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SocialistViewpoint

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

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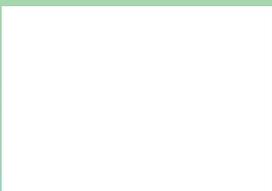


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Solidarity with Ukraine!

Ukraine Solidarity Network Mission Statement



The Ukraine Solidarity Network (U.S.) reaches out to unions, communities, and individuals from diverse backgrounds to build moral, political, and material support for the people of Ukraine in their resistance to Russia's criminal invasion and their struggle for an independent, egalitarian, and democratic country.

The war against Ukraine is a horrible and destructive disaster in the human suffering and economic devastation it has already caused, not only for Ukraine and its people but also in its impact on global hunger and energy supplies, on the world environmental crisis, and on the lives of ordinary Russian people who are sacrificed for Putin's war. The war also carries the risk of escalation to a direct confrontation among military great powers, with unthinkable possible consequences.

It is urgent to end this war as soon as possible. This can only be achieved through the success of Ukraine's resistance to Russia's invasion. Ukraine is fighting a legitimate war of self-defense, indeed a war for its survival as a nation. Calling for "peace" in the abstract is meaningless in these circumstances.

The Ukraine Solidarity Network (U.S.) supports Ukraine's war of resistance, its right to determine the means and objectives of its own struggle—and we support its right to obtain the weapons it needs from any available source. We are united in our support for Ukraine's people, their military and civilian defense against aggression, and for the reconstruction of the country in the interests of the majority of its population. We stand in opposition to all domination by powerful nations and states, including by the United States and its allies, over smaller ones, and oppressed peoples.

We uphold the following principles and goals:

1. We strive for a world free of global power domination at the expense of smaller nations. We oppose war and authoritarianism no matter which state it comes from and support the right of self-determination and self-defense for any oppressed nation.
2. We support Ukraine's victory against the Russian invasion, and its right to reparations to meet the costs of reconstruction after the colossal destruction it is suffering.
3. The reconstruction of Ukraine also demands the cancellation of its debts to international financial institutions. Aid to Ukraine must come without strings attached, above all without crushing debt burdens.
4. We recognize the suffering that this war imposes on people in Russia, most intensely on the ethnic and religious minority sectors of the Russian Federation which are disproportionately impacted

by forced military conscription. We salute the brave Russian anti-war forces speaking out and demonstrating in the face of severe repression, and we are encouraged by the popular resistance to the draft of soldiers to become cannon fodder for Putin's unjust war of aggression.

5. We seek to build connections to progressive organizations and movements in Ukraine and with the labor movement, which represents the biggest part of Ukrainian civil society, and to link Ukrainian civic organizations, marginalized communities and trade unions with counterpart organizations in the United States. We support Ukrainian struggles for ensuring just and fair labor rights for its population, especially during the war, as there are no military reasons to implement laws that threaten the social rights of Ukrainians, including those who are fighting in the front lines.

Read the complete list of USN Endorsements at:

<https://tinyurl.com/mwh8b35t>

Add your endorsement at:

<https://tinyurl.com/mr3yeued>



John Beadle (Screenshot)

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www.socialistviewpoint.org
email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

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Socialists Against Russia's War on Ukraine

EDITORIAL BY CAROLE SELIGMAN AND BONNIE WEINSTEIN

There is no disagreement that, beyond a doubt, the United States is the biggest purveyor of violence in the world. The U.S. capitalist class is the commander of world capitalism with the biggest and most powerful military. They lead the world in the business of death—in the manufacture and sale of weapons of all kinds from air-rifles for children to nuclear bombs capable of destroying the whole planet.

Not only does the U.S. train its children for future military and police service, they even train mass shooters in the public schools.

On February 14, 2018, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz murdered 17 students with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida—a public high school—the same school that taught him how to shoot. In a February 16, 2018, *Vox.com* article by Jen Kirbyjen, titled, “Nikolas Cruz was

reportedly on an NRA-funded rifle team in high school” the article states:

“The *Associated Press* reports that in 2016, Cruz had been a member of the school’s Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) air-rifle marksmanship team, a small group who met together after class for target practice using air rifles and traveled to other schools to compete. That program was supported by a grant from the National Rifle Association Foundation, the NRA’s charitable arm, as part of a multimillion-dollar national campaign to promote youth shooting clubs. In 2016, when Cruz was a member of the team, the NRA Foundation awarded the school program a \$10,827 non-cash grant. ... The NRA Foundation says on its website that it has distributed \$335 million in grants since 1990. According to the *Associated Press*, the majority of the grants to schools—\$2.2 million in 2016—were non-cash grants, like the one Cruz’s team received.”¹

And this training hasn’t ended. In a December 20, 2022, *New York Times* article by Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs and Mike Baker, titled, “N.R.A. Gets a Boost from J.R.O.T.C. in Public Schools,” reported that:

“At a time when many districts are going to great lengths to keep guns out of schools, J.R.O.T.C. has become one of the few programs on campuses that promote weapons training. The N.R.A. has donated more than \$5 million in money and equipment since 2015 to support competitive shooting programs at schools...The organization has supported J.R.O.T.C. programs by hosting shooting competitions, highlighting teams in its trade magazine, and providing special badges to J.R.O.T.C. shooting competitors.”

No other country is as blatant as the United States in its commitment to promote the use, ownership and carrying of weapons of death—even among children.

The United States is always at war somewhere.

On a more fundamental level, as Marxists, we can agree that war, violence, bigotry, economic inequality, and environmental destruction is due to capitalist ownership of the means of production for private profit. This is the fundamental cause of the continued threat of catastrophic destruction of all life that capitalism fuels.

Capitalism is the culprit

But the commanders of U.S. capital are not the only capitalist despots in the world. This is the *modus operandi* of all the capitalist world—England, France, Germany, Italy, Iran, Myanmar, Morocco, China—and, yes, Russia, among many others.



Nikolas Cruz, 19, was wearing a maroon shirt with the logo from the Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School when he was arrested February 14, 2018 following the massacre. He wore the shirt to “blend in” with the rest of the students so he wouldn’t be noticed.

Surely, the peace movement can oppose NATO and all military alliances of the U.S. government and also oppose the war moves of other reactionary regimes.

Yet a large part of the socialist left has kept silent about Russia's invasion of Ukraine—some actually claiming that Russia is defending itself against the U.S./NATO alliance by its military invasion and massacre of the people of Ukraine.

The casualties of war on all sides are virtually always the innocent—the masses of people caught in the crossfire of war while the generals and commanders are safe at home with their families and their wealth.

Not condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an affront to socialism

Instead of demanding that Russia stop their war and invasion of Ukraine, The Peace in Ukraine Coalition/CODEPINK joined with UNAC (United National Antiwar Coalition), ANSWER Coalition, Democratic Socialists of America, Veterans for Peace, World Beyond War, Peace Action and others joined together to call for demonstrations in opposition to the war in Ukraine and came up with the following slogans:

- Not One More Penny for War in Ukraine
- Negotiate Peace
- Stop the War Inflation
- Disband NATO
- Global Nuclear De-Escalation
- Slash the Pentagon Budget
- Abolish the CIA and Military-Industrial Deep State
- Abolish War and Empire
- Restore Civil Liberties
- Free Julian Assange

There is not one word demanding that Russia stop its invasion of Ukraine, withdraw its soldiers, stop killing innocent people, stop bombing apartment buildings, hospitals, factories, and national monuments—not one single word!

We need a new antiwar movement

As revolutionary socialists we need to form an alliance that opposes all capitalist war for what it is—a fight to the finish between capitalist empires—to hell with any who stand in their way. These capitalist empires see the masses as nothing but their cannon fodder to do their fighting for them—to maintain and grow their wealth and power.

Martin Luther King's admonition that the U.S. is the main purveyor of violence in the world is one we have quoted and written about since *Socialist Viewpoint* was begun 23 years ago. But never did this idea conflict with the facts that other capitalist regimes—and even non-capitalist, Stalinist regimes—must be opposed for their brutality, oppression, exploitation, and violence against peoples in their own countries and other smaller and weaker countries. “The international working class shall lead the human race”—the line in the *Internationale* song says it. The working class recognizes no borders to our solidarity. And this solidarity includes all the working class and oppressed peoples of the whole world!

Many in the U.S. Left and peace movements are now ignoring the suffering of the Ukrainian people, and some

are even attacking them because they are fighting back against the Russians and attacking them because they are white (and therefore treated more sympathetically by racist European countries than Africans seeking refuge in Europe and dying in the Mediterranean.) But let's be clear—capitalism is the enemy of all humanity—it cannot be reformed or solve the problems of war, violence, or destruction of the environment.

We, as revolutionary socialists, need to champion a new, anti-capitalist antiwar movement that, while recognizing that the central home of the capitalist system is the United States, we must fight against capitalism everywhere.

We ask you to join with us to demand:

- Stop the War on Ukraine!
- Russia Out of Ukraine Now!
- Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now!
- Disband all U.S. Military Bases Now!
- Disband the U.S./NATO Alliance Now!
- Build a Worldwide Anti-Capitalist Antiwar Movement to Save the Planet!

¹ <https://www.vox.com/2018/2/16/17021874/report-nikolas-cruz-florida-rifle-team-nra-grant>



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Ukrainian Troops Gain Ground as Russian Missiles Pound the Cities

BY MICHAEL SCHREIBER

As freezing temperatures took hold in Ukraine, Russia stepped up its efforts to deprive the population of heat, water, and electricity—and to try to break morale. By early December, fully one-half of the country's energy facilities had been damaged or destroyed. Apartment blocks, clinics, schools, and cultural facilities were also targeted.

Ukraine has steadily increased its success in repelling the bombardments. The government reported having shot down 80 percent of the rockets fired by Russia during the month of December. In the final days of 2022, however, the murderous rain of missiles and drones that Russia unfurled sometimes overwhelmed Ukrainian air defenses.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said on December 27 that it has confirmed 6884 deaths and 10,947 injuries among civilians in Ukraine since Russia launched the invasion on February 24, 2022. The real statistics, it stressed, are undoubtedly much higher, since major areas of the

country in which civilians have come under attack—like Mariupol—are still under Russian occupation. Moreover, the invasion has driven some 14 million Ukrainians from their homes in “the fastest, largest displacement witnessed in decades,” according to the UN head of refugee relief, Filippo Grandi. And Daria Herasymchuk, Ukraine's top children's rights official, said in November that 10,764 Ukrainian children had been reported by relatives or friends to have been carried off to Russia without their parents.

As the New Year approached, Ukrainian troops were slowly advancing on the eastern front in Luhansk along a triangle of highways leading to the twin riverside cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, which Russia captured last summer. Ukrainian forces were pushing ahead from three directions—from the southwest at Bakhmut (a town that the Russians have been trying to encircle for weeks,) from the northwest toward Kremenne, and from the northeast toward Starobilsk.

But the Ukrainian attempt to win back territory will not be easy; casualties are expected to be considerable. The Russians have built a series of protective barriers near Kremenne and elsewhere along the battlefield, although they are often manned by recently drafted soldiers, with minimal training. Russia has also reportedly transferred into the eastern region many troops that had been stationed in the south of the country last fall, when Ukraine captured the southern city of Kherson.

The hardcore of the Russian troops on the eastern front are said to be members of the Wagner Group, a shadowy and ruthless mercenary corps that Russia has employed in its imperialist exploits in Africa, Syria, and other areas. In recent months, according to U.S. national security spokesman John Kirby, the Wagner Group has recruited into its ranks as many as 40,000 convicted criminals who were released from Russian prisons in exchange for military service. The death toll among them has been high.

Military aid from the U.S. and NATO

Observers are expecting that both adversaries will undertake major offensives after the New Year, most likely in February, when the frozen ground will enable tanks and trucks to operate more effectively. Although there is considerable evidence that the Russian high command miscalculated its preparedness for the February 2022 invasion, as well as the will and capacity of Ukrainians to resist, we can anticipate that the regime will now redouble its efforts to annex the eastern and southern portions of Ukraine. This is historically the most industrialized section of the country, which contains rich mineral wealth and warm-water ports. Moreover, there is speculation that



Civilians train with arms in Siurte, western Ukraine, in February 2022.

Russia might undertake another drive against Kyiv in 2023, in an effort to drastically weaken or even overthrow the pro-Western Zelensky government.

Russia hopes to gain additional military strength as the year progresses. Draftees who were held back from being sent to the front in 2022 will be better trained in the future than their predecessors were. And Putin has pledged to expand the army by another half-million troops, while raising the age of potential draftees from 27 to 30.

At the same time, it is widely anticipated that the Ukrainian military, in addition to pressing to reclaim territory in the east of the country, will begin a drive in the south, directed toward recapturing Melitopol. On December 10, it was able to launch U.S.-supplied Himar missiles against a church in Melitopol that Russian forces were using as their headquarters. The 38 Himar mobile missile launchers that the U.S. provided have enabled Ukrainian forces to attack several hundred Russian bases and supply depots located far behind the front lines of battle.

The Ukrainians have an additional advantage of being supplied with highly advanced U.S.-produced intelligence and battle-management software, which can direct their weapons with great precision. The U.S. often helps with reconnaissance, using its satellite system. And even newer weapons are in the pipeline. The Joint Direct Attack Munition, usually referred to as JDAM (pronounced Jay-dam), is a device that turns a bomb into a highly accurate, GPS-guided weapon. The U.S. weapon was first dropped by stealth bombers over Kosovo in 1999; it will soon be used by Ukrainian pilots flying older Russian-made jets.

Ukrainian troops by the thousands are undergoing training in Britain and other European countries. In the meantime, U.S. and French operatives are training them on up-to-date weaponry, including the Patriot missile bat-

tery from the United States and the similar MAMBA from France.

Ukrainian working people—as service workers and in medical roles, as volunteers in the regular army, as members of the Territorial Defense Forces, and as partisans operating undercover behind the Russian lines—have made an important contribution to the country’s recent military successes. But the military aid from abroad, mainly from the U.S. and other imperialist countries, is considered by some analysts to have been pivotal in turning the tide of battle, while helping to ward off Russian missile and drone attacks on the cities.

During the past year, until December, the U.S. government allocated from \$48 billion to \$68 billion (depending on how it is calculated by various sources) in military, financial, and “humanitarian” assistance to Ukraine. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, close to \$40 billion was for the military—including for long-term weapons orders, U.S. military operations in the region, and money to weapons manufacturers to replenish the U.S. arsenal. And some funds went to U.S. allies in Europe to compensate for giving older and outmoded equipment to Ukraine, while enabling them to buy more modern weapons from the U.S. in the future. (Aid to Ukraine from Europe—Britain, Poland, the Baltic countries, *etc.*—amounted to about \$41.4 billion in 2022.)

In December, the U.S. Congress earmarked another \$45 billion for Ukraine as part of its \$1.7 trillion omnibus package. This aid is in addition to emergency loans that Ukraine has received from the World Bank and other major lenders.

Imperialism and the Zelensky regime

Workers Voice supports the right of self-determination for the Ukrainian people, and accordingly, we stand in

solidarity with their resistance to the invasion by Russian imperialism. And therefore, we believe that Ukraine has the right to request aid from any country—including the U.S. and its NATO allies—in order to carry on the fight.

