure we didn't expose Iola Jones to Klan retaliation, because when we'd sleep in our Congress of Racial Equality office, whites would phone all night and threaten to shoot us when we unlocked the front door at 8 a.m. In another case a deacon in his 60s at a cement block church in one of my precincts was shot in the calf one Friday afternoon. When I went out to investigate, an FBI agent was already on the scene. Neither he nor the local police figured out who had fired the shot. They implied it was a random "accident." But the church decided to end our voter registration classes there.

SS: What propelled you to focus on workplace safety?

DMB: As an undergrad, I had read that race relations in Brazil were somehow more equal than in the United States. But after serving in the Peace Corps at a mental hospital in the late '60s, I realized that their racism took a different form. For one thing, in most of Brazil the working class is largely brown and black, and working people of different colors often intermarry. But Brazilian Census stats showed that black university graduates were extremely rare. Back in the U.S. in

1969, I enrolled in Washington University in St. Louis, in a Ph.D. program in political science. The first semester there I cut my hair short and wore a jacket and tie to class, until I could figure out the lay of the land. After earning two As and a B, I decided to study the politics of environmental issues, correctly assuming very little was written about the subject, and that my professors would leave me alone. Stu Leiderman—a grad student with Barry Commoner, the ecological scientist and later a presidential candidate—urged me to meet up with a Teamsters Local 688 official, and he hooked me up with a group of workers at a lead smelter in nearby Herculaneum who suspected that their inability to get their wives pregnant was caused by lead poisoning at work. For almost two years the St. Joe Mineral Corp had refused to release to smelter workers the results of the blood and urine tests for lead they were obliged to take, despite repeated pleas to management. We got the head of the state industrial inspection service to visit the smelter that winter, and on the Earth Day #1 in 1970 we organized a motorcade through the little town where the company was located, followed up by a well-received educational session by a grad student in Commoner's program at Wash. U. I ended up writing a paper about that situation called "Occupational Disease and Public Policy: The Case of Lead Poisoning in Missouri," the genesis of *Death on the Job*. Ralph Nader (author, consumer advocate and third-party presidential candidate) and scientists and writers with the United Auto Workers, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, and the Teamsters safety department wrote about our method in their newsletters and books. Teamsters union Local 688, which had 13,000 members at 500 shops then, had been banging on the company door in vain to get safety inspections at the St. Joe smelter. The company reduced some of the workers' exposure to lead after we wrote a report discussed the results with smelter workers. All this occurred before the passage of the OSHA act in late 1970.

SS: How did Local 688 workers begin to organize to improve workplace safety?

DMB: We won a new bag house to filter out lead and sulphur dioxide from the air at the smelters. A couple of years later, at the Crane Corp in St. Louis, where they processed red-hot steel panels into heavy-duty pipes for oil and water transport., we put together a participatory investigation of health and safety problems. Art Button, the local union shop steward, helped organize the investigation, and we wrote up the method in a widely distributed pamphlet called "A Job Health and Safety Program on the Limited Budget." We learned that rank-and-file knowledge was essential in breaking the management monopoly on actionable information about hazards and their solutions. The shop stewards at Crane polled the workers in each department about the most important hazards, and it became clear that workers, led by their local leadership, were perfectly capable of figuring out the prob-

lems and helped design solutions. Our work became a model for other plants and their workers to guide investigation and improvement of working conditions. Based on that work I was hired to head up the Occupational Health Project of the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Chicago, and our project, following an idea put forward by MCHR chair Dr. Quentin Young, we held a conference in January 1972 which ended up creating the first COSH group, the Chicago Area Committee for Occupational Safety and Health.

SS: What was the workplace health and safety situation prior to the establishment of OSHA, which began enforcement in April 1971, under President Richard Nixon?

DMB: Before OSHA there was no national mechanism to respond to safety problems on the job, and the business community almost immediately worked to hamstringing the agency politically and legally. In 1978 the Supreme Court's *Barlow* decision—allowed employers to demand a warrant for any OSHA inspection, which created an additional administrative burden and weakened the element of surprise. The OSHA's high point was the administration of Dr. Eula Bingham from 1977-1980 under President Jimmy Carter. Dr. Bingham—responding to union advocacy—conceived and implemented the New Directions program under which thousands of rank-and-file health union health and safety committee members received top-notch training in starting and maintaining local programs to reduce injuries and health hazards. But even during OSHA's salad days, Charles Schultze and Bert Lance, President Carter's top economic advisors, wrote him to propose "totally eliminating most safety regulations and replacing them with some form of economic incentives..." They had trouble imagining any alternatives to market solutions.

Since its heyday under Bingham, the OSHA budget has stalled at around \$550 million in 2015 dollars, while the number of workers rose from 99 million to 151 million. Meanwhile the OSHA inspection force crashed from a 1980 peak of 14.8 per million workers to 5.4 per million this year. Furthermore the labor dream of a consistent and effective national inspection force had been destroyed by a balkanized and inconsistent enforcement system: half the states and a third of the workforce are subject to state inspectors, and enforcement is almost random in its penalties. In 2011 the average penalty for a "serious" violation ranged from \$737 in Washington to \$4,831 in California, and the average total penalty for a fatal injury ranged from \$5,400 in Washington to \$14,179 in California. Penalties were somewhat more consistent in states which retained jurisdiction by federal OSHA. (Surprisingly the union movement in New York State, with the country's highest union density at 24.2 percent in 2011, had a ratio of 72,528 workers per inspector, compared to North Carolina's ratio of 32,054 that same year. North Carolina had the lowest union density in the country at 2.9 percent, one-eighth that of New York State).

The story regarding new health and safety standards is similar. In its first 30 years of OSHA, regardless of who was in the White House, 80 new safety and health standards were passed, an average of over 3.6 standards a year. In the 16 years of the Bush Jr. and Obama administrations, only 12 new standards were passed, an average of 0.75 per year. A harbinger of the decline of the agency occurred when a new ergonomics health standard (which, if enforced, could have eliminated a third of all of serious injuries) was passed in late 2000, after the election of George W. Bush Jr. and a Republican Congress. Three months, Congress repealed the standard, killing a major campaign by the labor union movement. From then on the story is one of stagnation, with occasional exceptions. The crash in OSHA inspectors per worker and in the implementation of new standards seemed to parallel the decline of the labor movement itself, especially in the private sector.

In late 2009 the Obama administration chose Dr. David Michaels to head up the OSHA program in the Department of Labor. Author of the excellent book *Doubt Is Their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health*, he had already had extensive government experience as the designer and chief of a new Department of Energy program already dispersed over \$10 billion to thousands of workers victimized by exposure to radiation, beryllium and other hazards while building nuclear weapons. Michaels is already the longest-serving Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. Under his leadership OSHA he had done his best to ramp up enforcement. Early this year OSHA—after 28 years of foot-dragging, passed a new standard reducing legal limits for exposure to crystalline silica generation during construction and industrial work. Foundry workers and oil drillers are among heavily exposed to silica dust. The new standard was first recommended in essentially its present form back in 1978 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

SS: What factors explain the trajectory of federal OSHA?

DMB: The main factor is the declining power of labor unions, especially in the private sector. The tendency is for unions to put up with certain workplace conditions, given management's proven ability to discipline or fire protesters, to reduce employment, or move plants to low-wage venues. Management clauses in union contracts usually cede control of the production process to management. The role of organized labor is to secure decent wages and is to show up and work. Unions do not want to disturb the peace unless management does something really egregious, and protests and walk-outs are increasingly rare. A rarely discussed issue is the dispersal of in many plants to dozens of different town. The fact that they commute by car means they can't gather to socialize at nearby bars and clubs for drinks after work.

The slow rot continues on other health and safety issues such as workers' compensation. In 2013 Oklahoma—passed a new workers' comp law which allowed employer—as they can

in Texas—to opt out of workers' comp. Fortunately some provisions of the new law were struck down by the courts. The assaults on workers comp and other labor goals follow directions laid down by the American Legislative Exchange Council, a right-wing lobby funded by the Koch brothers. But the AFL-CIO has been slow to deal with state workers' comp issues, since their Federation's comp expert retired without a replacement a number of years ago.

SS: What are strengths and weaknesses of U.S. unions' approach to environmental and energy issues?

DMB: Workers in the fossil energy sectors are naturally afraid of an environmental movement which opposes what they do. The need a real “just transition” to alternatives, as Tony Mazzocchi of the oil workers' union used to point out. The involvement of rank-and-file union members' involvement in workplace safety campaigns is crucial. And they are more likely to succeed where union workers ally themselves with the entire community. A privatized municipal bus company in Washington D. C. which underpaid its workers and skimmed on the maintenance of brakes and doors was forced by a driver-based campaign to clean up its act, according to a recent Labor Notes article, and drivers' wages will soon increase to catch up with their public sector colleagues. The COSH movement—local, mostly usually union-based “Committees on Occupational Safety and Health—is alive and thriving. There are nearly two-dozen chapters affiliated with the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health. COSH groups are based on local labor leadership, but they also work together with many of the Labor Centers which organize mostly non-unionized immigrant workers, especially latinos. Workers' Memorial Day, which counts and calls attention to workers who are fatally injured on the job, generates a good deal of media public interest in health and safety every April, but, says one long-term COSH activist, the effort is a fraction of what is really needed on the margins of a declining labor movement.

Back in the early '70s many of us “New Activists” believed that health and safety might be an important key to the shop-floor revitalization of the labor movement, but that has rarely happened. When push comes to shove, most workers—given their lack of control on the job—prefer “to grunt and sweat under a weary life” and bear the ills they have, as Hamlet might have said, rather than fly to others that they “know not of.” But raising health and safety issues on the job triggers fears of job loss, even among unionized workers. They believe that if they push too hard the boss will make good on the threats to pick up and leave for low-wage “union-free” venues elsewhere. The threat of capital flight plus the job-killing impact of new technology plus the free market über alles doctrines of the masters of the universe in Wall Street and their collaborators in politics and government. This frightening reality has helped drive the electoral successes of both Bernie Sanders

and Donald Trump.

SS: What are recent examples of this trend?

DMB: Federal policies which purport to promote economic development and new jobs often will have the exact opposite effect, and drive workers in targeted industries to fear and loathing of the new technological marvels, and could drive more millions of families, both union and otherwise, to the edge of survival. Government “solutions” promoted by both major parties are aimed at the destruction of even more jobs. And the Obama administration is no exception. This contradictory approach is exemplified by the new craze for driverless cars and trucks. The federal Department of Transportation has been proposing a \$4 billion fund for research and development of driver-less vehicles which will have the ability “to uproot personal mobility as we know it,” as if Americans really dislike driving. Real implementation may start with over-the-road 18-wheelers on the interstates and freeways and turnpikes, because these highways have traffic patterns which are more predictable than local traffic on local roads. At least for now. Supposedly the magical new vehicles will be safer, once the “nut behind the wheel” is replaced by flawless, non-hackable computers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) there were about 1.8 million long-haul truckers in 2015 and they earned a bit over \$40,000 per year (about \$20 an hour) on average, with employment predicted to increase 5 percent a year in the short term. According to the BLS there were about 1.3 million delivery truck drivers in the U.S. in 2015, and their numbers were increasing at about 4 percent a year. They earned on average a bit over \$13 an hour or almost \$28,000 per year. There is nothing particularly easy about being an over-the-road driver of an 18-wheeler or a local delivery driver, but a job is a job. I used to drive a delivery truck for a San Francisco dress company and it paid the bills.

SS: Why get rid of three million drivers?

DMB: Because they can! Replacing the pay of over three million drivers with hi-tech systems could shift \$100 billion a year to the creators and owners of the new technology. That’s why Google, Apple, General Motors, Lyft and others are promoting this new approach. But there will be many bumps on the road before the drivers can be driven out. Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey, according to an article in The Atlantic, could not induce either Google or GM to tell him how an information system which would record every utterance and destination of the driver would preserve the privacy of drivers and other travelers. And what about safety issues? A couple of driverless cars have already killed their passengers. And when they perfect the “driverless truck,” what the hell will happen to those three million men and women who earn their keep moving goods around? And does anyone really believe, after all the hacking of “top secret” government and

corporate information systems., that the new self-driving systems be immune from hacking? And what about 200 million other drivers on the road? Though the DOT didn’t ask the Teamsters’ opinion, President Jimmy Hoffa Jr. says it’s “not going to happen...Can you imagine all of them crashing at the same time?” But no one asked him, even though he’s the head of a giant union with 1.3 million members....and the Obama administration’s Democratic party supposedly tilts toward the labor unions.

SS: What are other critics saying about this job-killing automaton and computerization?

DMB: Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor during Bill Clinton’s first term, recently pointed out “why we’ll need a universal basic income,” since millions of retail workers drivers are being to be replaced by the likes of Amazon, in addition to millions of drivers, and that’s just for starters.

SS: In Capital, Marx cited government inspectors’ reports on workplace health and safety over 150 years ago in England. When did you begin to read Marx?

DMB: I’m no expert. I first studied the Communist Manifesto in a class as a freshman in political science, and I’ve read Engels’ The Condition of the Working Class in England. His analysis of the links between shortened life spans and filthy jobs and living conditions impressed me tremendously.

SS: What do you advocate for to improve occupational health and safety in and out of the workplace?

DMB: We need to provide more public information, compensation for the workplace victims, and we need to humiliate and incarcerate more corporate criminals for crimes against the workers and nature. A group of us Yale alumni—in solidarity with a demand of an Italian asbestos victims’ group—have been campaigning for years to force the Yale Corporation to revoke a “Doctorate of Humane Letters” it granted to Stephan Schmidheiny, a Swiss asbestos-cement billionaire who was convicted of environmental mayhem for the deaths of mesothelioma of over 2,000 workers and citizens in Northern Italy caused by his Eternit Company factory. Schmidheiny got off on appeal by a technicality, but the new prosecutor has begun a trial for murder for the continued deaths of about 50 people a year from this always fatal cancer of the lining of the lungs which from asbestos exposures. If Schmidheiny is convicted and sentenced, there will be no appeal, because there is no statute of limitations for murder.

Judges and juries need to start jailing those responsible for workplace fatalities and environmental crimes, as they sometimes have done in Bangladesh and Italy. That is almost unthinkable in today’s United States. And everybody in the labor movement has to start thinking again about the need to shorten the workweek spread around the jobs and income and use technology and the organization of work to make life

more civilized and enjoyable. The slogan of the shorter work-week 130 years ago was “Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours for what we will!” That dream cannot be separated from the movement for safe and health working lives.

SS: How can OSHA improve?

DMB: So far as OSHA is concerned, safeguards must be strengthened to make it impossible for workers who file an OSHA complaint or otherwise “blow the whistle” on reasonable grounds to be punished. During the second term of Bush Jr., molecular biologist Becky McClain was doing research at a Pfizer lab in Connecticut when a virus she was exposed to made her sick. Becky filed an OSHA complaint to exercise her right-to-know the genetic sequence of the virus, but, she says, OSHA ruled it a “trade secret,” and she was quickly fired, and she never got her job back. So Becky filed a whistleblower lawsuit in federal court. In April 2010 she won \$1.37 million in damages, a judgment which was sustained on appeal. Eventually Pfizer paid up and Becky and her husband left for New Mexico. “I just can’t understand,” says Becky, “why we have to fight for common sense safety rights.”

In San Francisco, Darrell Whitman, an attorney with OSHA Region 9, claims he was harassed and ultimately fired from his job as a whistleblower attorney excessively vigorous representation of workers who had been fired for filing OSHA complaints. Now, his union, the American Federation of Government Employees, has assigned its top attorney to litigate his case. Clearly OSHA’s very essence depends on the rights of workers to file an OSHA complaint and complaint without retaliation. Everything else is secondary.

Perhaps it is time for more ordinary people as well as activists to start thinking and fighting for a different world where people no longer fear for their lives and sanity in order to keep their jobs and livelihoods. Maybe people should work to live rather than live to work, which can become a form of slavery. In 1896, ten years after Chicago’s world-famous 8-hour-a-day strike, Anton Chekhov, the great Russian writer, put the following words into the mouth of one of his characters: “Imagine that we invent machines which will take the place of physical labor, and imagine that we reduce our requirements to the minimum; none of us would have to work more than two or three hours a day...what a lot of free time we would have after all, [to] devote to science and art...” Maybe it is time for the labor movement to once again begin to address why we spend so much time earning a living, and to demand that the fruits of productivity increases be spread around to benefit everybody instead of just the lords of the universe on Wall Street and their acolytes in politics, who who so many of us in thrall. **CP**

NOTE FOR ACTIVISTS: *The National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, with members from COSH groups and unions around the country will be holding its annual*

conference on December 6–8 this year near the BMI Airport. Many of the issues addressed in this interview will be on the agenda. The Special Guest at the conference will be Dr. David Michaels, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. Visit www.coshnetwork.org.

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The Radiated Pacific Fukushima’s Oceanic Impact

BY ROBERT HUNZIKER

Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant remains a deadly out-of-control highly radioactive force that humankind has never encountered before. It is a Frankenstein monster on both land and at sea that knows no end and authorities do not have answers. Nobody knows what to do other than wait it out... forever? Meanwhile, its highly radioactive deadly isotopes populate the world.

The impact of 300 tons of radioactive water per day spewing into the Pacific Ocean for over 5 years is unknown (P.S. the newly constructed ice wall is failing to hold back the water). Fukushima is similar to a brand-new experiment that takes years to fully understand because radioactive water spewing into the ocean at such an enormous flow has never happened before in human history. Who knows what the impact will be because radiation is a “silent killer” that bides its time before striking with deadly force. But assuredly over time, several radioisotopes like cesium-137 do deadly damage. Just give it a few years to strut its stuff in full living (deathly) color. Unless, as claimed by some, Fukushima’s radiation is so diluted in the ocean that it is relatively harmless.

There is much speculation as well as professional studies extant about whether Fukushima will be a mass killer or only kill a few as it has already done despite Japanese authorities and nuclear advocates claiming “no deaths” or “so few it makes no difference” (Nukeheads).