But we warn that none of this aid, whether in grants or loans, is “free;” the imperialists will demand payback for all of it in one form or another. Just a few years ago, the IMF and the World Bank pressured Ukraine to “balance its budget” by cutting back on social spending. Healthcare was privatized in 2018, and state employees were subjected to a raise in the age for retirement pensions. Given that experience, we should expect that the major lenders and donors will ask Ukraine to commit to even more “structural reforms” in the future, including further privatizations and opening the way for an infusion of foreign capital.

Volodymyr Zelensky was elected president in 2018 as an anti-establishment “new face,” who promised that Ukraine would take an independent path in the world. Now, however, the Zelensky regime has shown itself to be quite open to collaboration with Western imperialism—during the war and afterward. This was symbolized by the Ukrainian president’s theatrical visit to the U.S. Congress in December when, holding the American flag aloft, he declared in an utterance worthy of Ronald Reagan: “We will win because we are united—Ukraine, America, and the entire free world!” A week later, Zelensky urged the European Union to open membership talks with Ukraine.

On the economic front, Zelensky demonstrated his friendliness to capitalist interests from the beginning of his administration with a decree that cancelled some 16 regulations that he claimed were unnecessary restrictions on business. After the war began, his government was able to take advantage of martial law, which hampers the ability of people to protest, in order to pass

measures to hold down wages and curtail the rights of the country's working class. For example, the Law on the Organization of Labor Relations under Martial Law, passed last April, lifts penalties for refusing to pay wages, allows workers to be fired despite collective bargaining agreements, and reduces paid time off. The Ukrainian parliament passed another law last August that exempts enterprises with fewer than 250 workers (*i.e.*, 70 percent of employees) from negotiating with trade unions or complying with other labor rights. Companies are permitted to suspend prior labor contracts, and to extend or reduce working hours unilaterally.

The Ukrainian working class is faced with a combination of tasks at present. On the one hand, it needs to organize itself in the struggle to repel the Russian invaders and to begin to reconstruct the country. At the same time, it needs to organize against the anti-working-class

and anti-social measures of the Zelensky regime and against the project of foreign capital to lock the country even more firmly in its grasp.

The International Workers League, of which *Workers' Voice* is a sympathizing group, issued a statement last September that sums up these tasks. The IWL called on Ukrainian working people to defend "the expropriation of all the assets of the Russian oligarchs and enterprises associated with Putin's regime, the nationalization and centralization in the hands of the state of the economy, in the service of national defense, under workers' control, and the centralization of Territorial Defenses as the organization of the resistance in workers' militias favoring the tendency towards independence of the government."

The statement added, "We must call to defend national sovereignty at the cost of capitalist profits and to defeat

layoffs, forced suspensions, and guarantee full employment, as part of a plan of national defense, with a policy of demands and criticism towards the actual policy of Zelensky."

Workers' Voice and the IWL are supporting an important act of international solidarity in the Workers' Aid Campaign to Ukraine, organized by the International Labour Network for Solidarity and Struggles. Last April, the campaign sent a truck convoy with humanitarian aid (mainly food and power generators) to the Miners' and Metallurgists' Union in Kryvyi Rih. A new fund-raising campaign to obtain supplies for Kryvyi Rih is now being organized.

To contribute, see:

<https://laboursolidarity.org/en/>

—*Workers' Voice*, December 30, 2022

<https://workersvoiceus.org/2022/12/30/ukrainian-troops-gain-ground-as-russian-missiles-pound-the-cities/>

Call for Solidarity Actions with Antiwar Activists in Russia

BY ILYA BUDRAITSKIS

This is a call for solidarity with Russian anti-war activists by Ilya Budraitskis on behalf of The Russian Socialist Movement.

For over a decade, Russian antifascists have commemorated January 19 as their day of solidarity. This is the date when in 2009, in the center of Moscow, the human rights and leftist activist Stanislav Markelov and the journalist and anarchist Anastasia Baburova were gunned down by neo-Nazis.

The murder of Markelov and Baburova became the culmination of the ultra-right terror of the 2000s, which killed hundreds of migrants and dozens of anti-fascists. For many years, while it was still possible, Russian activists held antifascist demonstrations and rallies on January 19 under the slogan "To remember is to fight!"

Today, when the Putin regime has invaded Ukraine and unleashed unprecedented repression against its own citizens who oppose the war, the date of January 19 takes on a new meaning. Back then the danger was posed by neo-Nazi groups, often acting with the connivance of the authorities.

**Today, the ideology
and practice of
right-wing radicals have
become the ideology and
practice of the Russian
regime itself...**

Today, the ideology and practice of right-wing radicals have become the ide-

ology and practice of the Russian regime itself, which is rapidly turning fascist over the course of its invasion of Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin is waging war not only against the Ukrainian people, but also against the Russian civil society resisting aggression. The brutal repressions hit, among other things, the left-wing movement: socialists, anarchists, feminists, labor unionists.

Before the New Year, the most famous left-wing politician in Russia, the democratic socialist Mikhail Lobanov, was arrested and beaten. The platform "Nomination" he created united the antiwar opposition in the municipal elections in Moscow in September 2022.

Kirill Ukraintsev, the leader of the Courier labor union and a well-known left-wing video blogger, has been in custody since April. The reason for the

arrest were the protests and strikes the couriers organized as they sought to improve their working conditions.

A feminist, artist, and anti-war activist Alexandra Skochilenko, who distributed antiwar symbols, faces a long prison term.

Six Anarchists—Kirill Brik, Deniz Aydin, Yuri Neznamov, Nikita Oleinik, Roman Paklin, Daniil Chertykov—were arrested in the so-called “Tyumen case.” They were brutally tortured—the cops seeking confessions for the preparation of sabotage.

Daria Polyudova, an activist of the Left Resistance group, was recently sentenced to nine (!) years in prison for “calls to extremism.” Leftist journalist Igor Kuznetsov has been in prison for a year now, accused of “extremism” for his anti-war and anti-Putin views.

This is a far from an exhaustive list of Russian leftists recently imprisoned or persecuted for their beliefs. As Russian activists forced to leave Russia for political reasons, we ask our foreign comrades and all those who care to support the antifascist action on January 19 under the slogans:

- No to Putin’s war, fascism, and dictatorship!
- Freedom to all Russian political prisoners!

- Solidarity with Russian antifascists!
- To remember is to fight!

We ask you to send us information about any solidarity actions during the week of January 19-24—pickets, open meetings, online discussions, and even personal photos with posters—by e-mail at: rsdzoom@proton.me.

Ilya Budraitskis writes regularly on politics, art, film and philosophy for e-flux journal, openDemocracy, LeftEast,

*Colta.ru and other outlets, and teaches at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences and the Institute of Contemporary Art Moscow. The Russian edition of his essay collection *Dissidents Among Dissidents* (Verso) was awarded the prestigious Andrei Bely prize in 2017.*

—CounterPunch, January 5, 2023

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/05/call-for-solidarity-actions-with-anti-war-activists-in-russia/>



Video of Russian police arresting antiwar protesters March 6, 2022. (Screenshot)

British “Mega Strike”

Half a million workers bring UK to a halt and protest government

By DIEGO SACCHI

On February 1, 2023, over half-a-million workers in the UK took part in a “mega strike,” the largest labor protest in the country in over a decade. Around 85 percent of schools were affected or fully closed, most trains stood still, and offices stood empty as workers took to the streets to protest the Conservative government of Rishi Sunak and demand higher wages.

Wednesday’s strike was part of a joint call by different unions grouped in the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to demand wage increases in the face of a 14-percent increase in the cost of living. Inflation in January hit eight percent, with food prices increasing by between 13 and 15 percent. Around five percent of British households are reportedly running out of food and

struggling to afford to buy more, and a growing number of working families are depending on food banks.

Wednesday’s actions were also a protest against the Conservative Party’s attacks on the right to strike. Workers are calling for the repeal of a recent bill which would mandate minimum levels of service during strike actions such as walkouts, forcing employees in certain

sectors to keep working. With this, the struggle is not just directed toward achieving a single economic demand, but takes on a more political character, confronting the anti-worker policies of the UK government; this raises the possibility of the fight expanding beyond the half-a-million workers who have already taken to the streets.

Among the sectors that went on strike were railroad workers, train drivers belonging to the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers (RMT) unions, and teachers belonging to the National Education Union (NEU). 70,000 teachers, librarians, and research workers from 150 universities who are part of the University and College Union (UCU) also joined the demonstration, and are poised to continue striking in 17 more days of action during February and March over pay and pension disputes.

Wednesday's "mega strike" comes after several months of strikes by various sectors. During what some called a "summer of discontent," RMT workers brought British transportation to a standstill. The UCU likewise held labor actions last year, and in December,

nurses held their first national strikes in the more than 100-year history of their union.

Support for strikes in these sectors is mixed, though more people support than oppose the actions. At least 53 percent of people support nurses going on strike, while 49 percent support teachers' strike actions. Overall, only 37 percent of Britons support unions; however, this proportion is up from 34 percent in November.

**Inflation in January
hit eight percent, with
food prices increasing
by between 13 and 15
percent.**

The Conservative government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak continues to play hardball in negotiations, insisting there is no money to grant the demanded salary increases. In the healthcare sector, for example, the government has refused to bump up its offer of an increase between 4.5 and five percent, despite soaring inflation.

The railway sector has been offered a nine-percent wage increase over two years, a proposal which has been rejected by the workers. The Sunak government is also pushing ahead with its anti-labor minimum service bill.

Union leaderships are so far refusing to call for joint actions to go on indefinite strike until all demands are met. However, rank-and-file workers continue to vote for new actions and show solidarity with other sectors. Wednesday's "mega strike" was an expression of workers' power, and shows the way forward to achieve their demands.

—LeftVoice, February 2, 2023

<https://www.leftvoice.org/british-mega-strike-half-a-million-workers-bring-uk-to-a-halt-and-protest-government/>



February 1, 2023, "Mega Strike" in the UK. (Shutterstock)

Strikers Unite Across England

By STEVEN MORRIS, JESSICA MURRAY AND TOBI THOMAS

In what was billed as the biggest day of industrial action in a decade, a range of workers from teachers to train drivers, civil servants to university staff went on strike on Wednesday, February 1, 2023. *Guardian* reporters spoke to groups of people on picket lines and at demonstrations in Bristol, Birmingham, and London.

Bristol: “We need to show we are serious”

Thousands of striking workers including civil servants, university lecturers, teachers and train drivers marched through Bristol calling for better pay and working conditions. Led by drummers and accompanied by many children whose schools had closed, a large, noisy crowd gathered on College Green before proceeding through the city center, generally receiving a warm welcome from passersby.

Jon Voake, a drama teacher at Downendschool in south Gloucestershire, said: “It’s partly about pay, which has been reduced by 11 percent over the last ten years. But it’s also about how our workload’s going up. We’re all working with bigger groups. Children’s education is going to suffer and enough is enough.”

Voake was there with his department’s mascot, an ogre called Fred made for a school production but now taken out on strikes. “He gets out more than we’d like,” Voake said. “This is the fifth time I’ve been out in 20 years.”

A teacher in his first year said he was already wondering whether the profession was for him. “There’s such a contrast between last year when I was training and we were given a huge amount of support in planning lessons, thinking about how best to teach the students, to this year when I’m working weekends and holidays, staying late and still not teaching to the standard I’d like because of the workload. It’s simply too much. I’m really wondering if I can sustain it.”

Liz Franco, a civil servant, and member of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), said: “We’re way behind in terms of our wages. I’ve been conflicted about going on strike, but we need to show we are serious about this, and something needs to be done.” She said workers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency were attending the rally and march. “There’s a variety of jobs and people of all ages. Feelings are strong.”

Gerard Cooke and Kim Hicks, two actors, were carrying an Equity banner through the streets. Cooke said: “We’re here in solidarity with unions that are striking today. The cost-of-living crisis has hit everybody.” Hicks added: “The only way any message is going to get through is if we continue to be seen.”

Jonas Rademacker, a professor of physics at the University of Bristol, said he would much rather have been teaching than marching. “But we’re very fed up with a massively increasing workload. Most of us spend weekends catching up with our work and at the

same time our employers continue to cut our real-time pay and there is a massive attack on our pensions. We’d all rather be teaching. We love our students. This is not a good choice for us.”

David Cussans, a research fellow in the university’s school of physics, said: “So many people seem to be close to burnout. It’s not the money *per se*, it’s the feeling of being unappreciated, being ground down.”

A notable feature of the Bristol demonstration was the number of children supporting teachers—often their mothers or fathers. Josie Burden, a teacher at Bowsland Green primary in south Gloucestershire, was there with her children, Jago, ten, and Casper, five. “It’s sad that the children understand the effect of the cuts,” she said. “They know they can’t just have a glue stick when they want one. The resources they have are limited. These two were keen to come. They love school, they love their teachers and wanted to support them.”

Seb, a high-speed train driver, said he was moved by people from so many jobs and professions coming together. “Our disputes may be separate, but we



Demonstrators at the march in Bristol. Photograph: Karen Robinson/The Guardian

have one aim. We need a pay rise to match the rising cost of living. I think the public are still behind us. Everyone, even if they are not on strike themselves, knows somebody who is. Everyone is feeling the pinch. Everyone is standing together.”

Birmingham: “It’s nerve-racking but it’s been positive”

In Birmingham, there were picket lines dotted across the city from 8:00 A.M., with groups of strikers in hi-vis jackets waving flags and placards receiving the occasional thumbs-up or beep of a car horn in support from passersby.

“It’s always nerve-racking putting your fight in front of the people, which is what we’re doing, but it’s just been positive,” said Justin Price, a PCS union rep outside the Gambling Commission office in Victoria Square where civil servants were striking. “I think everyone understands the cost-of-living crisis and can sympathize with having a fair, inflation-based wage increase.”

He said many strikers had found it empowering to be part of a national day of strike action across multiple sectors and unions, and it had helped harden resolve to secure a pay rise. “It’s the camaraderie and solidarity of unions, and the collective action. Being visible as a show of solidarity, it’s exciting. With the RMT and Aslef being the flagbearers at the start of last year, it has inspired people to say, yeah, we deserve a raise, we deserve not to be going to food banks and to be struggling, we can do what they’re doing.”

Around the corner, outside a West Midlands government office hub, another union rep said morale in the civil service was particularly low. “For many years now, civil servants have faced declining living standards, less job security, and poorer pensions. Despite the fact inflation is clearly high at the moment, we received only an average three percent pay increase, so that’s a seven-eight percent real-terms cut,” he said. “I’ve given my life to the civil ser-

vice, I’m civil service to my core, but it’s just not right and it’s not fair.”

He said he hoped this year’s strikes would act as a tipping point. “History will show us, but maybe one day, looking back, 2023 will be seen as the year where people decided that we could have a better country, and we could have a better life.”

“Our disputes may be separate, but we have one aim. We need a pay rise to match the rising cost of living. I think the public are still behind us. Everyone, even if they are not on strike themselves, knows somebody who is. Everyone is feeling the pinch. Everyone is standing together.”

Across the city, at the University of Birmingham, university staff had set up picket lines at the campus gates on the first of ten days of strike action the UCU branch has planned for February. Staff are calling on universities to improve their four-five percent pay offer and, as part of a longer-running dispute, revoke pensions cuts.