There have definitely been deaths from too much radiation exposure in Japan, as confirmed by a former nurse from TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Co.), independent journalists Mako Oshidori of *Free Press Corp/Japan*, a Buddhist monk Hideaki Kinoshita, who stores “decontamination troops” cremation ashes, and politicians like Futaba Mayor Katsutaka Idogawa, quoted in an April 21, 2014 RT interview: “It’s a real shame that the authorities hide the truth from the whole world, from the UN. We need to admit that actually many people are dying. We are not allowed to say that, but TEPCO employees also are dying. But they keep mum about it,” as

well as deaths (some from leukemia) of 7 young U.S. sailors that participated in Operation Tomodachi, a humanitarian effort at Fukushima.

A recent article in *Zerohedge* claims: “Fukushima Radiation Has Contaminated the Entire Pacific Ocean.” This may or may not be true, depending. In point of fact, there has been radioactive contamination, as the world watches tons upon tons of radioactive water flow into the ocean. The only question remains how badly contaminated, a little or a lot.

If in fact it is true that the entire Pacific Ocean is contaminated, a lot and not a little, then life on Earth will never be the same. It will be nightmarish and miserable for a host of dreadful reasons. But, Fukushima’s impact is likely very difficult to calculate. After all, the Pacific averages a depth of 2 miles and covers 30% of Earth’s surface. It is the planet’s largest mass and bigger than the total size of all the continents put together. Accurate measurement of radioactivity in the ocean implies a monumental study over many years.

After all, radiation can be tricky, as for example, deadly cesium pooling has been discovered at the base of 10 major dams in Japan, e.g., Ganbe Dam with 64,439 Becquerel’s per kilogram, Yoyokawa Dam at 27,533 Bq/kg and Mano Dam with 26,859 Bq/kg. Japan’s Environment Ministry safe limit for “designated waste” is set at 8,000 Bq/kg (Source: “High Levels of Radioactive Cesium Pooling at Dams Near Fukushima Nuke Plant, The Mainichi,” *Japan’s National Daily*, Sept. 26, 2016).

As an aside, one gram of radioactive cesium-137 (about half the size of a dime) contains 88 Curies of radioactivity. 104 Curies of radioactive cesium-137, spread evenly over one square mile of land, will make it uninhabitable for more than a century” (Source: Comments on Draft of Nuclear Waste Administration Act of 2013, Physicians for Social Responsibility, May 23, 2013). Cesium-137 is deadly toxic to the human body.

The dams hold drinking water and provide agricultural usage. Surface readings at the 10 dams runs 1-2 Becquerel’s per liter of cesium, which is below the drinking water safety criteria of 10 Bq. Therefore, the dams continue to be used for drinking water and agriculture even though excessive levels of deadly cesium have accumulated at the bottom, which the authorities seem to accept as a way of life in the unnerving world of radiation exposure.

This therefore begs the question of whether it is possible to accurately measure the impact of Fukushima’s 300 tons/day of radioactive water into the ocean. If dams collect radioisotopes, then how about the ocean which is miles deep?

“While the total amount of cesium deposited at the bottom of those dams is unknown from the environment ministry’s survey, a separate study conducted at Ogaki Dam in the town of Namie by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries’ Tohoku Regional Agricultural Administration Office estimated in December 2013 that there was a com-

bined 8 trillion Becquerel’s of cesium 134 and cesium 137 at the dam. The figure came about after estimating the amount of accumulated cesium every 10-meter-square area based on cesium levels in sedimentary soil sampled at 110 locations at the bottom of the dam, which is for agricultural use,” Ibid.

What then happens to the deadly cesium accumulating at the bottom of dams? Nobody has any fast and easy answers, but by default, governmental officials have decided: “At the moment, it is best to contain cesium at those dams. If we dredge it, the substance could curl up and could contaminate rivers downstream,” said an Environment Ministry official,” Ibid.

So, deadly cesium remains at the bottom of dams, and nobody knows what to do or whether anything should be done at all. How about them apples?

Similar to the 100% nuclear meltdowns at plants 1, 2, and 3 where deadly radioactive corium (the melted cores) have somehow disappeared to “who knows where,” officials do not know what to do next with massive quantities of radiation at the bottom of drinking water dams. To put it mildly, this is disturbing news but not a major news story fit for widespread print, yet- hmm.

Sea animals have been either dissolving (sea stars) or dying (whales and salmon and many, many others) by bunches over the past few years in the Pacific. Nobody has yet specifically pointed the finger at the causes, whether natural or not, but the scope of deaths is amazing.

For example, in April 2015, 160 dolphins beached themselves and died 50 miles from Fukushima. The necropsies showed ischemia or white lungs, which is linked to radiation poisoning, but the cause of death is not definitive yet. The chief scientist claims, “I have never seen this before” (Dr. Reese Halter, Dying Whales, Horrific Omen, *The Huffington Post*, Jan. 20, 2016).

Still, the most reputable sources for radiation testing like Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (senior scientist Ken Buesseler) and Jay Cullen, associate professor of ocean sciences at the University of Victoria and scientists at Berkeley (Kai Vetter, professor of nuclear engineering) and California State University (Steve Manley, professor of biology) who runs KelpWatch, in general, claim: “The biggest health impact from Fukushima has been the psychological impact (Vetter).” (Source: “The West Coast is Still Safe From Fukushima Radiation,” NovaNext, PBS, October 16, 2015)

There may, however, be a deeper problem, which is bioaccumulation or the proverbial “devil in the details.”

Ocean radiation health concerns for humans are not necessarily confined to tests along the surface water or to depth, but rather, long-term health risk may relate to the bio-magnification of radioisotopes, like cesium-137, in the food chain.

Similar to massive deposits of cesium enriched material found at the bottom of dams, radioisotopes accumulate

in algae as the 1st step in the food chain, thereafter bio-concentrating and magnifying up the food chain to micro organisms, to small fish, to larger fish, to people. Even very low levels of radiation are thusly bio-concentrated and magnified up the food chain to people. This is the real problem with Fukushima's tons upon tons of radioactive water into the ocean. It stealthily works its way up the food chain over time, magnifying its intensity along the way. If in fact, this proves to be a major problem over time, by the time it is fully understood, it could be too late. The damage may be largely done.

Bioaccumulation of radiation within the food chain gets very little if any press, but at the end of the day, it may be King Mutagen. As for example: "The potential radioactive contamination of seafoods through bioaccumulation of radioisotopes (i.e. 137Cs) in marine and coastal food webs are issues of major concern for the public health of coastal communities. While releases of 137Cs into the Pacific after the Fukushima nuclear accident are subject to high degree of dilution in the ocean, 137Cs activities are also prone to concentrate in marine food-webs... the 137Cs activities predicted in the male killer whale were 6.0 to 182 times 137Cs activities in its major prey (Chinook salmon)" (Source: Juan José Alava University of British Columbia—Vancouver, et al, A Marine Food Web Bioaccumulation Model for Cesium 137 in the Pacific Northwest, Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) No. America 32nd Annual Meeting November 2014).

That study showed a bioaccumulation magnification of up to 182 times as it moves up the food chain. That alone appears to be a deadly serious problem, but not a juicy newsworthy story at this early juncture of radioisotope accumulation within the food chain. It takes years to show up in humans.

On the other hand, reputable scientists claim, as explained in an earlier paragraph, the ocean has successfully absorbed the radiation impact without serious consequences, whilst cautioning it must be monitored. According to those scientists, it is okay to eat seafood from the Pacific and swim/surf in the water.

Still in all, it seems almost too coincidental with massive animal deaths occurring all across the Pacific smack dab in the footsteps of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Here's an astute observation that covers all bases: "The warm water [global warming] is killing off bottom-of-the-food-chain species like plankton and krill, allowing poisonous algal blooms to spread and encouraging a starfish disease to turn into an epidemic... Meanwhile, industrial and radioactive waste from the Japanese tsunami in 2011 and the dumping of modern chemical and agricultural debris are combining with a monster El Nino to push existing species to the brink of extinction," (Source: "Massive Die Off of Ocean Animals Turning Pacific Ocean Into Desert, Go See Them Now Before They're Extinct," *Inquisitr*, August 2, 2015).

Therefore, the operative question becomes whether the

primary killing force of sea life is Fukushima radiation alone or a cocktail of anthropogenic causes like Ag-runoff, overfishing, chemicals, trash, and global warming combined with too much deadly radiation? It is likely the combo of factors.

In the end, it is possible the Fukushima nuclear meltdown may go down in the record books as one of the biggest disasters in Earth's history. So far, it is way too early to tell, but the signals are not good. Three complete nuclear meltdowns aka: The China Syndrome three-times still out of control is all one needs to know. It's as strange and unexpected as The Twilight Zone.

After all, consider this, 30 years after the fact horribly deformed Chernobyl Children are found in over 300 asylums in Belarus backwoods deep in the countryside. As of today, Chernobyl radiation (since 1986) is already affecting 2nd generation kids.

According to *USA Today*, Chernobyl's Legacy: Kids With Bodies Ravaged by Disaster, April 17, 2016: "There are 2,397,863 people registered with Ukraine's health ministry to receive ongoing Chernobyl-related health care. Of these, 453,391 are children—none born at the time of the accident. Their parents were children in 1986. These children have a range of illnesses: respiratory, digestive, musculoskeletal, eye diseases, blood diseases, cancer, congenital malformations, genetic abnormalities, trauma."

Postscript: Recent studies confirm "Exposure to low levels of radiation can cause cancer," specifically: "No matter whether people are exposed to protracted low doses or to high and acute doses, the observed association between dose and solid cancer risk is similar per unit of radiation dose" (Source: British Medical Journal, Press Release, Low Doses of Ionizing Radiation Increase Risk of Death from Solid Cancers, International Agency for Research on Cancer, WHO, Oct. 21, 2015). **CP**

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An Uncounted Army Forging Consensus in a Fractured Age

BY ALENA WOLFLINK

"Politics," argues French philosopher Jacques Rancière in his *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, "arises from a count of community parts, which is always a false count" or a "miscount." So it is only fitting that on November 8, 2016, we realized we had been subject to a miscount of epic proportions. Poll averages had shown Clinton ahead by at least 3.4 percentage points the entire campaign only to see their numbers in many states essentially invert. FiveThirtyEight

downgraded its Clinton win probability from 64% to 52% and then fell silent. The stock market ticker in the corners of our television screens dipped until the financiers realized their miscalculation, and then their earnings began to pile in.

With them, a new white working class asserted their rightful place on the political stage. Having declared their support for the president elect, they brought themselves into being as a voting bloc. “Why had they not been counted before,” we all wondered, as we watched Clinton’s vaunted “blue wall” crumble. Early voting data, exit polls, probability estimates, turnout trackers—all of our fancy statistical tools failed us. The hidden white voters of post-industrial, post-union America, barely thought to be anything more than a shadowy mirage, stalked fully into the light and seized their part.

Rancière would have found this event familiar. A former student of Louis Althusser with a bent towards understanding popular uprisings, he argued that the very emergence of political categories always recreates their world. Politics, for Rancière, is about the “part of those who have no part.” It is the conjuring into existence of new communities and ways of being in the world that were previously excluded or ignored in political discourses. It is not, for him, “the exercise of power” but is rather a “paradoxical” mode of political action in which one is “at once the agent of an action and the one upon whom

control a significant voter turnout operation, and was not, in any sense, strategizing about capturing particular groups of voters. Instead, like any good demagogue, he toured the country giving speeches and repeated whatever got a response. The Trump model of electoral politics is readily amenable to the self-constitution of political communities. His was a call that resonated with a group of people with shared experiences, regardless of whether any of them had communicated with one another about their commonalities.

In many ways, Democrats have taken precisely the opposite approach. They identified preexisting interests within well-established demographic categories, and catered to them—“microtargeting” female voters with pro-choice legislation, black voters with community investment, and Latino voters with a progressive stance on immigration policy. They also appealed to a general interest, asserting that we would be “Stronger Together.” Clinton’s advertising famously pushed the idea that Americans would unite to condemn Trump’s offensive campaign.

Politics, for Rancière, is that which “breaks” with established orders. It is any activity which “reconfigures” or “shifts” things such that it “makes visible that what had no business being seen.” However, the second a dispute is recognized and its subject(s) thereby brought into being, it becomes part of the hierarchies that are antithetical to politics, suggesting that pol-

“Trump’s strategy was the one which was open to hitting the right nerves in the right people at the right time.”

the action is exercised.” In other words, in voting for Trump, these voters not only acted and exercised power in electoral politics, but subjected themselves to a certain action—to the formation of a group of working class white people who will show up to vote for a particular type of candidate.

Which is not to say that this version of the white working class spontaneously appeared on the political stage. There were certainly precedents for their emergence. They were in fact important members of Obama’s 2008 coalition, whose contributions were overshadowed by that year’s assertion of the “Rainbow Coalition” of young, racially diverse voters. Many of these areas had been assumed to be decided voters due to their long history of union-organized Democratic support, without any consideration for the effects that deindustrialization, right-to-work legislation, and general union weakness may have had on that loyalty. 40% of the “missing white vote,” after all, was between the ages of 18 and 24, and likely never directly experienced the effects of unionization in their own lives.

But Trump also did not see this coming. He did not

itics is only ever a temporary event. Once one is recognized, one is part of the existing order, and thus incorporated into the system of oppression. Politics, then, is only ever temporary.

There is therefore also a way in which Rancière’s “politics” is always a relational, displaced kind of politics. In turning up to vote, this community brought not only itself into being, but also a new category of precarious peoples—the black and brown, queer, and non-male bodies that are and should be afraid—a group of people unified by fear. We could leave it at that, and say that taking a political opportunity to say “we exist” will always entail an othering of those that are not part of that “we.” But there is a political opportunity here, which Rancière points towards, and which these voters enacted—a political opportunity to stretch those understandings of who that “we” is to include those that it evidently is not. This is because Rancière’s dichotomy between “politics” and the mechanisms of everyday affairs also works to create commonalities that had not previously existed—as he describes it, to be “together to the extent that we are in between.”

Commonality over shared oppression is not a new idea, of

course—who can forget “*Workers of the World, Unite!*” But where Rancière’s thinking on this type of politics takes us is enticing. Whether because of the failings of the Democratic electoral strategy, increasingly individualized and polarized media, or the collapse of collective social venues, appeals to shared interests have not worked. (Which is not to say we should not keep trying that avenue.) But Rancière’s thinking also points us to another route to seek, which is the search for commonality over unanticipated difference, over the thing that makes us together that we are not yet aware of, or that we have not yet articulated. Counterintuitively, his is a call to find not only the obvious points of commonality (after all, the call to unite in our common humanity for climate change has had limited success) but to find the ways in which we have not yet even imagined we might be common. To put it bluntly—we need what political theorist Samuel Chambers describes as an impossible politics or, a politics of the impossible—a being in common that cannot really exist, but therefore cannot be stopped.

Finding the ways in which our disunity, dissensus, and fragmentation can be the thing that holds us together may feel like a heavy burden, and even more so when we are already weighed down by crushing defeat. After all, how do you assemble an electoral coalition out of an impossible strategy? And yet if there is one thing we learned from this election, it is that a politics of impossibility is exactly what the Democratic Party needs to win. After all, just a few days ago, nobody, not even Donald Trump’s own pollsters, thought his campaign could succeed. Trump set up the conditions that allowed a new class to organize as an electoral bloc that did not imagine itself as existing even as it acted in concert to upend the desires of nearly the entire American elite class. After all, this was a group of voters that before this fateful evening had not been counted—had not counted themselves—as voters. Trump’s strategy, though by no means guaranteed to win any specific combination of voters, was the one which was open to the possibility of hitting the right nerves in the right people and in the right places.

What we can learn from this is that we need not dream up those impossibilities—we need only create the conditions for people—all people—to organize based on commonalities that are not evident to them. In addition to continuing to appeal to our common interests, we also need to create a space for the kind of unpredictable allegiances that emerge from the meeting of several minds. Which means that in addition to all of the directly political work we are doing to regain power in 2018, we need to create community-based groups for which there is no strategic purpose—ones that simply bring different people together in ways that allow them to organically generate new categories. An impossible electoral coalition can only be one that is not predefined in advance of election day and lured out with specific appeals. It is one that votes itself into existence, and in so doing, creates and

constitutes itself. **CP**

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Policing and Gentrification in America

Incident in Venice Beach

BY RUTH FOWLER

When Officer Rios slammed my head against the metal fence of the Headstart preschool on Seventh Avenue and Broadway, my son, who was already crying hysterically, started outright screaming, a long animal wail I hadn’t heard from him before. The male officer holding him jiggled him up and down awkwardly, just five feet away from me, as if unaware the proximity to the horrors was even worse than anything else. My son’s arms were outstretched, his dirty, snotty face confused and pained. I kept saying the same thing, “Give me my son. Give me my son. Please give me my son,” but instead Rios would tighten the cuffs and take each exhausted plea as an invite to push my head a little harder into the wall. A black woman from the Section 8 housing at the North-West corner came up to me. “She ain’t gone let you go ‘less you calm down.” “Give me my son,” I responded. “Stop cryin’. They makin’ it worse for you because you cryin,’” and then she sauntered off. “Don’t say I didn’t tole you,” she shrugged over her shoulder. I yelled to the gathering crowd to take pictures, to get out their phones, to record this, to bear witness, to do something...

Instead, at 4pm one hot baked afternoon in Oakwood Park, just two blocks from my home in Venice Beach, the crowd watched because real life is cheaper than cable. They watched as Officer Rios twisted my arm behind me and smashed my skull into the fence. They watched as my child screamed, louder and higher and more hysterical with each passing second. Cars slowed down, took pictures, sped off, and people snickered loudly and took bets on what I’d done. Child abuse or dealing meth? Crazy homeless person or drug addict?

The truth was far less interesting. I’d done little more than ride my bicycle into my local park. I’d stopped to get off, unstrap my toddler from the trailer, and while I was occupied with him, my four pound chihuahua jumped out. My son raced across the (gated) park while I ran after the dog, and before I could locate either, Officer Rios had spotted me and was heading over bellowing, “You! Don’t move!”

A plain, short, heavy forty-something female cop with graying black shoulder length hair pulled back into a ponytail, a large nose and a sour temper, moments earlier Office

Rios had been lurking near a small crowd of black folk sitting playing dominoes and shooting the shit with each other in a part of the park which had long been known as a meeting space for the local black community. The LAPD liked this side of the park. Rich pickings. Roll by and guaranteed there'll be someone here with a joint, a tallboy in a paperbag, an outstanding warrant, the wrong skin color. The wrong skin color is black. Rios had been talking to a man called Lovelle and his buddies, who'd been teasing her about the size of her ears. "She was pissed," Lovelle tells me later, chuckling. "She was pissed because we was makin' fun of her ears - you seen them big ears? - and she wanted to take it out on someone, and then you walked in."