Anke Buttner, the secretary of the university’s UCU branch, said union staff were frustrated that their demands were being called “woke.” “When trying to raise basic issues is being referred to as woke, I think we’re missing a lack of basic empathy,” she said. “But with today’s strikes, it’s hugely encouraging to see that you’re not the only one shouting into the void. There’s a lot of us.”

Harjinder Kaur-Aujla, the president of the UCU branch, said: “It feels like the

whole population is being gaslit. It’s like the government are saying there isn’t a problem. But then how can all these unions be saying there is a problem?”

London: “We’re striking for the future of education”

Outside Bishop Thomas Grant school in Streatham, south London, dozens of teachers joined a picket line, protesting against what they say are untenable conditions in the education sector for staff and students. Amid chants of “teachers say fair pay,” Diane Wilkinson, a languages teacher and the school’s NEU rep, said she and her colleagues were striking as a last resort.

“The government haven’t been listening to us, and like much of the public sector we have experienced a real-terms pay cut in the last ten years which has been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis,” she said. “A knock-on effect of that is that we don’t have enough teachers coming into the profession. So, we’re striking for the future of education.”

Wilkinson has seen first-hand the effects of the lack of government funding for the sector, most notably regarding recruitment. “It’s very difficult to find teachers for various subjects, and here we have people teaching exam subjects which they are not qualified to teach,” she said. “It’s only going to get worse.”

Lucy MacDonald, an English teacher, said the lack of investment in the education sector could be seen day to day. “For English, we have to rely on very old books which are used throughout the years which are falling apart and have to be taped together. We simply don’t have the money to replace them.”

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, the MP for Streatham, showed her support for the strikers. “They’re not just striking because [some teachers] are living within in-work poverty, they’re striking because they want a better service for the children they teach. But they

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“Citizens’ Insurrection”

Huge protests in France aim to kill Macron’s Pension Plan

BY KENNY STANCIL

Hundreds-of-thousands of enraged workers across France walked off the job and hit the streets January 31, 2023, to protest President Emmanuel Macron’s unpopular plan to raise the nation’s official retirement age from 62 to 64.

It marks the second time this month that French workers have mobilized against Macron’s attack on the country’s pension system. Nationwide strikes and marches on January 19 brought out between one and two million people, and labor unions aimed to match or exceed those numbers on Tuesday, with roughly 250 demonstrations planned around the country.

Longtime leftist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon predicted Tuesday morning that “a historic day” of protests would help defeat Macron’s proposal once and for all, as massive crowds rallied in cities and towns outside Paris—prior to a major march that shut down the French capital on Tuesday afternoon.

“It’s not often that we see such a mass mobilization,” Mélenchon said from the southern city of Marseille. “It’s a form of citizens’ insurrection.”

On the small western island of Ouessant, about 100 people gathered early in the day for a protest outside the office of Mayor Denis Palluel.

In a phone interview with *The Associated Press*, Palluel noted that the threat of having to work longer to qualify for a full pension dismayed mariners on the island who have grueling ocean-based jobs.

“Retiring at a reasonable age is important,” he said, “because life expectancy isn’t very long.”

Despite widespread opposition to pushing back France’s retirement age—approximately three-fourths of the population is against such a move,

according to recent polling—many lawmakers remain determined to fulfill Macron’s election pledge to overhaul the nation’s pension system.

On January 30, 2023, Macron described his effort to hike the retirement age as “essential.” Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne, for her part, asserted this past weekend that raising the retirement age to 64 by 2030 is “no longer negotiable.”

“Strikers and protesters intend to prove otherwise,” *Agence France-Presse* reported Tuesday. “Labor unions and left-wing legislators fighting in parliament against Macron’s plans are counting on protesters to turn out massively to strengthen their efforts to kill the bill.”

As they did earlier this month, strikes on Tuesday upended multiple aspects of daily life, including electricity production, transportation, and education.

“TotalEnergies says between 75 percent and 100 percent of workers at its refineries and fuel depots are on strike, while electricity supplier EDF said they’re monitoring a drop in power to the national grid equivalent to three nuclear power plants,” *Euronews* reported.

According to *AP*: “Rail operator SNCF reported major disruptions, with strikes knocking out most trains in the Paris region, in all other regions, and

on France’s flagship high-speed network linking cities and major towns. The Paris Metro was also hard hit by station closures and cancellations.”

France’s Education Ministry, meanwhile, reported that around a quarter of the nation’s teachers were on strike Tuesday, down from 70 percent during the first round of protests.

Macron’s proposed pension reform, the text of which Borne presented to the National Assembly earlier this month, faces an uphill battle.

For one thing, the New Ecological and Social People’s Union (NUPES)—a coalition of four left-wing parties recently formed by Mélenchon—won 131 seats in last June’s parliamentary elections, helping to prevent the neoliberal alliance Ensemble from securing the absolute majority it needed to ram through Macron’s unwanted austerity agenda.

According to *AFP*, even the president’s own allies from his ruling alliance have expressed concerns about some aspects of the legislation.

“We can feel a certain nervousness from the majority as we begin our work,” Mathilde Panot, head of the left-wing France Unbowed party in the National Assembly, told the news outlet on Tuesday. “When we see this opposition growing, I understand why they are wavering.”



Protesters march in Paris on January 31, 2023.

However, journalist Marlon Ettinger, citing French Communist Party MP André Chassaigne, warned recently that “the government might try to pass the reform through a social security financing bill (known as PLFRSS), which would allow for a series of constitutional delays that would significantly limit the amount of time deputies can discuss the bill. It would also block the possibility for the opposition to present their own counterproposals.”

In addition, “although Macron has no popular assent, nor a parliamentary majority for his reform, he does have constitutional tools he can use to push the package through,” Ettinger explained in *Jacobin*. “One, known as 49.3 (after the article of the Constitution which grants the president this power), essentially lets him bypass the National Assembly. The constitution of the current Fifth Republic grants the president these authoritarian powers to hedge against any popular sentiment that might make its way into the lower house. The use of 49.3 would suspend the debate in the National Assembly, then send the bill directly to the Senate, which is controlled by Les Républicains.”

Aware that such anti-democratic maneuvers are on the table, Mélenchon and other opponents of the assault on France’s pension system have called on Macron to withdraw his proposal for good.

—*Common Dreams*, January 31, 2023

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/france-protests-macron-pensions>

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can’t do that at the moment under the current conditions,” she said. “Under the Tories, public sector pay has stagnated and living conditions have gotten worse. We need to invest more in our teachers.”

—*The Guardian*, February 1, 2023

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/01/strikers-england-picket-line-voices-bristol-birmingham-london>

Stop U.S. Funding for Israel’s Massacres

PARTY FOR SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION EDITORIAL

January 26, 2023—The massacre of nine Palestinians today in the city of Jenin is an unmistakable sign that the new Israeli government intends to intensify the wave of repression it has unleashed since taking office last month. The killings were carried out by Israeli soldiers as they conducted a large-scale raid attempting to capture Palestinians they accuse of being part of resistance organizations. The dead include a 60-year-old woman Magda Obaid, and 20 other Palestinians were shot but survived.

Deadly Israeli raids into the West Bank are not new—they have long been a near-daily reality of life under occupation. But the brutality and frequency are clearly escalating. 2022 saw the highest number of Palestinians killed by

Israeli forces in this manner since 2004—and so far, killings this year are taking place at twice the rate of 2022!

This terrible violence is paid for with U.S. tax dollars. The U.S. government sends \$3.8 billion to Israel every year—and U.S. corporations provide the bullets, tanks, tear gas and all the other weapons this money buys. The United States is Israel’s main backer in world politics and attempts to shield it from any type of accountability for its crimes.

It is an outrage that the politicians in Washington choose to prioritize funding this horrific repression over addressing any of the countless dire social problems working people are facing across the country. All aid to Israel should be immediately cut off,

The U.S. government sends \$3.8 billion to Israel every year—and U.S. corporations provide the bullets, tanks, tear gas and all the other weapons this money buys.



Palestinians carrying the bodies of four of those killed during Israel’s raid on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on January 26, 2023. (Screenshot)

and all ties with Israel should be severed in recognition of the decades of oppression it has inflicted and continues to inflict on Palestinians.

The need to end U.S. financing of Israel has become even more urgent after a profoundly dangerous new coalition took power at the end of December, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The coalition includes ministers from formerly fringe groups that rocketed to power with the assistance of Netanyahu. Most prominent among these figures is Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of the fascist Jewish Power party. Ben-Gvir holds the newly-created title of “Minister of National Security,” which gives him control over the country’s police, prisons, and border guards. Another fascist, Bezalel Smotrich, is the minister in charge of armed forces activity in the West Bank.

This far-right government’s assumption of power coincides with the rise of a new generation of Palestinian resistance. Young fighters have organized themselves into new formations to challenge the occupation, and Jenin is one of the places where this phenomenon is the strongest. Netanyahu and his allies think they can crush this trend with overwhelming violence.

But the spirit of resistance is on full display in the aftermath of the Jenin massacre. A general strike across the West Bank was immediately called in response, and Palestinian groups vowed to keep up the fight.

Palestinians are waging a just struggle to reclaim the land that was stolen from them with the creation of the state of Israel and its constant expansion. They are subjected to constant violations of their most basic rights under a

political system similar to apartheid South Africa or Jim Crow segregation in the United States. The U.S. government must stop writing the checks that make this oppression possible.

—*Liberation*, January 26, 2023

<https://www.liberationnews.org/psl-editorial-stop-u-s-funding-for-israels-massacres/>

All aid to Israel should be immediately cut off, and all ties with Israel should be severed in recognition of the decades of oppression it has inflicted and continues to inflict on Palestinians.

Israel’s Most Backward Government Ever

BY RAYA FIDEL

To say that the new Israeli hardcore right-wing, ultra-religious, chauvinist government desires to destroy Israel’s democracy and turn it into a reactionary, backward country is not hyperbole. Within days of being appointed, Israel’s new National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, along with heavily armed guards, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem, asserting a false claim to the Muslim Noble Sanctuary. This potentially deadly provocation against Muslims and Palestinians is a taste of things to come.

Moving ever rightward. Israel’s most recent parliamentary election was held on November 1, 2022. It was the fifth legislative election in four years. Left-wing, center, and Arab parties suffered losses, and far-right parties gained seats. A turn by Israelis to the right, and to fundamentalist religion, has been growing exponentially. Recent

surveys found that 80 percent of Israelis call themselves religious, whereas 30 years ago only 25 percent did. During this same time, conservative and religious parties became openly racist against Arabs, extremely ultra-right, and anti-democratic.

Benjamin Netanyahu’s party, Likud, received the largest number of votes in November. Likud allied with hard-right religious parties and obtained a majority of 64 of the 120 seats in the parliament—the Knesset. Netanyahu was named Prime Minister.

Most of the members in this coalition government live in illegal settlements in the West Bank. The majority have criminal records—for corruption, money laundering, and racist violence against Palestinians. Netanyahu himself has a trial for fraud, breach of trust, and bribes still proceeding. He has only one goal: to create a law that will keep

him out of prison. The aims of his partners are to take total control over the life of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and Israeli Arabs, and to convert Israel into a religious state, much like Iran and Afghanistan. This new government plans to do both.

Plans to overhaul the judicial system include having politicians, rather than a committee of experienced judges, make all judicial appointments, including those for the Supreme Court. In addition, the Knesset will have the power to overturn Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority.

The appointments of new ministers will make it easy to activate an ultra-orthodox and extreme chauvinist agenda. Most dangerous among the crop is Itamar Ben-Gvir, a leader of violent incidents of settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. He has been indicted over 50 times for hate

speech against Arabs and support of a Jewish terrorist organization. Netanyahu immediately placed Ben-Gvir in the new post of Minister of the National Security Office.

Ben-Gvir plans to terrorize Israeli Arabs, expel all Palestinians from the West Bank, and annex it under the settlers' rule. A celebrity criminal and renowned racist, he has complete control of the police, and he is now also responsible for the Border Police in the West Bank—a role previously under the army—which carries out arrests and deals with public disturbances. This gives *de facto* permission to settlers to increase their violence against Palestinians.

Avi Maoz, an extreme homophobe who promised to cancel the Jerusalem Pride Parade, is in line to head a host of educational programs on dozens of subjects, such as civics, Jewish identity, human rights, and gender equality. He will also be responsible for government collaboration with civil society groups. Most outrageous is the finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who has said he will base his policies on the Old Testament, which the settlers use to “prove” the West Bank belongs to Israel.

Ultra-religious schools—that are private and don't teach core subjects such as math and science—are slated to receive twice the funding per student of secular, public schools. And claims of “religious reasons” will allow businesses to discriminate against women and LGBTQ+ people and will allow doctors to refuse treatments.

New policies are afoot to reduce women to second-class citizens. Public spaces would be separated by gender, with women forced to sit in the back of the bus and at the upper gallery in theaters. Women will undoubtedly be harassed for not dressing “modestly enough,” and no image of a woman will be allowed in public.

The pushback. The Palestinian people, in response to increased Israeli aggression, have ramped up self-defense efforts.¹ In the United States, Jewish people have spoken out strongly against this new government. Hundreds of U.S. rabbis signed an open letter to stop far-right Israeli lawmakers from delivering community speeches. And the Jewish Federations of North America, which is the world's biggest vehicle for donations to Israel, recommended that

donations be made to Israeli organizations but not to the government.

Meanwhile, Israelis have begun mass demonstrations against the new order. On January 7, 2023, 20,000 protested in Tel Aviv. Many organizations, including the army, have sounded the alarm. Given the growing protests, the government could be slowed down or stopped from implementing some of its most backward plans. Only time will tell.

The author is an Israeli American and staunch supporter of Palestine.

—Freedom Socialist Party, February 2023

<https://socialism.com/fs-article/israels-most-backward-government-ever/>

¹ “New Upsurge in Palestinian Resistance”
<https://socialism.com/fs-article/palestinian-fight-back/>



On November 7, 2022, shortly after being elected into office, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir meet in Tel Aviv. PHOTO: Likud

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community,” the movement said in a statement. “Had those officers not pulled Tyre over, he would be here right now with his four-year-old son, taking photos of sunsets and skateboarding. Yet, even as we try to grieve and stand in solidarity with Tyre’s family, we know the police are ramping up to criminalize our actions—meeting our calls for justice and accountability with more state violence and suppression.”

—Truthout, January 28, 2023

<https://truthout.org/articles/released-footage-shows-five-memphis-cops-brutally-beating-tyre-nichols/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=73db7920-9037-4f81-8436-90121380c16a>

Sickening Similarities in Police Assaults Evidence Resilience of Racism

BY LINN WASHINGTON

Raw racism deeply embedded in law enforcement connects the fatal January 7, 2023, police beating of a Black man in Memphis, Tennessee with a vicious December 9, 1981, police assault on a Black man in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

That deadly 2023 police beating of motorist Tyre Nichols and the barbaric 1981 beating of journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal each occurred in cities with documentable histories of racist policing from false arrests to fatal shootings.

Evidence of brutal, bigoted behaviors that often animate law enforcement culture are evident in the merciless beatings of Nichols and Abu-Jamal. Commonalities include that police unleashed each assault without resistance from their targets, and the lawless law enforcers in each incident reflexively denied any misconduct.

Police brutally battered both Nichols and Abu-Jamal with punches and kicks.

With Nichols, one policeman also hammered his head with a metal baton.