And then I walked in.

Everyone stopped and stared, curious, as Officer Rios walked over to me. The cops rarely bother the white folks here, so when they do it becomes a point of curiosity.

Rios is one of the 'Oakwood' cops—a member of the Pacific Division of the LAPD operating predominantly, though not exclusively, in and around Oakwood Park, headed up by an Officer called Kristan Delatori, a tall, heavy blonde in her forties I'd met the week before. Oakwood Park is what the LAPD consider a targeted gang area, and as such, it was placed under one of the LAPD's notorious 'gang injunctions', a pronouncement that public gatherings of two or more adults and teens in public places is illegal on the grounds that this behavior is typical of gang members and encourages illegal activity. The names of the 'gang' members are top secret and held on a 28 year old police database, CalGang, which, according to a 2013 report called 'Tracked and Trapped' by the Youth Justice Coalition of Los Angeles, lacks both transparency and accountability, and frequently targets the wrong people. According to Ana Muñoz, "Over 200,000 people across California are on the Cal Gang database, including one in ten of all African-Americans between the ages of 20 and 24 in Los Angeles County. There are people as young as 10 years old in the CalGang Database." In reality, the injunctions and the associated databases unnecessarily target black, brown and low income people who are more likely to socialize in communal public spaces such as parks. In Venice specifically, it targets the black community who have used Oakwood park as a community space for decades before ghost town became the haunt of SnapChat, and rents and property prices skyrocketed. Just a week or so before I encountered Officer Rios, the Oakwood cops had detained, harassed and then arrested a group of innocuous black elders who had gathered at the park to play Dominoes and celebrate someone's birthday, citing the gang injunction as a reason for doing so.

Oakwood Park has consequently deteriorated rapidly over the last decade from a community meeting space for local people of color, into a hub for the predominantly white middle classes, offering expensive private children's classes

such as "Super SoccerStars" which run pre and elementary school soccer programs on a daily basis. A local kickball group comprised of young twenty-something employees from local businesses meet one or two evenings a week to play music, drink, smoke weed, kick ball. White people come to walk their dogs in the park every morning and every evening, preferring it to the dog park on Westminster Avenue and Pacific which is usually dirty, overpopulated with aggressive, un-fixed pitbulls and more importantly - is next to a parking lot full of people who live in their RV's, a despised section of society in Venice Beach. Mostly, the cops leave the gentrifiers—of whom I am one—alone. Ironically, just six days before I was cuffed, detained, beaten and cited for having my four pound dog off leash for less than thirty seconds, local activist, sixth generation Venetian and single mother and grandmother Laddie Williams had called out the LAPD for precisely this, writing publicly: "Why is that we cannot come to the park and enjoy the facility? We are always harassed, but the White people come in with dogs off leash everyday all day and nothing is done, that is a law that is being broken all the time. The kickball people come and drink alcohol, smoke weed and we never see LAPD coming in to Oakwood park to harass or arrest any of them, but when people of color come into Oakwood we are harassed and harangued all the time. We ask where is the justice in that?"

The move to sanitize Oakwood Park has not entirely worked. While the soccer moms and weekend dads cruise up on Saturday mornings still clutching their Gjelina coffees, in the week Oakwood community center still offers after school programs for local children from elementary and high schools, a few classes and summer camps, and free meals for the elderly in the Community. White mommies and their nannies use the playpark on the southern end between 10 and noon but steer clear of the community center and its inhabitants, while the black community members have been pushed further north towards the picnic tables and BBQ's bordering Broadway. Officers such as Rios, and her superior, Delatori, spend their days driving aimlessly around the park stopping and detaining local youth, like my neighbor, Anthony Powell. Anthony's a chubby, smiling, funny black kid in his thirties. I say kid because Anthony is still some way from becoming an adult. Sometimes he'll roll past wearing horrific dayglo hoodies and bright plastic jaunty glasses, sneakers which dazzle you. His 100 year-old grandfather owns a lot of real estate in Venice Beach, real estate which he rents out, and which his vast extended family of kids and grandkids and nephews and nieces occupy. Some Venice residents call Mr. Powell the black Donald Trump of Venice, which seems unfair because unlike Mr. Trump, Mr. Powell has always been profitable, has never been divorced and would probably make a better President. I met Anthony shortly after having my son in December 2013. I'd been living in Venice for several years, but had only just moved onto Westminster Avenue a

few months previously when heavily pregnant. I was waddling around the streets with my three week old son and my mother in law, pushing my baby around in an ugly lime green bassinet, still wearing stitches and those thick concrete sanitary towels they give you in hospital, when I turned a corner to find two white police officers had Anthony and two of his friends pushed up against the fence of one of Mr Powell's properties. Their hands were cuffed. The boys sagged their heads, defeated, tired, bored of this.

Only a month before I gave birth I'd walked outside at midnight to check why three helicopters were circling overhead and found three teenage boys cuffed against my garden gate. Turn out they'd been arrested for 'breaking into' their own home after one of the kids forgot their key. Even after this came out, the cops kept them cuffed for an hour. I'd sat outside and filmed the whole thing, and then left my phone in the freezer in an act of pregnant insanity and deleted the recording when trying to defrost it.

This time, I resolved not to do the same. I asked the po-

They chose me.

I rolled into the U.S. ten years ago a fairly privileged white girl expecting to find—well, not this. Not this astronomical, unholy fucked up mess, a country where a police officer is so tightly wound and so afraid of a black man, that he fabricates a reason to stop his car and execute him in front of his girlfriend and a four year old in broad daylight. Not where an unresponsive man suffering from a stroke is tasered and pepper-sprayed before police will try and engage him in conversation. Not where a man's car breaks down and he's shot in the back with his hands in the air. Not where a man wins the Presidency by promising to build a wall to keep out Mexican rapists, deport all undocumented immigrants and ban all muslims. Not this, not this, not this.

I know what the police do in America to people who don't look like me, but I also know that when you get into the system, when you are marked out in someway as vulnerable - you become a target. You become an example.

I was tired and emotional the day the police stopped me,

“When you are marked out in someway as vulnerable —you become a target. You become an example.”

liceman why they were detaining Anthony and his friends, and they told me to “Move along”. I told the policemen they'd better figure out what they were doing as fucking with them, not formally detaining them, not formally arresting them, just holding them hostage, publicly, one sunny afternoon in January, was neither fair nor legal. I got out my phone, I turned it on record, and I asked the cops again why they were detaining my neighbors right outside their home in cuffs.

Anthony came by later to say thanks. He said I was the first white person who'd ever criticized the police, and we became friends after that. I'd see him around, sitting in his car like a teenager, blasting tunes, his tiny little white fluffy dog, Biscuit, yapping in the back. Anthony was always slightly stoned, always courteous, always smiling. He left Venice and his family after a year. He said he'd been harassed by the cops too many times, and he couldn't cope with being shaken down three times a week. He moved to Mar Vista for a year or so, and then eventually came back to live on another street just a block or so from his large extended family.

Some local activists say this is what the police want: to make black residents lives so miserable they'll eventually leave, sell up, or vacate their rent fixed apartments. Either way, their absence makes space for more desirable residents with lighter skin and more money.

On Thursday October 22nd 2015, the cops chose someone else to make miserable.

a single mother with no money going through a grueling custody battle. I was an easy target and it was clear within minutes of stopping me that I was frightened and fragile, that I was scared when they picked up my child, and that I had accepted their power. My tears had become the source of more mocking from Rios. “Are you mentally unstable?” she kept asking. “Do you need your meds?” As I cried during this entire thirty minute ordeal, a black woman from the projects came up to me and said in a bored tone, “You gotta stop cryin’. They makin’ it worse for you because you cryin’.” And she was right. Had I shown no panic, no emotion, no fear, not said a thing, they would still have made my son cry, they would still have tortured me, but it would have ended sooner.

Eventually an Australian woman named Jann came out to ask the police to stop. I could hear her as I was facing the wall. This is what she sent me later:

I was driving along 7th and went past as a lot of cops were doing something on the right hand side of the street. What I saw was you being banged up against a fence by big cops and your child being held by another cop and screaming. It looked like you were being bullied, it was shocking and unpleasant to see. I didn't stop, went on to Oakwood. I dropped my son off at soccer and circled back, by which time you were sitting on the ground surrounded by even more cops. I went up to ask what was going on and rolled on my iPhone while I went up—I didn't frame it, just rolled

so most of what you see is feet and you can hear the Sgt explaining.

Lloyd Yates, a local resident in his fifties, saw the entire incident, and admitted he thought I was dealing drugs the way the police were acting. He'd never seen them treat a white woman like that before. Black women, sure. But this was something else.

Lovelle filmed the whole thing on his phone. He said that Rios took the phone and destroyed it later. A latino guy drinking tall boys from a paper bag said he had a beef with her himself. He was saving up for a lawyer, because she'd arrested him without cause. She was known around here, he said, because she was mean, and she was rough, and she went after people.