Policemen who assaulted Abu-Jamal, at one point, held his body battering-ram-style to smash his head into a street sign pole multiple times. Police beat Abu-Jamal with such intensity that some who witnessed it said seeing that assault made them physically sick.

Like the Nichols beating, where Memphis police callously left the badly injured Nichols suffering at the scene for nearly thirty minutes, Philadelphia police maliciously refused to quickly render medical aid to the critically injured Abu-Jamal—despite him bleeding from a policeman's bullet.

Unlike the Nichols beating, when police finally took Abu-Jamal to a hospital emergency room, officers attacked him again, beating him before life-saving surgery and beating him during his post-op recovery. Nichols was not attacked

inside the hospital but that police beating caused his death days later.

One salient difference does exist between the police assaults on Nichols and Abu-Jamal, who has been incarcerated since 1981 for fatally shooting a policeman.

Capitol Hill did not approve anti-lynching legislation until March 2022.

In the 2023 Nichols beating death, undeniable video evidence from police force installed anti-crime surveillance cameras helped defeat initial denials of wrongdoing from the policemen who attacked Nichols.

In the 1981 Abu-Jamal beating, the lack of video evidence during that pre-high-tech era enabled authorities to dismiss multiple eyewitness accounts of that beating. Typically, Philadelphia authori-

ties accepted pleas from police who denied beating Abu-Jamal. Authorities ignored the obvious evidence of multiple broken bones and other serious internal injuries the journalist sustained from those police beatings.

Even more absurd, authorities embraced belated claims from police that Abu-Jamal confessed—claims not made until two months after Abu-Jamal's arrest. During an investigation into a brutality complaint Abu-Jamal filed against his attackers, two policemen claimed they suddenly remembered hearing Abu-Jamal utter a confession.

That belated confession claim helped prosecutors convict Abu-Jamal in a murder case that lacked any credible forensic evidence that connected Abu-Jamal to the crime. One of those two belated confessions claim cops filed a report hours after Abu-Jamal's December 9, 1981, arrest stating the journalist "made no comments."

Many proclaim racism is not an element in the fatal beating of Nichols



Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal march down JFK Blvd. past the Juanita Kidd Stout Center for Criminal Justice and City Hall, in Philadelphia, December 16, 2022.

because the five officers initially arrested for his savage death are Black.

Persons who've made this "no-racism" declaration range from Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn "C.J." Davis, a Black woman, to British broadcaster Piers Morgan, a white man.

Chief Davis postures that Black police involvement blunts criticisms that "problems in law enforcement [are] about race." Morgan pretends that Black police involvement proves Nichols' death "isn't a racist act of white supremacy."

In February 1981, while Abu-Jamal worked as an award-winning journalist, he questioned Philadelphia's then District Attorney about racism in that city's justice system, according to Abu-Jamal's original audio recordings of that encounter.

That DA rejected racism as a factor in a Philadelphia judge's highly unusual dismissal of assault charges against three white policemen for their vicious beating of a Black radical in 1978. TV news captured that 1978 beating live and broadcast it around the world. That televised 1978 beating of the unarmed, surrendering radical came 13-years before the infamous videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King in Los Angeles.

Attempts to downplay racist police culture embedded in the beatings of Nichols and Abu-Jamal evidence either willful ignorance or deliberate deception about the realities of institutionalized, race-based inequities operative across American society since the inception of the United States in the late 18th Century.

For example, with the Nichols beating, if anti-Blackness is not embedded in police culture, then Blacks in Memphis would not comprise 86 percent of the persons subjected to use of force from a Memphis police department that is 58 percent Black.

As a *New York Times* article about Nichols' death and policing in Memphis noted, "...the data shows that Black residents were subjects of

police use of force at a rate nearly three times that of white residents, and eight times that of Hispanic residents."

Commentators on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean rebuff attempts to downplay racism in law policing.

Wendell Griffen, a recently retired state court judge in Arkansas, noted on his blog that terrorizing people of color for social control is embedded across American society.

**Wendell Griffen, a
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"People like Tyre Nichols are abused...and slain by police to satisfy White supremacist notions of what 'safe' and 'public safety' mean," Griffen wrote.

Richard Sudan, in a commentary posted on London's African-Caribbean, *The Voice-Online*, called-out the law enforcement attitude that Black lives hold less value than white lives.

"Black officers beating and killing Tyre Nichols does not suddenly mean that race no longer becomes a factor in another Black death in custody," Sudan wrote. "It makes the officers involved, whatever their complexion, complicit in a system blighted by white supremacy."

The plight of Mumia Abu-Jamal is a prime example of institutional racism embedded throughout America's justice system.

Racism in law enforcement stalked the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal years before his controversial 1982 conviction—a conviction that initially sent him to death row for decades before

conversion of his sentence in 2011 to life in prison without parole.

In October 1968 a white Philadelphia police detective wantonly beat a teen-aged Abu-Jamal and falsely charged the teen with assault. A judge dismissed that charge due to evidence Abu-Jamal did not attack the detective. That detective beat Abu-Jamal when Abu-Jamal sought protection from bigots who attacked him for his participation in a protest against a prominent white supremacist [George Wallace] then campaigning for the presidency of the United States.

In the Abu-Jamal murder case, Philadelphia police unlawfully manufactured evidence of guilt and Philly prosecutors illegally withheld evidence of innocence, some evidence withheld for nearly four decades.

Further, courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, have consistently dismissed this egregious misconduct by police and prosecutors to uphold Abu-Jamal's flawed conviction. Those appeal dismissals clearly violate Abu-Jamal's constitutional rights—evidence that courts consistently shirk their prime duty to ensure justice.

In one ugly example, the judge at Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial declared on the eve of that trial that he would help prosecutors "fry the nigger." That odious pronouncement of racial bigotry and pro-prosecution bias corrupted Abu-Jamal's constitutional right to a fair trial.

Yet, appellate courts consistently whitewash trial judge Albert Sabo's racist misconduct with contorted contentions that Abu-Jamal suffered no legal harms during his trial undermined by Sabo's bias.

In 2003, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania found no fault with Judge Sabo's judicial conduct code violating admission to assist prosecutors "fry the nigger." Years later, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice who authored that 2003 whitewash ruling was forced to resign from Pennsylvania's highest

court when exposed as a participant in a scandal that involved sending racist/sexist/homophobic emails.

Corrupted, racist procedures in Abu-Jamal's case have triggered criticisms nationally and internationally for decades.

In February 2000, Amnesty International, the respected human rights organization, released a report on its thorough review of Abu-Jamal's racism-tainted case. One finding in that AI report stated: "The record of this case indicates a pattern of events that compromised Abu-Jamal's right to a fair trial."

In December 2022 the United Nation's Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent issued a legal document regarding the Abu-Jamal case. Criticisms in the Group's document sent to the Philadelphia judge handling Abu-Jamal's current appeal cited content and context regarding "impropriety and racial discriminatory effects" embedded in the Abu-Jamal case.

Demands for federal legislation to address racism-rooted abusive policing across America erupted again in the wake of the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols.

In September 2021, Republican U.S. Senators stifled approval of the "George Floyd Justice in Policing Act"—named

after a Black man murdered by police in Minnesota the year before. Senators responded to police union demands to kill the George Floyd bill approved by Democrats in Congress over objections from Republicans in that body.

**That deadly 2023
police beating of
motorist Tyre Nichols
and the barbaric 1981
beating of journalist
Mumia Abu-Jamal each
occurred in cities with
documentable histories
of racist policing from
false arrests to fatal
shootings.**

Reticence to approve federal legislation addressing abusive policing is reminiscent of the U.S. Senate's century-long refusal to approve legislation outlawing lynching of Blacks. Lynching of Blacks raged from the end of the Civil War into the mid-1900s. Rampaging racist mobs, often with

assistance from racist police, murdered thousands of Black men, women, and children — with few of those murders ever prosecuted for their crimes.

Capitol Hill did not approve anti-lynching legislation until March 2022. Members of Congress introduced 200 anti-lynching bills with only three successfully approved, each of those approved measures killed by racists in the Senate.

The first federal anti-lynching bill came in January 1900, introduced by the last African American to serve in Congress during the 19th Century. That measure introduced by then Congressman George H. White never received consideration.

When White, a Republican and former prosecutor in North Carolina, spoke on behalf of his anti-lynching measure, he poised a question relevant to the current need for anti-police-brutality legislation.

"Should not a nation be just to all of her citizens, protect them alike in all their rights, on every foot of her soil?"

—*This Can't Be Happening*,
February 4, 2023

<https://thiscantbehappening.net/sickening-similarities-in-police-assaults-evidence-resilience-of-racism/>

The Brutal Police Beating of Tyre Nichols

By JESSICA CORBETT

The city of Memphis, Tennessee on Friday night released four videos of the January 7, 2023, arrest of Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black motorist who died after being beaten by five officers who were subsequently fired and charged with murder.

The footage was privately seen by Nichols' family on January 9. Three of the videos are from body-worn cameras issued by the Memphis Police Department (MPD). Another is from a camera mounted on a pole and contains no audio.

Before the videos were released, MPD Chief Cerelyn "C.J." Davis warned that they show "acts that defy humanity."

Nichols was pulled over by Memphis officers for alleged reckless driving that Davis has since said her department has been "unable to substantiate." After three days in the hospital, he died on January 10, from cardiac arrest and kidney failure.

"I am disturbed and disgusted by the sheer brutality and lack of humanity on display in the footage released

today," said NAACP president and CEO Derrick Johnson in a statement Friday night. "No person should ever be subjected to such violence, to have to call for their mother as they are being brutalized by police."

"This video is a stark reminder that in America, on any day of the week, a Black person can be brutally beaten to death less than a hundred feet from his home by those who are supposedly here to 'serve and protect' our communities," he continued. "Let me be

clear—a traffic stop should not result in the brutal death of an unarmed man—period.”

Turning his attention to federal lawmakers, Johnson added: “As you leave the halls of Congress today and return to your comfortable homes, take a moment to think about the pleas for mercy that Tyre cried as he begged for his mother, and ask yourself the question: What if this was your child? Your continued failure to act has left Tyre’s blood, and the blood of the countless Black lives claimed by police violence, on your hands. Get up and do something. We are done dying.”

As *Common Dreams* reported January 12, former MPD cops Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Justin Smith, Emmitt Martin III, and Desmond Mills Jr.—who are all Black—were charged with second-degree murder and various other crimes.

In a series of tweets responding to the charges, Color Of Change president Rashad Robinson said January 13, “Let’s be clear, while the mass movement of people demanding some level of accountability has succeeded in this one instance, convictions aren’t the goal.”

“WE WANT AN END TO POLICE MURDERS OF BLACK PEOPLE. So,

this moment isn’t about Black vs. white, it’s about blue vs. Black. Diversity cannot and does not solve systemic problems,” he continued. “If we don’t change the structure of policing and safety in our country, Black people will continue to be killed, by police of all races. The evidence is clear—investing in communities will keep us safe, not the police.”

“Let me be clear—a traffic stop should not result in the brutal death of an unarmed man—period.”

Damon Hewitt, president and executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said January 13, that “Tyre’s death is a bitter reminder of the Black lives that we’ve lost due to police brutality. Thirty years ago, we were horrified by the footage of police beating Rodney King. And yet, despite our decades of protest, we’re still fighting the same battle.”

“The only difference now is more of the horrific incidents are being captured on video, whether it be bodycams or bystanders,” he added. “Tinkering at the margins of a violent

police state is not enough. It never was. This death must amount to more than just another viral moment or hashtag. It must spark a serious reconsideration and shifting of priorities, deployment, and resources.”

Before the footage was released, major cities across the United States were preparing for potential January 13 protests.

According to *The Associated Press*:

“As a precaution, Memphis-area schools canceled all after-class activities and postponed an event scheduled for Saturday morning. Other early closures included the city power company’s community offices and the University of Memphis.

“Nichols’ mother, RowVaughn Wells, warned supporters of the ‘horrific’ nature of the video but pleaded for peace.

“I don’t want us burning up our city, tearing up the streets, because that’s not what my son stood for,” she said Thursday. ‘If you guys are here for me and Tyre, then you will protest peacefully.’”

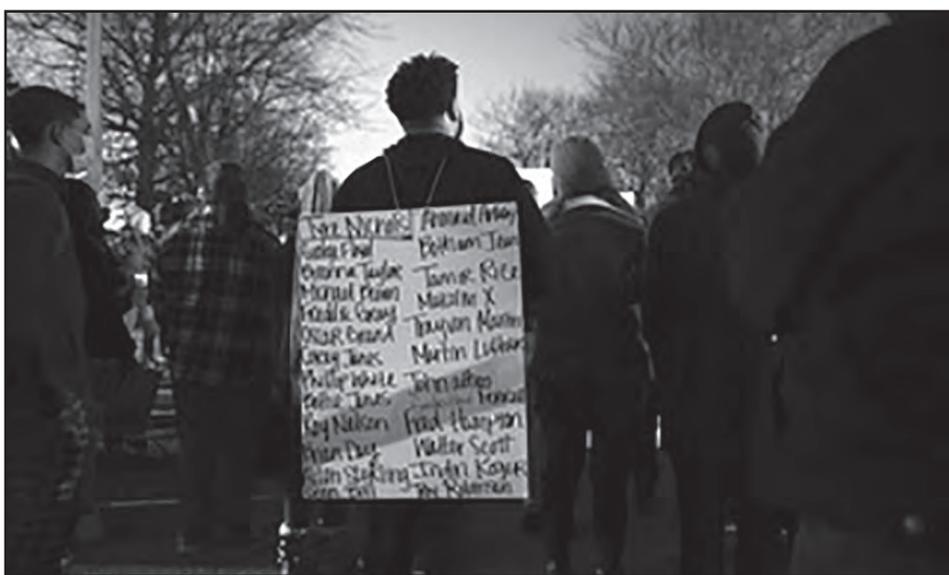
Noting that “there’s been a lot of focus on the perceived threat of violence,” *MLK50: Justice Through Journalism*, a nonprofit Memphis newsroom, on January 13 published a collection of stories and columns “to add context to this tragedy” for those who may be unfamiliar with “the antagonistic relationship police have cultivated with the community, dating back decades.”

The coalition Decareerate Memphis shared on Twitter demands from Nichols’ family and the community, including reforms to reduce the chances of similar future events.

The Movement for Black Lives tweeted advice on “how to limit viewing sensitive content” on social media platforms, for those who do not want to be traumatized by the footage.

“We grieve with Tyre’s family, friends, and the entire Memphis com-

Continued on page 16



Demonstrators protest the death of Tyre Nichols at the hands of Memphis police on January 27, 2023 in Memphis, Tennessee.

The Murder of Tyre Nichols and the Death of Police Reform

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

“Black policemen were another matter. We used to say, ‘If you must call a policeman,’—for we hardly ever did—‘for God’s sake, try to make sure it’s a white one.’ A Black policeman could completely demolish you. He knew far more about you than a white policeman could, and you were without defenses before this Black brother in uniform whose entire reason for breathing seemed to be his hope to offer proof that, though he was Black, he was not Black like you.”