They let me go that day with a ticket. Ostensibly it was for having my dog off the leash, but when I passed the ticket onto a criminal attorney called John Raphling, he pointed out that they had given me not only a ticket for having my dog off leash, but a warning for penal code 148, which states:

Every person who willfully resists, delays, or obstructs any public officer, peace officer, or an emergency medical technician, as defined in Division 2.5 (commencing with Section 1797) of the Health and Safety Code, in the discharge or attempt to discharge any duty of his or her office or employment, when no other punishment is prescribed, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not to exceed one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

This incident—so extraordinary in my home country of the UK—is nothing here in the U.S., particularly nothing for people of color, or for low income folks, or for activists. We have spent decades accustomed to the use of extraordinary force, and it is only recently that an entire movement has been formed in response to it. What now? Now we have a President who is clearly intolerant, clearly bigoted, clearly hot-headed and clearly itching to exercise his dictatorial personality and agenda? **CP**

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The Anti-Trump Uprising Class Delusions, Perverted Politics, and the Prospects for Real Change

BY ANTHONY DIMAGGIO

So much of the American public is in a state of anger over the election of Donald Trump. That's not surprising. He only

received the vote of about a quarter of the adult population, and his favorability rating is abhorrently low, at 42 percent as of election day, compared to a 54 percent unfavorable rating, as documented by the Real Clear Politics. By comparison, President-Elect Obama had a 70 percent favorability rating in November 2008, and came into office with a 67 percent approval rating. Obama came in to power on a very short leash, with the public expecting change, and fast, in dealing with the economic crisis. The Democrat's majority control of Congress was quickly terminated, however, by 2010 as it became clear that the party had not effectively implemented the positive "change" it promised. Trump comes into office on an even shorter leash, due to his failure to receive a majority, let alone plurality of the popular vote. His favorability rating of 42 percent is far lower than Obama's in early 2009. One can only imagine what his approval rating will be once in office, but there's a very good chance it will be under 50 percent - which would be unprecedented in the history of polling and the presidency.

Considering the divisive nature of his campaign, protests have sprung up across the U.S., dedicated to rejecting Trump's reactionary social platform. I participated in one of the protests in Easton, Pennsylvania last week, with a few hundred activists of all races and ages attending. But the protest was heavily identity-politics centered, with very little focus on the reactionary economic policies of Trump or the Democrats. My impression from the news is that protests of "The Donald" have been much the same throughout much of the country, heavily emphasizing post-material issues like racism, sexism, homophobia, trans-phobia, and xenophobia.

We should be careful on the left not to denigrate or dismiss the progress made by post-material social movements over the last half century. The civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights movements have made America a far more civilized, humane, democratic place. But to focus on these social issues moving forward to the exclusion or marginalization of economics and class issues would be a huge mistake. Occupy Wall Street, 15 Now, and the 2011 Madison Wisconsin rebellion against Scott Walker demonstrated that American concerns with economic inequality and the neoliberal attack on workers can, and must play a central role in social protests. The challenge from this point forward is to bring economic issues to the front when it comes to organizing the backlash against Trump. To fail to do so would be to fall into the hands of a neoliberal Democratic establishment, which is more than happy to oppose Trump for post-material reasons, while ignoring both parties' guilt in assaulting main street America.

We face many challenges moving ahead. The American public appears to have a thoroughly underdeveloped sense of class consciousness, and this will hinder effective progressive action when it comes to challenging the government's assault on the working class. On the one hand, there are causes for

optimism. Numerous surveys show most Americans recognize that inequality today is higher than it was in previous years. Most Americans don't like inequality, and want to see government work to reduce it. And most importantly, economically-motivated activism has grown post-2008 with the rise of Occupy and other social movements concerned with inequality. Black Lives Matter has contributed to this emphasis on inequality, as was apparent in the economic grievances bubbling under the surface in Ferguson, Missouri. As we now know thanks for the Department of Justice's extensive report, racial profiling and harassment was used with impunity in Ferguson to criminalize the city's black population, and in order to use them as an ATM machine to fund a city that had been bankrupted via neoliberal policies seeking to starve government of operating funds. The people of Ferguson were fed up with city officials' systematic, racist policies that treated poor blacks as their personal piggybank via excessive fines for minor ordinance offenses. The rebellion in Ferguson shook the city's political establishment to its core, suggesting that post-material and material factors are both important to the modern rebellion against government corruption.

Despite the many positive signs above, there is serious room for concern regarding the many ways in which Americans delude themselves on the severity of inequality. It will be difficult for anti-Trump protests to effectively fight inequality so long as much of the public suffers from mass economic false consciousness. Some statistics put the public's ignorance into better perspective. More than half of Americans refuse to accept the reality that the U.S. is divided economically between "haves" and "have-nots." About two-thirds of the public continues to naively believe that Americans will simply "get ahead" in their lives if they are willing to work hard. These opinions, to put it simply, are delusional.

Half of Americans today hold none of the nation's financial wealth. If one measures being a "have" or "have-not" per the dominant metric of financial assets—as is typical in a capitalist economy—then half of Americans are clearly have-nots. Furthermore, the notion that working hard is a guarantee of success is obnoxiously outdated. Over the last four decades, American families have endured an average one-third increase in work hours, despite an actual decline in wages among male earners, and stagnating wages for families. Stagnation of wages was possible, despite declining male earnings, due to women entering the workforce in mass. Additionally, the cost of items like health care and post-secondary education have skyrocketed over the decades, so much so that unless one is in the top one to ten percent of income earners, they've lost economic ground since the 1970s. Finally, household debt is at a record high post World War 2, with the most common cause of bankruptcy being unsustainable health care costs. In sum, Americans have already been working harder for decades now, and yet they find

themselves far worse off than in the past, due to growing cost of living, growing personal debt, exhaustion via increased work hours, and stagnating to declining wages.

In such a situation, a strong majority of Americans should recognize the writing on the wall: we are economically divided, and hard work is no guarantee of success in an economic system that is fundamentally broken and works only for the top one percent. And yet, Americans often struggle when it comes to understanding inequality. One 2014 Harvard study found that Americans significantly underestimate the amount of inequality that exists, with Americans estimating that less than 60 percent of national wealth is controlled by the top 20 percent. The figure is more like 85 percent of wealth controlled by the top fifth.

Americans also struggle to understand class distinctions, and how they fit within these distinctions. I took a close look at the Pew Research Center's December 2015 monthly survey, which asked Americans about their household incomes, in addition to surveying them about their self-designated class status. Respondents had five options to describe themselves: upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, lower-middle class, and lower class. These five categories are potentially valuable, since they can be broken down and made to overlap with Americans' incomes as divided into fifths. The Census Bureau already breaks income earners down by fifths—including the top 20 percent, the second highest 20 percent, the middle 20 percent, the second poorest 20 percent, and the bottom 20 percent.

The value of Pew's December survey is that you can compare it with U.S. Census Bureau data (published in 2014), to see how closely one's self-designated class status matches their actual class status as determined by their income. The results are sobering, demonstrating mass public ignorance. Although the Census estimates that the bottom 20 percent of American income earners take home less than \$20,000 a year, only 40 percent of those in Pew's survey from a family earning less than \$20,000 classified themselves as "lower class." Sixty-percent erroneously placed themselves into a higher class, despite being in the poorest 20 percent of all income earners.

Class misrepresentations and delusions were even worse at the top. Those earning over \$150,000 a year fall into the top 20 percent of income earners, per the Census. But just 18 percent of people living in these households referred to themselves as "upper class." Similarly, just 15 percent of those from households earning between \$75,000 and \$150,000 a year classified themselves as "upper-middle class," despite being solidly upper-middle class in the Census data.

People weren't quite as delusional in the middle, as most Americans (52 percent) who the Census put in the second-poorest 20 percent accurately classified themselves in the Pew survey as "lower middle class," while most of those (54 percent) in the middle twentieth percentile for income ac-



Photo: Anti-Trump protest in Mission District, by Pax Ahimsa Gethen, CC BY-SA 4.0

curately placed themselves as “middle class.” These findings are comparatively better than those we see from those in the bottom and top of the income distribution, but even they are nothing to write home about. Apparently, almost half of the Census Bureau’s lower-middle and middle income earners fail to accurately classify their class status, as measured by their own self-reported incomes.

Clearly, Americans have a heavily underdeveloped class awareness, especially at the bottom and top of the income spectrum. To hear these people tell it, apparently, no one is poor in America. And no one is rich either. Such sentiments are patently ridiculous, considering that the United States holds more wealth than any other country in world history, and suffers from record inequality, in addition to having the highest inequality of all wealthy countries. What’s going on seems simple. Many Americans naively cling to the notion that the American dream is still real, and that they can reach out and grab it if they’re willing to work hard enough, and if those damn political elites in Washington do something positive for once to help the working man and woman. I can’t dispute the anger at Washington, but the sentiment that hard work will get you ahead, and that nearly everyone is middle class, are both thoroughly divorced from reality. Clearly, many Americans prefer the naïve view of a classless society. We can see as much in the systematic over-estimation of class status among the poor, and the consistent under-estimation of class status among the affluent. We can also see Americans’ collective class delusions in national survey findings suggest-

ing that nearly 90 percent of Americans classify themselves as being some variant of middle class (lower-middle, middle, or upper-middle), with just 10 percent admitting they are lower or upper class.

I’ve been researching the issue of inequality for years now, and one thing I’ve been fascinated by is how quickly Americans can be manipulated through hegemonic messages promising the myth of affluence and prosperity. For example, for years I’ve asked my students to read a report from the Heritage Foundation (published in 2011) claiming that poverty does not exist, since most “poor” Americans are shown in surveys to own a television, some sort of video game system, a cell phone, and have access to modern amenities such as a refrigerator, stove, and dish washer (Heritage, “Air Conditioning, Cable TV, and an Xbox: What is Poverty in the United States Today?” July 2011). Of course, Heritage’s attempts to erase poverty conveniently ignore the many ways in which poverty is very real, including the struggles of the poor to secure adequate health care, the obvious connection between obesity and poverty due to the high cost of healthy foods, the clear relationship between poverty and poor academic performance in resource-starved schools in poor minority communities, and the struggles of the poor to afford post-secondary educational opportunities for their children. All these factors severely limit the quality of life prospects for the poor, not to mention the constant fear of housing eviction for many poor families, due to the insecurity that accompanies poverty-level wages.

And despite all these things, many of my students become convinced that poverty isn't real, because poor families own a television or X Box. These products are cheaper now than ever due to mass production, and possessing a video gaming system or a TV hardly suggests affluence with the cut-throat prices of modern electronics, which have fallen significantly in the last decade. If you doubt the dubiousness of using electronic ownership to define poverty, consider this simple thought experiment: how long could you afford to live if you lost your job, if you sold all your electronic items, including DVDs, CDs, video games, your cell phone, computer, and other devices? My guess is you'd have less than enough to pay for a month of living expenses. So much for electronics as a gateway to affluence.

And yet, the seduction of cheap modern technology has convinced many Americans that poverty isn't real. This much is apparent in my discussions with students. A common response I hear to the Heritage article referenced above goes like this: "Wow, I can't believe that Americans really think they're poor with all those modern conveniences...when I used to think of poverty in America, I imagined people who were homeless and on the verge of starvation." Think about the absurdity of this statement, especially for a student who was informed (during my class) that the U.S. poverty rate (itself horribly underestimated by the Census) has hovered around 13 to 15 percent during the 2010s. My students' definition of poverty (as restricted to the homeless and starving) would mean that 41 to 48 million Americans are apparently roaming the streets of the country, desperate and without food or shelter. If this were true, Americans would have much bigger issues to think about than figuring out how to define poverty, as such mass desperation is the lifeblood of revolutions. More sober estimates of homelessness put the actual number at about half a million Americans. To put my students' massive overestimate into context, after accounting for the smaller population in 1930s America, 41-48 million homeless people today would be the equivalent of three times the number of homeless Americans that lived during the Great Depression.

Obviously, my students, and Americans more generally, are thoroughly underinformed when it comes to understanding poverty and inequality. They suffer from false consciousness, no doubt the product of a hegemonic media system that downplays the existence of poverty, while framing the wealthy as well-meaning and "just like everyone else" in their beliefs and behavior. In this kind of society, it's extremely difficult to fight against growing economic insecurity. How can one fight against growing inequality, and oppose the class system that produces it, if one doesn't even understand that system or their place in it? Two-thirds of Americans fail to accurately place themselves on the correct point of the five-point class scale discussed above, based on their own self-reported incomes. Sadly, many don't see class and inequality

because they don't want to see them. They are willfully ignorant. Most Americans are unaware that an economic divide between haves and have-nots exists. And many are delusional, holding out hope that simply working hard will fix their problems.

What we need now is a collective effort to deal with inequality, accompanied by progressive demands that government address the growing economic insecurity of modern society. Overcoming public ignorance about inequality will require a lot of work from progressively-minded people. Millions of Trump voters selected a candidate who promised to "Make America Great Again" by dealing with problems like outsourcing and the collective lowering of the living standards of the masses due to corporate globalization. But Trump will not be able to satisfy the mass public and their demands for better living by appointing corporate lobbyists into key government positions, while pushing through reactionary pro-business tax cuts, and cutting regulations on the business sector. And Trump won't be able to push changes that benefit the masses so long as he relies on a Republican majority in Congress that is dedicated to serving corporate elites in their schemes to gut public revenues, and privatize social welfare programs such as Medicare and Social Security.

What we need is a progressive movement that will resist Trump's reactionary policies specifically, and neoliberalism more broadly. Trump's deplorable social policies cannot be the only focus of protests. A broad-based resistance, however, is unlikely to emerge if the Hillary Clinton contingent of the current protests succeeds in driving the anti-Trump movement's political agenda moving forward. **CP**

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CULTURE & REVIEWS

The Poverty Industry

Bullies and Lunch Money

BY LEE BALLINGER

“Vast contractual interconnections between government and private contractors are undermining the legal and economic structure of America’s government assistance programs and siphoning billions in aid from those in need.”— Daniel L. Hatcher in *The Poverty Industry: The Exploitation of America’s Most Vulnerable Citizens*

The poverty industry is where corporations get rich by keeping people poor. In Hatcher’s book, he paints a picture of it that is painful to look at, sometimes hard to believe, yet impossible to deny.

State human services agencies, which are supposed to maintain a safety net to catch our friends and neighbors when they fall, face shrinking budgets and a rising demand for services. Instead of pushing to tax bloated corporate treasuries or local billionaires to make up the shortfall, these agencies increasingly partner with corporations.

State agencies are under pressure to embrace this dance with the devil—the Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act requires government agencies to determine every possible government activity that might be contracted out to private firms. Yet states themselves have hardly been reluctant to open their veins to corporate heroin. For instance, on the first page of every

chapter of a training manual at the Georgia Department of Human Services is a striking representation of how the needs of the most vulnerable have disappeared into a black hole of corporate greed—a woodblock graphic of the state capitol dome sitting atop a dollar sign.

The scope of the poverty industry is vast, but its essence can be seen in the operation of foster care systems. State human resources agencies hire corpo-

“Corporations value families only to the degree that they contain ‘revenue generating mechanisms.’ Government now embraces those same pitiless standards.”

rations to help them find the children already in foster care who are entitled to Social Security disability benefits but are not receiving them. The state then applies for the benefits in the child’s name without telling them about it and then pockets the money every month. Ditto for child support payments. If the child has parents who were killed while in the military, the state takes their VA benefits.

While states and their corporate partners claim that they must appropriate this money in order to use

it to help the people they steal it from, that’s not what those funds are used for. Checks children should be receiving go into the agency’s coffers or into the state’s general fund. In either case the money is then dispensed, after a less than arm’s length negotiation, to corporations which will pocket a profit and then go on to identify new groups of underage victims. It’s a circle game with a few winners and many losers.

When the children age out of foster care at eighteen, the money they were entitled to is gone. According to Hatcher, more than half of those children go on to experience unemployment, almost 60 per cent end up making less than \$10,000 a year, 43 per cent lack health insurance, 25 per cent experience homelessness, 25 per cent never graduate from high school.

Some of the corporate players in the poverty industry are giant defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin or Northrup Grumman. Others are poverty specialists, although they are hardly boutique firms. For example, there’s MAXIMUS, which sounds like a condom brand, a very apt metaphor. In 2014, MAXIMUS had revenue of \$1.7 billion and 13,000 employees, a result of their assessment that foster children are a “revenue generating mechanism.” The company’s website claims with a straight face that “Our commitment to serving the people is boundless.”

What is actually boundless is the lengths to which MAXIMUS and other poverty industry corporations will go to make a buck. MAXIMUS has been forced to pay a settlement for filing fraudulent Medicaid claims. Executives at WellCare, a company notorious for removing neonatal babies and the terminally ill from its insurance rolls, had to pay the Department of Justice \$137.5 million for violations of the False Claims Act. Of course, if you or

I commit a crime we go to prison, lose the right to vote, and probably will never be able to find work again.

Despite its transgressions, MAXIMUS won a new consulting contract with the state of New York. After WellCare received its slap on the wrist, the company added former Florida Senator Bob Graham to its board of directors and then won a federal contract to continue providing Medicare Part D prescription drug plans in all fifty states.

On the other hand, a social worker in New York's Westchester County was charged with grand larceny for taking resources from a foster child. A heinous act, stopped by the vigilance of local authorities? Westchester County's foster care agency has contracted with private companies since 2007 to help them take foster children's Social Security benefits for county use.

But while all of the activities of the poverty industry may be immoral, most are perfectly legal. For instance, corporations and state agencies legally collude to have as many foster children as possible declared disabled by the Social Security Administration and thus eligible to receive SSI benefits. The state agency will then apply to become the payee, without telling the child, and keep the resulting payments for itself.

The poverty industry's expansion of the definition of disabled stands in stark contrast to the situation with veterans disability benefits, where the Veterans Administration not only denies as many claims as possible, but continually works to take away previously awarded disability benefits. Why the disparity? Because veterans disability benefits go directly to the disabled person instead of being routed to corporations via state agencies.

Both the VA and the poverty industry have partnerships with Big Pharma which are perfectly legal even though they result in pumping men, women, and children with psychotropic drugs they may not need. Meanwhile, the state of California

helps to ensure there will be plenty of foster children to be drugged. The state routinely sends its agents into homeless encampments and forces children living with their parents into foster care, a policy reminiscent of press gangs and slave patrols.