—James Baldwin

It’s often said, and usually true, that police only show up after a crime has been committed. But that wasn’t the case with Tyre Nichols. There were plenty of police (including some “elite” officers) on the scene when Nichols was being savagely assaulted, in a crime that took his life. Swaddled in body armor, adorned with all kinds of weapons, of varying degrees of lethality, none of these lawmen intervened to save his life, and none of them tried to stop a homicide from taking place before their eyes. Some actually joined in, others just stood and watched, giving the assailants, Nichols’ killers, an appreciative pat on the back, as if they’d made a good tackle in a football game. How do you reform this?

It’s been nine years since the killing of Michael Brown. There have been many promises of reform since the 18-year-old Brown was shot six times with his hands up on a Ferguson, Missouri street, usually resulting in bigger budgets, new weapons, and policing techniques. The Scorpion police unit that punched, kicked, clubbed, sprayed and tased Tyre Nichols was one of these new elite tactical squads. Yet last year U.S. police killed more people than any year in history. Surely, it’s clear by now that police reform only serves to legitimize

a violent system.

Videos of police violence have become a media event with their own “coming attraction” release dates, assuring that more people will tune in to watch (mainly) Black men being beaten or shot. For some, I suspect, the footage has the same allure as the whipping scenes in *12 Years a Slave*. Yet these aren’t actors. This is real ultraviolence being inflicted on real people, leaving real blood staining the streets.

I’d read the accounts of Tyre Nichols’ beating. I knew it was bad. Very bad. It had to be for Missouri prosecutors to take such swift and rare action. I didn’t have to watch the videos. But I did. I felt some obligation to—a need to witness what people acting under the authority of our government are doing to its own citizens. These videos of state violence document atrocities, but they also provoke intense emotional responses. For some, a sadistic thrill, for most horror, for others fury and rage.

On the night of January 7, Tyre Nichols, a 28-year-old Black man, is pulled over on what appears to be a rou-

tine traffic stop in the Brandywine neighborhood of Memphis. But as is so often the case, especially with Black drivers, routine stops are a pretext for searches or casual intimidation, especially by the Scorpion special unit that had targeted Nichols. Indeed, such manufactured encounters—call it vehicular stop-and-frisk—seem to be the very purpose of the Scorpion Unit. Originally, the Memphis police department claimed Nichols had been stopped for reckless driving. One officer even suggested he’d been driving on the wrong side of the street, trying to ram one of the cop cars. But there’s no video showing this alleged infraction. Apparently, the police car was “too new” to have a working dash cam and these claims swiftly evaporated. The Memphis police chief now says she doesn’t know why Nichols was pulled over.

The first video shows a cop with gun drawn approaching Nichols’ blue car. One cop described the initial encounter this way: “He pull up to the red light. Stop at the red light. He put his turning signal on. ‘So, we jump out the car. ‘Shit went from there.’” As Nichols tells the cops, “I didn’t do anything,” he’s shoved to the pavement



Tyre Nichols slumped against squad car unconscious and bleeding while cops chatted among themselves after brutally beating him. (Screenshot)

and beaten. Nichols can be heard saying, “OK! I’m on the ground.” Then as the assault continues, Nichols pleads, “You guys are really doing a lot right now. I’m just trying to get home.”

As Nichols squirms, one cop says: “What the fuck man?” Another cop shoots Nichols with a yellow stun gun, but Nichols, surely fearing for his life now, breaks free and bolts down the street. An officer yells: “Taser, taser!” Two cops can be seen running after him, but apparently winded and blinded by their own pepper spray, they soon give up the chase. One cop has lost his glasses. Another tries to wash the chemical agent from his burning eyes. “One of the [taser] prongs hit the bastard,” the cop wearing the body cam says.

Four minutes later a cop can be heard calling the Memphis police dispatcher for back up: “Any other Scorpion car pull over to east Raines and Ross. We have one running on foot.” The video shows two more cars arriving at the scene. “That way,” one of the cops tells the arriving officers. “Thin male, Black, blue jeans and a plaid jacket.” A couple of minutes later, the cops learn Nichols has been captured. “I hope they stomp his ass. I hope they stomp his ass,” one cop blurts.

The next video begins four minutes later. Nichols is once again pinned to the ground. He’s being shoved and slapped by two cops. Nichols screams: “Mom!” His mother’s home is less than a football field away.

Then Nichols is pepper sprayed in the face. “Give me your hands,” a cop yells. “Give me your fucking hands!” Nichols tries to wipe his eyes. “All right, all right,” he says. “Watch out, or I’m going to pepper spray you again.” Nichols tries to move his hands to his back when he is sprayed in the face once more. He screams again, “Mom, mom, mom.”

Three cops restrain Nichols on the ground, while another kicks him brutally in the face two or three times. Nichols is now on his back, writhing in

pain. “Watch out—I’m going to baton the fuck out of you,” a cop shouts then begins clubbing him.

For the next three minutes, Tyre Nichols is punched, kicked, beaten, and dragged across the ground before being jerked upright, when he is punched viciously in the head again. Then he collapses.

Surely, it’s clear by now that police reform only serves to legitimize a violent system.

Now prone, Nichols is handcuffed and dragged to a police car. The cops prop him up against the door. He topples over, obviously seriously injured. Another cop yanks him back up. Nichols’ body appears to twitch and shake. Two of the officers near him give each other fist bumps, as Nichols’ life begins to bleed away.

By this time, two EMTs are at the scene. But it will be another 19 minutes before Tyre Nichols receives any medical treatment. Finally, an ambulance arrives, and Nichols is placed on a stretcher, 24 minutes after slumping over next to the patrol car.

Tyre Nichols would die three days later. The coroner’s report laconically concluded that he “suffered excessive bleeding caused by a severe beating.”

There’s no evidence that extreme body cam images like these have changed police behavior or inhibited their eruptions of violence. But I suspect they have changed people’s attitudes toward police. After watching so many incidents of cops shooting or assaulting people over minor incidents with little or no provocation, it has made most of us more fearful of cops, more compliant to their every command, and more willing to give up basic rights and privileges to keep from

being beaten up, jailed, or killed. This is how police states take hold, bit by bit, through a kind of silent coerced consent of the governed.

But the authorities will take the rage, too. I almost got the sense that the Memphis cops wanted the videos of Nichols’ beating to propel people onto the streets. They needed a riot to deflect from the brief glimpses the videos provided of the violent reality of everyday policing in America. Is there any question that American police are more militarized now than they were before the protests that erupted after the killing of George Floyd?

Five of the Scorpions were arrested, charged with second-degree homicide, and soon released on bail. (People are sitting in jails across the country because they can’t raise a couple of hundred bucks for bail on petty crimes.) All of them were Black. There were more than five cops on the scene, several of whom are white (including the one who first tasered Nichols,) any one of whom could have stepped in to stop the assault and protect Tyre Nichols’ life. None did. Any one of them could have arrested Nichols’ assailants. None did. Where are these Scorpions now? Back on the streets of Memphis?

Of course, the real shit didn’t start at that stoplight in Memphis, and it won’t end with the prosecution and conviction of the five Scorpions. In the end, the five cops charged with killing Tyre Nichols were almost as expendable as he was. They are the sacrifice necessary to save the system, the system which put their elite unit out on the street to harass and intimidate young Black men, a system that shows every sign of becoming more, not less, violent.

Jeffrey St. Clair is editor of CounterPunch.

—CounterPunch+, January 29 - February 4, 2023

<https://www.counterpunch.org/category/counterpunch-plus/>

Cop City is the Future They Want

BY KENN ORPHAN

Over this past weekend I went to see the new *Avatar* movie. I had seen the first one and, although it had flaws, I saw the overall message as compelling. Fair warning, here is a small spoiler: Simply put, the plot is one where humans in the future, with the help of gargantuan and lethal military might, attempt to colonize a planet called Pandora. It is another solar system many light years from earth, and it possesses many extraordinary and rare minerals and resources, as well as incredible biodiversity and Indigenous societies. In the sequel, the humans of earth have returned, and their goal is nothing less than total colonization of the planet for the purpose of resettlement. Earth, as one cold hearted military general says, is dying.

Hollywood produces a lot of rubbish. I mean, a LOT of it. And we are living in an age where fast paced computer-generated graphics and imagery have taken the place of meaningful dialogue, acting and plot development. Much of this is nothing new, the film industry has long collaborated with the Department of Defense, the Pentagon, and the CIA in its productions. How else could a blockbuster movie have access to so much military hardware? Major box office money makers, like the braindead “Top Gun” series, rely enormously on the U.S. military industrial sector.

Thus, much of the messaging in today’s blockbuster movies is in lock-step with that of modern American imperialism. The military is almost always portrayed as a flawed, yet thoroughly heroic force for good in the world. Foreigners, especially if they are in the Global South or from Arab or Muslim countries, are othered. They are often depicted in racist stereotypes, stripped of their humanity, and given the role of a sinister or backward troll bent on the destruction of all that is good in the world.

So, watching the new *Avatar* film provided a refreshing break from such racist and ludicrous plotlines. Here, imperialistic military forces are portrayed in the more accurate light of world destroyer. One scene is reminiscent of the American military’s murderous assault on Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 70s. Giant starships make landfall on parts of Pandora’s pristine rainforests, setting everything and every living being ablaze. It is scorched earth policy seen for what it is, ecocide.

Police forces are now being trained, not to protect people from harm, but to protect state and corporate power. And this marriage is classic fascism.

Without a doubt, *Avatar* has many flaws. It is still very American-centric. And there is still the stench of “white

savior” mythos haunting many of the scenes. But it is visually stunning. And it is a departure from most of the films generated by the film industry these days. I cannot imagine most people coming away from the movie with anything other than disdain for militarism and all its nauseating jingoistic platitudes. What struck me the most is that while I was watching this movie about an assault on the ecosystem of a fictional planet and its Indigenous peoples, another was unfolding on a real forest and on the people attempting to protect it from destruction. That forest is in the city of Atlanta, Georgia.

On January 18th, the Atlanta police assassinated one of those defenders. Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, affectionately known as “Tortuguita,” or “Little Turtle,” was gunned down in cold blood by a stormtrooper raiding a peaceful encampment. The defenders have been in the Weelaunee Forest (also known as the South River Forest,) south-east of Atlanta, for nearly two years protesting the construction of a massive \$90 million dollar, 85-acre, police training facility. According to



Manuel Esteban Paez Terán was killed defending a forest in Atlanta. Photograph: Gabe Eisen

Truthout, the project has the backing of major corporations like Coca-Cola, Home Depot, Delta Airlines, UPS and Cox Enterprises. The latter owns the *Atlanta Constitution-Journal* which has published endless articles in praise of the Cop City project and demonizing anyone who dissents or protests it. The citizens of Atlanta, where a majority has opposed the facility, will nonetheless be paying for a third of its cost.

The Weelaunee Forest was land stolen from the Muscogee people who were marched westward, many to their deaths, in the infamous Trail of Tears. It is also located in a predominantly working-class Black neighborhood. And it had been slated as a much-needed greenbelt for the city and to mitigate the damage from climate change. It has been aptly named “Cop City” by many protestors and critics alike.

With all these characteristics, the assault on this forest and its defenders is one of the best analogies for our current predicament. It also parallels the ongoing war against Indigenous peoples in the Amazon or in Central America, where scores have been murdered by armed militias and illegal loggers and ranchers who have been decimating the rainforests for decades. But it also signifies something even more chilling.

The authoritarian state, now in the most dangerous and destructive phase of late capitalism, is ramping up its efforts to suppress any meaningful dissent. With each passing year it becomes more brazen. So sadly, in all likelihood, the Weelaunee Forest will be razed, and Cop City will be built. The state is already unleashing its arsenal and declaring protestors “domestic terrorists,” a term which has been made meaningless with each passing year as it is applied to virtually anyone who exposes or opposes state violence, mindless militarism, rapacious consumption, and corporate ecocide.

Police forces are now being trained, not to protect people from harm, but to protect state and corporate power. And this marriage is classic fascism. They will be trained in urban warfare against civilians, primarily the poor, working class and people of color, and all under the guise of “fighting crime and keeping people safe.” The real purpose is far more ominous.

Instead of dismantling the planet-killing arrangement of power currently in place, those on the top are seeking to bolster its defenses. And they will defend this racist, ecocidal and untenable fortress at all costs.

As our climate becomes more precarious and erratic, social and economic tensions will continue to be exacerbated. Instead of dismantling the planet-killing arrangement of power currently in place, those on the top are seeking to bolster its defenses. And they will defend this racist, ecocidal and untenable fortress at all costs. But does it need to be this way? And how complicit are we in this scheme?

As I watched *Avatar*, I found myself thinking of this unfolding drama in the Weelaunee Forest. I thought of the two Indigenous Pataxó land defenders who were just murdered in Brazil. I thought about the protests happening in west Germany to oppose a mine, where Greta Thunberg and others were just arrested. And I felt myself grieving that many of us seem a bit too comfortable with the theme of abandoning our precious home world within the realms of

science fiction movies. I understand that the broader message of films like this may be to defend what we have left here, but how often is this understood by the larger audience? How often do they recognize that they represent the fictional “Sky People” or at least tacitly support their destructive policies and projects by their silence?

The species on fictional Pandora aren’t more wondrous than the real ones who inhabit our fragile and beleaguered biosphere. Not by a longshot. I’ve been fortunate to witness so many of them when visiting various places around the world. From bioluminescent algae in the sea in Panama, to marsupials in Australia, to howler monkeys in Argentina, to sequoias in California, to glow worms in New Zealand, to sea turtles in the Caribbean Sea, to lynxes here in my native Nova Scotia. And the Indigenous peoples and cultures of that fictional world are no match for the real ones who still live among us, in our times, and who are at the forefront of this ongoing war being waged for profit, against the biosphere on which we all depend.

Resistance to colonialism, militaristic, state violence and ecocide isn’t fictional. Cop City is the future they want, but there are courageous people pushing back against that nihilistic narrative everywhere. It is a resistance that is happening now, in big ways and small, on this world, and in places not far from where you live. But it needs all of us, or it will fail. And this wondrous, real world, and all that rely on it, will be lost forever.

Kenn Orphan is an artist, sociologist, radical nature lover and weary, but committed activist.

—CounterPunch, January 26, 2023

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/26/cop-city-is-the-future-they-want/>

Morality, Medicine, Money

BY DR. NAYVIN GORDON

“When COVID swept the planet, a moral injury crisis arose as ethically wrenching dilemmas became the new normal. ...In an atmosphere of rationed care, doctors, nurses, and other health-care workers must admit a few patients and turn many away,” to die.¹

Moral injury is a specific and devastating trauma that arises when people face situations that deeply violate their core values. Such violations of morality can result in shame, guilt, and hopelessness, raising the risk of substance abuse, depression, and suicide. When society allows the uncontrolled spread of a deadly virus, millions are afraid they may become infected and transmit the virus to their family.

How did we arrive at this point of moral degradation?

For thousands of years, physicians took oaths to always act in the patient’s best interest when providing care. At the heart of medical ethics, this moral code was passed down through the centuries and reaffirmed by the World Medical Association (WMA) in 1949 and again in 2006. Additionally, the WMA specified: “A physician shall not allow his/her judgment to be influenced by personal profit or unfair discrimination,” and “shall not receive any financial benefits or other incentives solely for referring patients or prescribing specific products.”

Ethics vs. HMOs

Ethics ran headlong into the HMO (Health Maintenance Organization) Act of 1973.

The passage of this act set the stage for the undermining of long-established medical ethics. The HMO Act was designed specifically to reduce costs, by charging patients a monthly fee for a set package of healthcare. The Act was passed with the knowledge that

there had been no systematic analysis done to show that it would not negatively impact healthcare. Nonetheless, the Government gave millions of dollars in direct financial assistance to develop the HMO which was designed to be a profit-making business.

The AMA has betrayed their ancient oath as healers, in service to an economic system that puts profits before people.

This HMO economic arrangement put physicians and other healthcare providers’ financial interests into conflict with the needs of their patients. The monthly pot of money must provide for profit, salaries, wages, and healthcare. If too much is spent on the patients, there is less available for profit and wages. So began the health insurance, corporate medicine assault on

medical ethics. By 1980 this Wall Street strategy had crystallized into a worldwide approach to healthcare.

In 1980 the World Bank Act

Publishing a new healthcare sector policy in 1980, the World Bank advocated reducing public health infrastructure and opening the door to rampant privatization of health services and pharmaceutical supply.²

This policy was adopted by the U.S. government. The Federal Government’s share of public health expenditures plummeted from 60 percent in 1968 to ten percent in 1983, where it has remained for forty years. This silent war on our public health infrastructure carried out under both Democratic and Republican administrations has drained hundreds-of-billions of dollars from our public health services, jeopardizing the health, safety, and welfare of the population. Since 2009 alone, some \$150 billion has been defunded, along with the loss of some 60,000 jobs.³



(Shutterstock)

Tragically the medical profession succumbed to the rise of corporate healthcare by betraying their core medical ethic and became complicit “stewards” of an economic system that puts profits before people—The AMA’s (American Medical Association) Principles of Medical Ethics:V11, gives the following ethical guidelines for physicians: “Mitigate possible conflicts between physicians financial interests and patient interests by minimizing the financial impact of patient care decisions and the overall financial risk for individual physicians.”⁴

We have experienced four decades of HMO’s negative effects on healthcare while they became the darlings of Wall Street earning billions-of-dollars for investors as healthcare was rationed by denial of service, restricted benefits, cost cutting, patients dumping, overworked and underpaid staff, and plunging physician’s incomes.⁵

The author D.H. Lawrence (1880-1930) appears to have anticipated these horrors, when he wrote, “The mosquito knows full well, small as he is, he’s a beast of prey. But after all he only takes his bellyful, he doesn’t put my blood in the bank.”

Fast forward to the ACA (Affordable Care Act) of 2010

One of its chief goals was to “reduce the cost of healthcare” by giving “financial incentives” to providers for the “value” they provide in healthcare. A value-based payment incentive was to be established by bundling payment for certain types of care. *Forbes* magazine, advertised as “the capitalist tool” stated, “Bundled payments are just price controls by another name—and as such will yield subpar care by encouraging insurers and providers to put their own financial interests above the medical needs of patients.”⁶

The ACA was passed with very little known about its effectiveness or risks to patient care.⁷

Once again it is all about cost-cutting. But now with the so-called “value-based purchasing,” it is no longer about making profits for corporations, but spending less government money—it is about getting more for the governments shrinking dollars going to healthcare spending for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security Disability. The politicians want to “save” money, which, in reality, means to redistribute money, but the economics is similar. With some ten-trillion dollars in tax cuts for the rich over the last two decades, the U.S. treasury has less available for social services as politicians continue to redirect a trillion-dollars-per-year to the military—war industry—without concerns that it is “costing the government too much.”⁸

. With some ten-trillion dollars in tax cuts for the rich over the last two decades, the U.S. treasury has less available for social services as politicians continue to redirect a trillion-dollars-per-year to the military—war industry—without concerns that it is “costing the government too much.”

“The Tax Reform Act of December 2017 will suck an estimated thirty-billion dollars out of Medicare... Bundled payments will shrink and the giant vice of shrinking payments, combined with rising costs (hospital profits, rising prices for supplies, drugs, medical equipment, *etc.*) will inevitably squeeze the lifeblood out of both the patients and the healthcare providers.”⁹

Tragically this became a reality in 2020 with COVID-19, when the elderly were allowed to die as the state of Arizona rationed healthcare using “crisis standards of care,” to decide who lives and who dies.

This policy was founded upon the ethics promoted in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

JAMA called for “A framework for rationing ventilator and critical care beds during the COVID-19 pandemic.”¹⁰

JAMA accommodated itself to this brutal betrayal of the people’s health. The journal advocated a policy to ration and deny care that will fall most heavily on those over 60 years of age. The *JAMA* article of March 27, 2020, recommends who should be denied care:

1. Those least likely to survive treatment. Statistics show that the death rate increases over the age of 60. (The elderly, with a higher risk for minorities.)
2. Those with other medical conditions. More common over age 60. (The elderly, with a higher risk for minorities.)
3. Those who are working and “intrinsically more worthy” will be given priority and those who are retired will be denied. (The elderly.)
4. Those who are younger will be given priority and the elderly will be denied.

A dangerous moment

The exsanguination of medical ethics has helped bring us to this dangerous moment in history. We have witnessed a craven transformation of medical ethics when physicians and other health providers are clamoring to sign up for “value-based bundled care.” The AMA has betrayed their ancient oath as healers, in service to an economic system that puts profits before people.

The COVID pandemic that President Biden declared was over, and

the lifting of all restrictions against its spread, have killed a quarter-of-a-million U.S. citizens in 2022, 95 percent are age 65 and older. Our parents and grandparents continue to die, while vaccine-evasive and transmittable COVID variants constantly emerge as the pandemic has become one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. Moral injury continues to spread across the land. We have been led into a partnership with Dracula.

Systemic solutions

How do we escape from this public health catastrophe of moral injury? “Unless your employer hires more staff or supplies more resources, chances are you’ll have to keep making decisions that violate your ethics, compounding your trauma.” The causes of moral injury require “systemic solutions on a much broader level.”

This is the road to cure and prevention.

1 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/moral-injury-is-an-invisible-epidemic-that-affects-millions/>

2 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/649631468138271858/pdf/40968ocr.pdf>

3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695931/>

4 <https://www.ama-assn.org/sites/default/files/media-browser/principles-of-medical-ethics.pdf>

5 http://www.mbc.ca.gov/Publications/Newsletters/action_report_1998_04.pdf

6 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sal-lypipes/2014/09/22/the-bungling-of-bundled-payments/?sh=7cc952d1c60f>

7 <https://www.rand.org/health/key-topics/paying-for-care/value-based-purchasing.html>

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Amazon Labor Union Wins Certification in New York

BY MARK SATINOFF

January 15, 2023—On January 11, nine months after the historic victory at Amazon’s JFK8 fulfillment center in Staten Island, New York, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Region 28 director overruled Amazon’s objections and certified the election results.

The election took place March 25-30, 2022. There were 8,325 eligible voters. Of the nearly 5,000 ballots cast, the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) won by a margin of 523 votes.

“Amazon’s workers won fair and square,” ALU president Chris Smalls said in a statement. “It’s now time for Amazon to quit stalling, obey the law, respect their workers, and sit down at the bargaining table.”

One week after the NLRB counted the ballots last spring, Amazon filed 25 objections to the election. It accused the ALU of coercing workers to support the union and charged the NLRB with behaving in a manner that favored the ALU. The labor board’s Region 29, based in Brooklyn, New York, oversaw

the election. The hearing on Amazon’s objections was transferred to NLRB’s Region 28 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Last summer, NLRB hearing officer Lisa Dunn issued a report dismissing Amazon’s objections in their entirety. The January 11th decision and certification of the union upheld Dunn’s findings. Amazon has until January 25 to request a review of this ruling by the NLRB in Washington, DC. Irrespective of the outcome of such a request, Amazon chief executive Andy Jassy has already made public the company’s intention to appeal the labor board’s ruling in federal court.

Seth Goldstein, attorney for the ALU, said in a Twitter statement that Amazon “put us through a 23-day hearing, 100 pages of briefs, and at the end of the day, certification has been issued.” He told the website *Vice*, “We’re demanding that Amazon now, after certification, meet and bargain with us...and if we need to, we’re going to move to get a court order enforcing our bargaining rights.”



Workers at JFK8, Amazon’s fulfillment center in Staten Island, New York, celebrate January 11 National Labor Relations Board decision overruling Amazon’s objections and certifying the victory of the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) in last spring’s representation election. (Photo: ALU)

In a letter to JFK8 workers dated January 12, the ALU wrote, “Amazon MUST negotiate a fair UNION CONTRACT with the Workers of JFK8 over our schedules, working conditions, and pay. Amazon MUST negotiate over ANY changes to working conditions...”¹

It is clear Amazon will resist those demands. In an internal communication to employees, released the same day and addressed to the “JFK8 team,” Amazon wrote, “We strongly disagree with the decision and intend to appeal. ...In the meantime, *there will be no immediate changes to how we operate at our site*” (emphasis added).

Amazon’s strategy is to tie the union up in a drawn-out legal battle, draining it of valuable resources and hoping to demoralize workers in the process. According to an analysis on the website *Bloomberg Law*, on average it now takes 465 days for a union to win its first contract.

The decision to certify the ALU followed another recent unfavorable ruling for Amazon. In November, a federal judge in New York issued an

injunction requiring Amazon to cease and desist from firing workers for union activity. That ruling was in response to a petition filed by Gerald Bryson, who was fired from JFK8 in 2020 when he protested the lack of safety protocols regarding COVID-19.

“This is of huge significance,” Goldstein said in November. “That means that wherever in the country they violate it, theoretically the National Labor Relations Board can immediately seek a Contempt of Court order. A federal judge is not happy when a party violates their rule—there can be sanctions of all types.”

That may be true. However, employers rarely claim that union activity is the reason they dismiss an employee. More frequently they target union activists with the charge of breaking other employer rules. Moreover, the NLRB and the courts rarely move quickly on the infrequent occasions they take action to protect workers’ rights. If Amazon violates the court order, the ALU and its supporters will need to respond.

Amazon is the second largest employer in the country, with 1.6 million workers as of October 2022. JFK8 is the company’s first and only unionized warehouse in the United States. The fight to win a contract there is crucial for the future of the ALU and can help inspire workers nationwide.

While Amazon’s strategy is to wage a prolonged legal fight against the ALU, it’s important to recognize that a recalcitrant employer’s judicial appeal does not prevent rank-and-file action to compel that company to negotiate. The organized power of the rank and file can force Amazon to the bargaining table.

—*World-Outlook*, January 15, 2023

<https://world-outlook.com/2023/01/15/amazon-labor-union-wins-certification-in-ny/>

¹ A letter the ALU sent to Amazon workers at JFK8 immediately after the January 11 NLRB decision to certify the union is published in *World-Outlook* here:

<https://world-outlook.com/2023/01/15/amazon-labor-union-wins-certification-in-ny/>



82-Year-Old Alabama Woman Arrested for Overdue Trash Bill

BY DANIEL WERST

On November 27, 2022, the local government of Valley, Alabama caused a scandal by sending two cops to the home of Martha Menefield, an 82-year-old Black woman living alone, to arrest her for failing to pay \$77.80 worth of garbage collection fees. Locals and online commenters slammed the Valley Police Department (VPD), and the story was picked up by the *Washington Post* and *NBC*. The police actually cuffed Menefield's hands, but in front of her body "in recognition of a lower threat." One cop had the temerity to whisper, "Don't cry, Ms. Martha," while arresting her. Menefield was placed in a station cell, and was bailed out soon after.

VPD chief Mike Reynolds tried to nip public criticism in the bud with a statement asserting municipal code enforcement officials repeatedly tried to contact Menefield about outstanding bills, before leaving a card on her front door summoning her to a court hearing. He said Menefield was chronically late paying her trash bill over the last fifteen years, implying that the arrest was justified because the court had issued an arrest warrant for failure to appear.

Bourgeois media provided some sense of the tragicomedy of arresting a person of such advanced age for such a trivial "crime" quoting neighbors criticizing the city and expressing appreciation for Menefield. But the bourgeois press won't touch the idea that this inappropriate arrest is one reflection of whether or not police really "protect and serve" the general population.

Menefield asked why the city did not just halt her trash service rather than arrest her. Basic services like trash pickup ought to be free, especially for elderly and working-class people. The city government stole one day of this woman's limited final years on earth to

subject her to Kafkaesque harassment. However, one local reporter saw garbage workers collect Menefield's trash after the arrest, either out of solidarity or because the city wanted to limit negative publicity.

Menefield grew up under Jim Crow. Her parents worked as a house painter and a cook, which a local station bizarrely described as a "middle class" background. In the USA, everyone except Jeff Bezos and unhoused people are supposed to be "middle class" for political reasons, but this is a description of being working class. For most of her adult life Menefield was a care worker for elderly people and children. Mainstream news coverage did not ask why she may have struggled to pay \$78 in service bills. They did not discuss inflation and other factors threatening people's ability to pay living expenses. Menefield also had her water service shut off and had occasionally had to go to neighbors for help.

The city spent much more than \$78 of residents' tax money on two cops,

jail, court time, paperwork, and public relations to harass Menefield. Bullying an 82-year-old working class woman with late bills puts the lie to the police propaganda that cops are meant to protect us from violence. Socialists understand that the capitalist state is a hypocritical, inevitably abusive machine. Its forms of "legality" serve the very rich, even as they profit from climate change, force people to work twelve-hour shifts, and cause preventable deaths from inadequate health-care. The state elevates officials, including cops, into a position of superiority, unaccountability, and contempt towards working people, particularly those who are oppressed on the basis of race, gender, and other dividing lines.

No reasonable person would ever have consented to arrest Martha Menefield. A logical society would easily organize a little cooperation to help a retiree with a trivial household problem. The cops and the courts are put together in a way that goes outside basic social expectations. Their job is



Martha Menefield (Photo: Lee Hedgepeth)

not to serve and protect anyone but the ruling class.

A receptionist at the county court told the Washington Post that since Menefield's arrest, "There have been a million people offering to pay her bill," yet the local government will not accept the payment until Menefield appears as a defendant at a January hearing. Mayor Leonard Riley came out in defense of the arrest and attacked Menefield, saying that she ran a lucrative tax preparation business from her home without a license, received a pandemic PPP government loan, and "should be able to pay [her] garbage bill."

This shameful use of police power is not an exception. The police are intended to maintain and regulate capitalism: it is common for them to micromanage people's lives, and even commit violence against the elderly. Cops in Arizona arrested a 78-year-old woman this year for giving free hot meals to homeless people in a public park. Alabama police arrested two women aged 61 and 85 for feeding stray cats. In recent years, police have also cracked the skull of a 75-year-old Black Lives Matter protester in New York state, broken the arm of a mentally disabled 75-year-old woman in Colorado, and

shot a 61-year-old man dead in his wheelchair in Arizona.

Black Lives Matter. The dignity of people who have worked their entire lives matters. The police have no right to exist—in Valley, Alabama or anywhere.

—*Left Voice*, December 23, 2022

<https://truthout.org/articles/local-alabama-police-arrested-82-year-old-woman-for-overdue-trash-bill/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=ccd2ef61-dcbd-4334-8bf7-824c9b042b6f>



Martha Menefield's house, Valley, AL (Photo: Lee Hedgepeth)

Markets and Technology Won't Solve Climate Crisis. We Must End Capitalism.