As a smokescreen, legislators, bureaucrats, and their corporate partners in the poverty industry prattle on endlessly about "family values." The reality is that they all conspire in a most deliberate and cold-hearted manner to destroy families. Child welfare agencies become eligible for federal foster care funds immediately upon removal of a child from a home. These same agencies are motivated to prevent the reunification of that child with its family because they will lose federal funding if they do not terminate parental rights within fifteen months. State agencies also can receive adoption incentive payments by taking children away from their parents and, after adoption, there are adoption subsidy payments to go after. In every case, there are corporations with taxpayer-funded contracts to help target the greatest possible number of potential victims.

Meanwhile, in this century our government has sent millions of parents overseas to carry out military operations, many never to return. In this century our government has sent millions of parents off to prison, many never to return. The promotion of "family values" is a cruel joke, a myth that's promoted to pit a hallowed "middle class," the supposed repository of family values, against everyone below them on the socio-economic scale.

Corporations value families only to the degree that they contain "revenue generating mechanisms." Government at all levels now embraces those same pitiless standards. This is in absolute conflict with the morality of the public, which actually does value families, especially children, as treasures which are the future of humanity. These two visions now stand face to face, toe to

toe, without any possibility of reconciliation or compromise. **CP**

LEE BALLINGER'S new book, *Love and War: My First Thirty Years of Writing*, is available as a free download at loveandwarbook.com. You can listen to his podcast on YouTube at *Love and War Podcast*.

Park Chan-wook's "The Handmaiden" A Cruel Beauty

BY NATHANIEL ST. CLAIR

In 1930s Korea, under Japanese colonial rule, a young woman takes a position as a servant to a wealthy Japanese heiress, Lady Hideko, who lives in an isolated, expansive country estate. No one's motivations are what they seem.

With *The Handmaiden*, celebrated South Korean film-maker Park Chan-wook (the Cannes Grand Prix-winning *Oldboy*) provides the answer to the question: "What would happen if Anaïs Nin directed a revenge thriller?" Those familiar with Chan-wook's oeuvre will have much to celebrate. *The Handmaiden* is as methodical in its exposition of revenge as cinematographer Chung Chung-Hoon is in shooting the gloomy Anglo-Japanese manor in which most of the film takes place. And Chan-wook's penchant for deadpan humor, dark sexuality and violence takes on a new life through the film's central relationship, which quickly develops beyond one between master and servant. What starts out as a triangle of deception and desire becomes something much darker and more intricate.

Intricate, too, is the film itself: Perspectives change, names change, even the subtitles change, with Park using white subtitles for Korean dialogue and yellow for Japanese, a distinction that becomes very important. In other words, you really need to pay attention.



Still from *The Handmaiden*

Park's previous effort was his English-language debut, *Stoker*, and *The Handmaiden* possesses a similar combination of roiling, submerged insanity and baroque, detailed surfaces: The houses in both films function as major characters, and here, the performances from Min-hee Kim and Kim Tae-ri are as perfectly enigmatic as those of Mia Wasikowska and Matthew Goode in *Stoker*.

As exploitative as some of this stuff could've been—and might still seem—Park never goes for cheap thrills. He's one of those directors, like Wes Anderson or David Lynch, whose films all seem to take place in a coherent, discrete universe of their own design. For Park, it's a place where, as one character in *The Handmaiden* says, beauty is inherently cruel. And where the sweetness of revenge is directly proportional to the cruelty it's paying back. It's not a place you'd ever want to live—but once you peek into it, it's hard

to look away. **CP**

NATATHANIEL ST. Clair is social media editor for CounterPunch.

Labor Under Siege Striking in Reagan Time

BY RON JACOBS

The history of labor movements is an essential history. Without the stories and analysis of the organizing struggles of working people in the past, those of us who are workers today would find the task of organizing for fair wages and decent working conditions even more difficult than they already are. This fact is a primary reason the history of labor movements—of union organizing and strikes—is rarely taught to workers or their children. It is also

a reason labor reporters no longer are found on the staff of mainstream media outlets and labor classes are few and far between in universities and colleges. Most importantly, and probably most detrimental to working people, the lack of knowledge concerning the historical and current struggles of working people for wages and dignity is a big reason right wing rulers like Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin can destroy the unions of thousands of workers with the consent of thousands of others.

This dismal reality is why I am both cheered and compelled to champion labor histories when they are published. That task becomes considerably easier when the book in question is well-written, fast-paced, and inspiring. I just finished reading such a book—*Song of the Stubborn One Thousand: The Watsonville Canning Strike 1985–87*. This masterpiece of the genre is simultaneously an education in labor organizing in the multinational workplace and a

stirring tale of struggle by some of U.S. capitalism's most exploited workers. It is a story with many twists and turns and a determination and sense of justice. The publisher, Haymarket Books, is probably the best current publisher of labor history; with this book both Haymarket and the author Peter Shapiro have outdone themselves.

The strike began in 1985. Ronald Reagan was in his second term as president. His first term had made it clear that he hated unions and wanted to help bust as many of them as he could. In addition, the economy was well on its way to the stage that became known as globalization and workers everywhere were suffering the consequences. Jobs were being moved out of the country so their owners could squeeze more profit from the labor forces while simultaneously using the threat of such a move to demand concessions from the workers in the United States. Despite the odds against them, the mostly Latino, mostly female workers in the canneries in Watsonville decided to strike.

At the time, Watsonville's population was predominantly Spanish speaking. I remember hitching through the burg a year or two earlier and stopping for lunch at a cantina. I had done some day labor in the fields near the town before, but had only seen it from the back of a pickup as we drove back to Oakland after a day of work. The food was predominantly Mexican, the beer choices were Tecate and Modelo and the jukebox featured only two musical artists who were not singing in Spanish—The Doors and the Rolling Stones. It was like being in a town in Baja or on the Mexican-Texas border.

The town's council and landowners, however, were mostly Anglo/white. Like towns and cities throughout the U.S. Southwest, they had arranged the political situation so they could dominate. The lack of Latino political power in Watsonville was another aspect of this strike. Perhaps the most important result of the workers'

campaign was the realignment of political power so that non-Anglos representation in civil affairs was more representative than ever before. Of course, money still trumps everything else in a capitalist system.

Shapiro relates the intricacies of organizing and maintaining the strike, something made even more difficult given the situation within the Teamsters Union, who represented the cannery workers. In part because of how the international union was

“Many of the strikers were women, whose insistence on inclusion was a challenge to unions traditionally dominated by men. Yet without the women there could be no strikes.”

organized and in part because of the entrenched power of the man who had run the local for decades, conflicts arose inside the strikers' various committees and meetings. In addition, personal resentments, personality clashes and political differences occasionally challenged the unity any such endeavor requires. Underlying these currents was the fact that many of the strikers were women, whose insistence on inclusion was (and continues to be) a challenge to unions

traditionally dominated by men. However, without the women there could be no strike. *Song of the Stubborn One Thousand* does a masterful job at weaving these lines of the narrative into a cohesive and elucidating tale of sacrifice and inspiration.

The tale of struggle told in this book is interesting enough to gain the readership of labor history's typical audience of students, labor organizers and leftists. The vivid rapid-paced nature of Peter Shapiro's narrative could propel it beyond that audience. Not only does the text share the same environment of some of John Steinbeck's best novels, it even reads like one of them on occasion. In fact, Watsonville was actually the town Steinbeck set the novel *In Dubious Battle* in. Even though the Watsonville strike took place some fifty years later, some of the same types of characters can be found in both books: communists, distressed workers at the mercy of heartless owners, frustrated organizers and union members ready for sabotage and destruction, and, mostly, a group of committed workers fighting to make their lives better and achieve a broader social justice.

In a world where labor is exploited even more than it was in 1985, *Song of the Stubborn One Thousand* is a study guide, a lesson, and an inspiration for the working people of today. In a time when recent electoral results portend a working class divided at the behest of the rulers, the Watsonville canning strike of 1985 provides a hopeful and progressive alternative. **CP**

RON JACOBS is the author of *Daydream Sunset: Sixties Counterculture* in the Seventies published by CounterPunch Books.

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BERNIE & THE SANDERNISTAS Field Notes From a Failed Revolution JEFFREY ST. CLAIR



“A brilliant exposition of how Bernie led his Sandernistas up a garden path to nowhere. A blistering, infuriating, and totally engrossing read.”

**— Andrew Cockburn,
author *Kill Chain***

Bernie Sanders promised a Revolution, a promise that was seized upon with an almost religious fervor by a new generation of political activists, a generation raised with smart phones and terror alerts, a generation burdened by debt and facing dim economic prospects. Jeffrey St. Clair, editor of the political journal CounterPunch, called Bernie's raucous band of followers The Sandernistas, as they pitched themselves for battle against one of the most brutal political operations of the modern era, the Clinton machine. Ridiculed by the media and dismissed as a nuisance by the political establishment, the Sanders campaign shocked Clinton in a state after state, exposing the deep structural fissures in the American electorate. Ultimately the Sanders campaign faltered, undone by the missteps of its leader and by sabotage from the elites of the Democratic Party. By the time the Senator gave his humiliating concession speech at the convention in Philadelphia, even his most ardent supporters jeered him in disgust and walked out, taking their protests back to the streets. This turbulent year of mass revolt and defeat is recounted here, as it happened, by one of America's fiercest and most acerbic journalists.

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