EVE OTTENBERG INTERVIEWS JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

Climate change—caused primarily by capitalism's incessant burning of fossil fuels—is happening faster than even the most pessimistic scientists predicted, causing freak weather events and mass displacement worldwide. From floods submerging one third of Pakistan to temperatures of 100°F in the Siberian Arctic, evidence abounds that rich countries better cut off their fossil fuel dependence fast. Among those rich countries, argues John Bellamy Foster in his new book, Capitalism in the Anthropocene, the United States is the epicenter. The U.S. military alone boasts a carbon footprint larger than that of many countries.

But as many have observed, for many people it's easier to envision the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Foster's book tells us that we have a choice: "ruin or revolution." The reason for the necessity of revolution is that tinkering won't solve our problems. Technocratic fixes won't save the Earth as a place fit for human habitation. The problem, as he told me in the interview that follows, is systemic: capitalist accumulation, its endless growth, and its phenomenal waste.

Eve Ottenberg: The common conception is that the main environmental crisis is the climate catastrophe, but your book mentions that three planetary boundaries out of nine have already been crossed. Can you elaborate?

John Bellamy Foster: Developing the concept of the Anthropocene, scientists didn't base it simply on climate change, but on nine planetary boundaries, climate change being one, then the destruction of the ozone layer, loss of genetic diversity (including species extinction,) ocean acidification, the disruption of biogeochemical (nitrogen and phosphorus) cycles, loss of

groundcover/forests, loss of fresh water, chemical pollution and the release of novel entities, and atmospheric aerosol loading. These boundaries are defined in terms of the Holocene, the geological epoch which goes back 11,700 years and in which civilization developed. The Earth System environment was very conducive to the development of civilization and prosperity for human beings.

**The U.S. military alone
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In conceiving of the planetary boundaries, scientists codified various changes with respect to each boundary

that signal moving away from the Holocene and into global ecological crisis. So far, we've crossed the boundaries for climate change, species extinction and biogeochemical (or phosphorous and nitrogen) cycles. And we're in the process of crossing others. The chemical pollution boundary may have been crossed. Crossing each boundary constitutes a global ecological crisis that threatens the planet as a place of habitation not only for human beings but also for innumerable other species. The problem is that a lot of these things are irreversible. For example, we could end up killing off 30 to 50 percent of all species this century. Well, that's irreversible.

Eve Ottenberg: You argue that the more elite, technocratic, and capitalist elements are in the driver's seat in the U.S. climate movement. Can you explain?



Environmental activists attend Fire Drill Fridays to call attention to the growing climate crisis and demand that President Biden declare a climate emergency at a rally in Freedom Plaza, on December 2, 2022, in Washington, D.C.

John Bellamy Foster: We live in a capitalist society—students sometimes think the system is democracy, I say no, the system is capitalism. And the system, like any other, wants to perpetuate itself. Capital is geared to accumulation and growth, it's a class-based system of economic accumulation, and in all of these problems, crossing the planetary boundaries, there's one common denominator, and that's capitalism, capital accumulation, the growth process. And the powers that be, the ruling elements of our society, the billionaires, the ruling class, the capitalist class, the power elite that embraces those who are part of the political system—they don't want to change the system, it's their system and they want to keep it going, even though we know that it's the accumulation of capital that's destroying the Earth System as a place of human habitability.

So, the vested interests pretend that we can solve the problems with technology or with the market, because they say the market is inherently efficient. The difficulty there is that, as every economist would admit, climate change is the biggest market failure in history and you can't really solve a problem with the same system that created it, not a problem this big. And of course, those in power don't want to talk about changing the actual social relations, or how we produce, or even how we consume. They want to keep the system going the way it is.

Since the market can't solve it, the powers that be say technology will solve it. And everybody believes in technology. But technology can't break the laws of physics, and we've got a system here of exponential economic growth based on capital accumulation that's simply destructive to the planet. If you have a three percent rate of growth, in 100 years, you'll have a world economy 16 times bigger than the present, in 200 years 250 times bigger than the present, in 300 years 4000 times, and so forth. But we're already

reaching the limits of how we can live on the planet. We have to reorganize, do things differently. There are no existing technologies themselves that can solve the planetary emergency we now face, which requires a change in social relations.

Eve Ottenberg: Could you elaborate on the waste-based accumulation that characterizes U.S. monopoly capitalism and what that means for the global economic budget?

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John Bellamy Foster: This comes out of economic theory. In the 19th century we produced things that were used and needed, use values. Now under monopoly capitalism, it is a demand-constrained system, because corporations have so much productive capacity, they can't utilize it, particularly at the prices they set, because they set high monopoly prices. So, there's always an underutilization of productive capacity. Twenty-five or even 30 percent excess capacity is not unusual, say for the U.S. economy. And in this system, it then becomes oddly rational to produce a lot of junk and a lot of marketing to sell the junk. So, we

spend trillions on marketing every year in the U.S. economy, trying to get people to purchase things they neither want nor need. That's what marketing does. The Marxist economist Paul Baran once encapsulated this irrational situation by saying that we now live in a society in which we neither want what we need nor need what we want.

In our society we produce an enormous amount of material goods that are unnecessary, destructive even, and that are inefficient because they're designed for a throw-away society, a throw-away economy, so that you go back and buy more. And we deemphasize everything to do with the quality of life, so we try to convince people that if they want love or community, they can get it by buying a Dr. Pepper. But we can actually improve the quality of life by producing differently, by focusing on needs, focusing on genuine efficiency and so on.

Eve Ottenberg: Some are advocating for "Green Keynesianism." Can you explain what that is?

John Bellamy Foster: In Keynesianism the economic problem is one of effective demand. It's geared towards getting people employed to increase demand. Green Keynesianism attempts to merge ecology and the economy, saying we can solve the ecological problem by creating lots of green jobs. We'll create green things, green jobs and expand the economy that way, instead of expanding the economy based on anti-ecological things. The problem is that it still wants to expand the economy, still wants to increase consumption, still wants to increase the scale of everything, and that isn't realistic in physical, scientific, or ecological terms. So, it promises a progressive approach to the environmental problem that will appeal to workers, but in some ways, it's lying about the nature of the problem.

Eve Ottenberg: Will an environmental proletariat arise in the Global South?

John Bellamy Foster: I often think in terms of Engels's *The Condition of*

the Working Class in England, one of the great works on the Industrial Revolution, written in 1845. It was all about the epidemiological problems faced by the working class, the disease, the pollution, the bad food. But we tend to think of the proletariat or working class in terms of economic factors, simply in terms of factories. But the times when the proletariat or working class has been most radical is when faced with not simply the degradation or exploitation in the workplace, but also the destruction of their environment, including, of course, the urban environment. We've separated the economy and the environment in our society, and I think they're becoming less separated. People are being forced into a more materialist view in which the environment and the economy are both material aspects of our reality that are interrelated.

This is being forced on people in the Global South even faster than here. So, in Pakistan, where 30 percent of the land was flooded this year, 33 million people were affected, you can believe that people are now involved in material struggles that are just as environmental as they are economic. Think about being deprived of food—is that an environmental or an economic problem? People will think more in terms of environmental struggles as an essential part of their material reality and as their position as workers. You can see this happening all over the world. This really is a hope for change.

Eve Ottenberg: Could China be the global leader in promoting ecological civilization in the Anthropocene?

John Bellamy Foster: We can hope so. They actually have a plan to peak their carbon emissions by 2030. Initially it involves expanding carbon emissions and then a rapid downshift. I don't know if this is going to happen. But the fact that it's a very serious effort is important. They're already the

In our society we produce an enormous amount of material goods that are unnecessary, destructive even, and that are inefficient because they're designed for a throw-away society, a throw-away economy, so that you go back and buy more.

leader in solar in the world, in alternative technologies, in reforestation. They've done more recently to reduce pollution than any other country. But there are a lot of struggles in that society, there are massive environmental

movements in China and I'm on their side. But without China going toward ecological civilization, as they call it, it's difficult to see how the world's going to get out of this mess, because they are such a large part of the world population and production. So, we have to be on the side of that effort.

Their plan to peak in 2030 is really set in stone. They've got a very detailed operation going and a lot of Western environmental movements think this is realistic and offers hope, so we just have to see. Our whole situation worldwide is really dangerous and untenable now, but if we're to get out of this mess, we have to look for where the hope lies, what are the things that seem realistic and that will lead us in the right direction. My hope is based on the movements on the ground, everywhere in the world, including China, that are having an effect. What we know is there's going to be a struggle over this. Humanity's going to struggle over this. It's a question of whether you're going to join the struggle.

—*Truthout*, December 26, 2022

<https://truthout.org/articles/markets-and-technology-wont-solve-climate-crisis-we-must-end-capitalism/>



We are “Greening” Ourselves to Extinction

BY VIJAY KOLINJIVADI

More than a decade ago, investment experts James Altucher and Douglas Sease wrote a book for the *Wall Street Journal* called *Investing in the Apocalypse*. They argued that the end of the world is a profitable opportunity for those who know how to “fade the fear,” as everyone else panics. They maintained that when disaster strikes, investors should approach it with the rationale that “no matter how bad things seem, they really aren’t that bad.”

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, they advised investing in big pharmaceutical companies as a strategy to reap dividends from global pandemics. They also encouraged putting money into renewable energy systems while ramping up oil production.

Today, it seems many have followed Althucher and Sease’s advice. Under the guise of taking action on the pandemic, billions of dollars have been poured into big pharma, instead of public health and policies aimed at preventing another global outbreak. The supposed energy transition that

has been undertaken has seen renewable energy production expanded, but there has been no indication that oil and gas are being substituted and ultimately phased out.

**...this trickery is called
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What is worse, governments and corporations have teamed up to turn the apocalypse into a money-making opportunity. They have rushed to put forward false solutions to the climate crisis: from the push to replace fuel-engine vehicles with electric ones, to so-called climate-smart agriculture, to protected areas for nature conservation and massive tree planting projects for carbon offsets.

All this trickery is called “greening” and it is designed to profit off of climate fears, not stop climate change. While guaranteeing high returns, this deception is tantamount to the genocide of the hundreds-of-millions of people who will perish from the effects of climate change within the next century because things are that bad.

“Firefighters with flamethrowers”

That is how climate writer Keton Joshi describes the world’s biggest polluters proposing climate solutions. Indeed, what governments and corporations have pushed for in terms of climate action in the past few years are policies that only make the situation worse.

Take carbon offsets—the epitome of “greening.” Acting as real-life “Pass GO and Collect \$200” tickets, they allow some of the biggest climate criminals to go on polluting by engaging in a charade of tree-planting schemes. The logic behind them is that we cannot stop our greenhouse gas emissions immediately because that would “hurt the economy,” so we can instead plant trees that will absorb them and grow the economy through carbon markets—a supposed win-win situation.

But this fallacy has been repeatedly exposed. For one, the organizations that are supposed to certify that indeed enough tree-planting has taken place do not have the tools to verify that the declared emissions will definitely be absorbed. Another problem is that many offsetting activities do not actually offset anything.

A recent investigation into the world’s largest carbon standard found that 94 percent of its rainforest offset credits did not actually contribute to carbon reduction. Worse still, it exaggerated the threat to forests included in its projects, while its conservation



Partially burned and standing trees loom over a site where researchers were conducting reforestation experiments at Deer Lake Mesa in Cimarron, New Mexico on August 17, 2021.

activities—which yielded some of these credits—involved serious human rights violations, including forced evictions and home demolitions of local people.

Even if some of these carbon offset schemes do make a difference in the short term through forest conservation or reforestation, given our current climate reality characterized by ever-worsening forest fires, they can easily just burn to dust and contribute to the greenhouse gas problem. One recent study, for example, found that since 2015, close to seven million tons of carbon was released from wildfires in six forest projects that are part of California’s carbon trading system.

Then there is the fatal confusion between efficiency and ecology. We are being duped to believe that buying more “energy efficient” or “green” products can save the planet. Whether it is a new electric car, an “eco-friendly” condo, a paper straw instead of a plastic straw, or a solar-powered turtle-shaped mega yacht—all are branded as ecological solutions because they are supposedly more energy or materially efficient than the standard alternative.

What often hides behind these “green” labels is the large carbon footprint their production generates. Furthermore, “greened” technological solutions often just shift the environmental damage they do to another sector or a distant location.

For example, the growing electric vehicle industry may help reduce carbon emissions, but it will also cause a massive jump in the demand for lithium and other minerals. Scientists are already warning about the grave environmental impact the rush for mining lithium may have, including water pollution and loss, toxic waste spills, biodiversity loss and soil contamination.

Apart from making climate change worse, these “solutions” also disproportionately harm marginalized groups and Indigenous peoples, as UN special rapporteur Tendayi Achiume has

recently warned. Not only are the impacts of ecological collapse felt more severely by those who encounter racism on a daily basis, but the extraction of minerals needed for “smart” technologies and renewable energy exposes these same people to pollution, violence and displacement.

The argument that “green” solutions provide jobs also rests on weak foundations, especially if the quality of work is considered. As the ILO has pointed out, a large share of employment for the so-called “nature-based solutions” is informal, low-wage, temporary, and exposed to risks, such as unsafe working conditions, child labor and lack of social security.

Since 2020, the top one percent has collected nearly two-thirds of all new wealth, as the world has faced a deadly pandemic and massive climate-change-related disasters.

“The biggest land grab in history”

Nature conservation has also fallen prey to the “greening” deception. For years now, large conservation organizations and their corporate sponsors have been pushing the idea that large swaths of land and forests need to be fenced off so we can protect biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Like the carbon offset schemes, this policy is just another way to enable big polluters to continue to pollute by saying: “We are doing something for the planet.” It also enables some—particularly in the tourism and construction sectors—to benefit from the so-called “nature” tourism in which the wealthy pay big money to access fenced-off parks

and “experience” pristine nature while staying at luxury real estate projects.

And just like other “greening” strategies, this type of nature conservation results in major human injustices. Indigenous peoples from around the world have suffered evictions, dispossession and even killings as they have been forced from their lands to make way for nature conservation projects.

In the Republic of the Congo, the Indigenous Baka people have been brutally oppressed by the guards of a conservation project supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the European Union (EU), the U.S. and logging and palm oil companies. A UNDP investigation found that members of the community were routinely beaten, some imprisoned, tortured or raped.

In the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, the guards of a national park funded by the U.S. and German governments have also engaged in violent attacks on the Indigenous Batwa people living in its territory. A 2022 report by Minority Rights has produced evidence that at least 20 members of the community have been killed and at least 15 women raped during forced eviction campaigns.

There are countless horror stories like these ones; according to estimates, some 14 million people have been evicted in this manner in Africa alone. That is why the news that a new conservation scheme was approved at the UN conference on biodiversity (COP15) held in Montreal in December was met with much dismay by Indigenous people across the world.

The new Global Biodiversity Framework—also called the 30×30 target—aims to turn 30 percent of the planet into protected areas by 2030. In a letter to COP15 participants, Indigenous peoples stated that the policy “may be the biggest land grab in history and further threaten the physi-

cal and cultural survival of Indigenous people worldwide.”

Given that Indigenous peoples reside on territories that hold 80 percent of the world’s biodiversity, it is certain that Indigenous-held land will fall within the 30×30 plan. Evicting them from land they have lived in since time immemorial is hardly an ecological solution.

A much better solution would be addressing the biggest cause of biodiversity loss: industrial-scale farming. It destroys the soil, increases desertification, releases huge amounts of greenhouse gases, and is linked to deforestation.

30×30 would not curb the damage industrial-scale farming does. If the economic model that enables it does not change, it may even worsen its impact. Restricting land use may raise food prices, artificially inflate the value of land, and encourage further overuse of chemicals and harmful crop and livestock breeding practices to increase production. This would have devastating consequences for smallholder farmers who produce more than 30 percent of the world’s food and tend to use more sustainable practices than industrial farms.

Reparative justice, not “greening”

Perhaps the biggest problem with apocalypse investing and its “greening” deception is that they dominate the global conversation on climate change and biodiversity at official forums (such as COP15) and are presented to the public as “making progress” on environmental issues.

We also have people like billionaire Bill Gates who say they are “very optimistic” about the future. Of course, they are! Since 2020, the top one percent has collected nearly two-thirds of all new wealth, as the world has faced a deadly pandemic and massive climate-change-related disasters.

The optimism of the wealthy and the fake climate solutions pushed on us are quite effective in convincing people

that climate change will be tackled. That is because they provide reassurance that we will not have to give up the comforts we enjoy and because they also give us, the consumers, “a choice”—to go “green” or not. Indeed, we can now choose between a renewable or an oil-powered turtle-shaped mega yacht.

Making the “green” choice then leaves us satisfied that we are “doing something” about climate change. But driving an electric car, putting your organic produce in a tote bag and turning down your heating or air-conditioner by one degree is not going to save the planet. Let’s have the courage to face this fact.

“...we can’t save the world by playing by the rules because the rules have to be changed.”

What would make a difference is developing mass transport and substantially reducing car ownership; closing coal mines and ending oil and gas exploration; promoting decentralized and community-managed renewable energy systems; doing away with industrial-scale monoculture farming; and supporting smallholder and Indigenous-led agroecological systems that have been shown to enhance nutrition, biodiversity, and quality of life.

Of course, the system we have in place now favors apocalypse investors, who would do everything in their power to resist real climate action. That is why, as Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, has eloquently pointed out, “we can’t save the world by playing by the rules because the rules have to be changed.”

We need to confront the manipulation of false solutions, discredit them, and move on to changing rules promised on profiting from apocalypse.

Reparative justice is one approach to changing the current system. Embracing reparative justice means giving power back to the people to invest in the needs of their communities by supporting autonomous organization and mutual aid efforts for affordable housing, food production, energy, and transport systems.

Reparative justice for reducing carbon emissions means demanding that those companies and governments historically responsible for climate change pay for the damage they have caused. Present and future victims of climate change should get to collectively decide how these reparations are to be spent.

Reparative justice also means supporting agroecological practice and restoring diverse food-growing cultures that have been erased or lost due to industrial monoculture farming.

Reparative justice also means that biodiversity loss would be tackled by guaranteeing the status of Indigenous people as stewards of their land and empowering them to protect it based on their knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and traditions.

Achieving all this will not be easy and we will have to face the power of governments and corporations—the apocalypse investors. But through human solidarity and collective action, we can fight back and invest in our survival.

Vijay Kolinjivadi is a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Development Policy at the University of Antwerp.

—Aljazeera, January 29, 2023

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/29/greening-ourselves-to-extinction>

Kill Capitalism Before It Kills Us

BY PAUL STREET

“It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and then of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism”

—Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, 1994

“What kind of culture is it which pushes distraction, in its ordinary selection even of news, to the point where there is hardly any sustained discussion of the central and interlocking issues of human survival?”

—Raymond Williams, *The Year 2000*, 1983

Radicals seek to go to the root of current problems, taking on the main currents beneath the melting ice brought to us by capitalist “modernity.” Liberals and progressives prefer to skate around on the liquifying surface.

Take the (just-suggested) topic of climate change, arguably the biggest issue of our or any time (there’s no democracy, common good, equality and social justice on a dead planet.)

Turning the planet into a giant greenhouse gas chamber

A recent episode of the archetypal progressive media outlet *Democracy Now!* (*DN*) was dedicated to arguing the obviously accurate fact that recent extreme and lethal weather—more frequent and extreme storms, rainfall, floods, snowfall, heat, drought—are the result of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change and most especially from the excessive burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas.) Reflecting on recent deadly flooding in California, a UCLA climate scientist explained to *DN* what has long been well known in his field:

“All weather events [today] are evolving in the context of a changed climate...The question is, really, to what extent is climate change influ-

encing certain kinds of events, not really whether it is in the first place....in this case, we know that the primary link between climate change and extreme precipitation events is through a fairly basic fundamental principle of atmospheric thermodynamics. That sounds complicated, but it just comes down to the fact that the atmosphere has a much higher capacity to hold water vapor when it’s warmer. In fact, the increase in the water vapor-holding capacity of the atmosphere is exponential, even for a linear or an incremental warming.”

Climate warming is clearly behind the recent record-setting winter heatwave in Europe, the rising heat that has sparked drought and rampant wildfires in the U.S.-American West, and numerous other forms and symptoms of extreme weather at home and abroad. It is also behind the deep freeze

“polar vortexes” that have chilled much of the U.S. in recent years. These are a result of the meandering northern jet streams produced by the accelerated warming of the Arctic that has resulted from “modern civilization’s” massive carbon emissions. As the Buffalo meteorologist Don Paul explained to the *PBS NewsHour* three days after last Christmas, reflecting on an epic winter storm that had killed 38 people in his city by the time he spoke:

“The Arctic, which is warming two to three times faster than the rest of the globe, by warming up has caused the polar jet stream episodically to weaken. A strong polar vortex keeps most of the polar air bottled up over the polar region. But when that polar jet weakens, it can allow episodic stretching of the polar vortex far to the south, generally east of the Rockies. And this can



Pollutants released from Biomass plant near Boardman, Oregon. Photo: Jeffrey St. Clair.

happen in the midst of an otherwise milder-than-average winter. It sounds counterintuitive, especially to nonscientist denialists, but we can see some of the most extreme winter weather events for short periods. And, as you may have heard by now, we're going to—most of the eastern two-thirds of the country are going to go back to well-above-average temperatures over the next three or four days into next week. A lot of the snow will melt, but it's not going to erase the tragedy. ...these episodes not only will be happening more often, but they already have been happening more often than prior to the accelerated warming...we have also seen some tropical events that appear to be related to the change in the jet stream."

Extreme weather is coming harder and faster than the climate scientists originally thought, suggesting rather forcefully that the climate catastrophe—"crisis" doesn't do the problem justice—is already underway. It's not just something for "our grandchildren" to deal with. Consider some crucial findings. And it's going to get worse in the coming years. According to *Nature*:

"Arctic permafrost stores nearly 1,700 billion metric tons of frozen and thawing carbon. Anthropogenic warming threatens to release an unknown quantity of this carbon into the atmosphere....Carbon dioxide emissions are proportionally larger than other greenhouse gas emissions in the Arctic, but expansion of anoxic conditions within thawed permafrost and soils stands to increase the proportion of future methane emissions. Increasingly frequent wildfires in the Arctic will also lead to a notable but unpredictable carbon flux."

It is terrible to learn, that, as *DN* reports, citing research by *Media Matters*, "national TV news is largely ignoring the link between climate change and the deluge devastating California. [*Media Matters*] looked at

60 segments that aired on national TV news networks between December 31st and January 4th. Only one mentioned climate change."

That's awful, but typical of the dominant U.S. media, which is dedicated by its very capitalist and commercial nature to pre-emptively cancel deep critical thinking on the origins and nature of the many tragedies produced by racist, sexist, and eco-cidal capitalism-imperialism. (When's the last time you heard a nightly news anchor link the inner-city violence that typically leads U.S. city's local six and ten o'clock news broadcasts to the savage race-class segregation that characterizes imperial America? When's the last time you heard a national news anchor connect the southern border migrant crisis to U.S. imperialist policy in Latin America or indeed to U.S.-led climate change.)

"It was not humanity as a whole that created large-scale industry and the massive textile factories of Manchester in the 19th century or Detroit in the last century or Shenzhen today. It was capital."

But let's go deeper on the climate. Extreme weather is just the tip of the cataclysmic iceberg. The number of people directly killed in and by floods, tornados, bomb cyclones, wildfires, hurricanes, derechos (strong, fast-moving windstorms,) and the like is nothing compared to the millions upon millions—nay, billions—who will perish from famine, water-shortage, heat stress, war, economic collapse, disease, and "civilizational collapse" resulting from and intimately related to "human-

ity's" carbon-emitting charge past ecological tipping points. Human extinction is a real possibility in some serious scientific scenarios.

"Today, at just 1.2 degrees [Celsius]," David Wallace-Wells wrote last October:

"The planet is already warmer than it has been in the entire history of human civilization, already beyond the range of temperatures that gave rise to everything we have ever known as a species. Passing 1.5 and then two degrees of warming will plot a course through a truly foreign climate, bringing a level of environmental disruption that scientists have called 'dangerous' when they are being restrained. Island nations of the world have called it 'genocide,' and African diplomats have called it 'certain death.' It is that level that the world's scientists had in mind when they warned, in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.) report, published in February, that 'any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.'"

It is already well understood by climate scientists that Earth will pass the long-dreaded 1.5 Celsius benchmark in this century, likely falling closer to 3 degrees. This is a gruesome experiment that has never been run: "civilization" is turning the entire planet into a giant Greenhouse Gas Chamber, a crime that would have horrified Adolph Hitler.

**Welcome to the capitalocene:
nobody gets out alive**

What's the cause? What is the solution?

You may have noticed something in what I wrote above—I put the word "humanity" in quote-marks while typing the words "'humanity's' carbon-emitting charge past ecological tipping points." (I also just put quote marks around the word "civilization.")

Is it really humanity that has created the climate catastrophe? Is it really “anthropogenic climate change?”

The eco-Marxist, world systems geographer/sociologist/historian, Jason W. Moore rightly prefers to put the focus on capital and, more to the point, capitalism. Moore explains on why he prefers the term “Capitalocene” over “Anthropocene” when it comes to naming the era in which human activities have altered Earth systems in ways that pose dire challenges to livable ecology: “It was not humanity as a whole that created large-scale industry and the massive textile factories of Manchester in the 19th century or Detroit in the last century or Shenzhen today. It was capital.”

It’s an important point. It is not all *homo sapiens* that have warmed and otherwise polluted the planet to the point where a “livable future” (Welles) is at severe risk. It is not all of humanity but rather executives at Exxon Mobil who suppressed their own firm’s earth scientists’ findings on how the burning of fossil fuels would warm the planet. It is not *homo sapiens* as such but rather Fossil Capital and its political allies who have conducted a deadly anti-scientific propaganda campaign to obfuscate the findings, projections, and increasingly dire warnings of respectable climate science.

If you must blame “humanity,” then at least say “humanity under the command of capital.” Or humanity subjected to the inhumanity of capital.

But let’s go deeper. What drives capital to destroy the planet is not some inner demonic pathology on the part of individual capitalists and managers but rather the underlying dynamics of the profit system. It’s not just capital or capitalists that have caused this mess. It is capitalism, with its endless pursuit of surplus value and “cheap nature”—chiefly cheap raw materials, cheap energy sources, and cheap labor power—to buoy up its holy rate of profit.

Competition between capitals compels investors to constantly seek new profitable markets, raw materials, energy sources, labor power, transport routes, political environments, and technologies in every corner of the world. Livable ecology be damned: gas and oil must be extracted; forests must be razed; pipelines must be built; labor supplies must be tapped; new forms of built-in-obsolescence must be designed; lakes and rivers must be poisoned; barriers between humans and

It’s not just capital or capitalists that have caused this mess. It is capitalism, with its endless pursuit of surplus value and “cheap nature”—chiefly cheap raw materials, cheap energy sources, and cheap labor power—to buoy up its holy rate of profit.

zoonotic viruses must be collapsed; sustainable local agriculture must be trumped by mass chemical farming to feed animals for slaughter; fertile soil must be raped to make way for carbon-spewing trucks, cars, airports and soulless real estate developments; Indigenous people must be removed and defeated to carry out toxic mining and drilling operations; politicians must be bought to prevent government interference with the endless commodification of the planet and its species (people included); melting Arctic ice must be seen as an opportunity for new shipping lanes instead of an existential warning to cease and desist from the relentless capitalist war on “a livable future.”

The anarchy of capital in the material base undermines any effort by the political and state superstructure to impose adequate decent environmental rules. The state and its regulatory agencies and the overall politico-ideological and media culture are captured by profit-mad capitalists whose superior wealth translates into superior political and anti-intellectual power. The needs and demands of workers and the broader populace subjected to class rule and exploitation compel constant quantitative expansion—“growth”—for capital and its political operatives to provide the “solution” to structural unemployment and poverty (both of which are built into the capitalist system.) Growth, the holy expansion of Gross Domestic Product, is capitalism’s timeworn deadly answer to mass complaints over the economic insecurity that is built into its chaotic system. Politicians take up the cry, citing statistics and the pursuit of quantitative expansion—job growth, income growth, stock market growth—as the basis for their legitimacy and power even as poisoned quantity leads to the qualitative degradation of air, water, and soil and the Earth’s rising self-protective determination to burn the human race off its face.

There is also the anarchy and conflict of competing nations. The disorderly multiplicity of nation states in the world capitalist system as it has evolved for half a millennium militates against the establishment of the central political and regulatory authority required for humanity to overcome the planet-wide collapse of “a livable future.”

“Accelerating the race to the abyss”

When leading military powers atop that world state system come into violent conflict with each other (as they recurrently and inevitably do,) moreover, the prospects of common global action to stop “the thoroughgoing deterioration of earth and nature”

(Jameson) are badly damaged. Perhaps some skilled researchers will calculate the carbon footprint of the current inter-imperialist U.S.-Russia proxy war underway in Ukraine before Washington and Moscow solve the problem of global warming with planetary nuclear winter. The investigators will want to factor in how the conflict has accelerated the extraction and burning of fossil fuels outside Russia. As Noam Chomsky observed with his usual eloquent brilliance last fall:

“The Ukraine war finds its natural place in [our] collective [ecoidal] madness. One outcome of Putin’s criminal aggression and the consequent sanctions regime is to restrict the fossil fuel flow from Russia on which Europe relies, particularly the German-based system that is its economic powerhouse. Economic consequences for Europe are severe, though not for the U.S., which is largely immune; or for that matter for Russia, which at least for now is profiting handsomely from rising oil prices and has many eager customers outside of Europe. Europe is seeking alternative sources of oil and gas, a bonanza for the U.S. fossil fuel industry, rewarded with new markets and expansive drilling opportunities to enable it to destroy life on Earth more effectively. And the military industry could hardly be more ecstatic as the killing and destruction mount.... One can think of other reasons to bring the horrors to a quick end, but the fate of organized human society is surely one. The Ukraine war has reversed the limited efforts to address the mounting crisis of environmental destruction. While it should have accelerated efforts to move rapidly towards sustainable energy, that was not the path chosen by the political leadership. Rather, the choice has been to accelerate the race to the abyss.”

(The giant U.S. capitalist global military Empire—with “roughly 750 military bases spread across 80 nations!” [so boasts the imperialist *Soldiers’ Project*]—

certainly has the largest carbon footprint of any single institution on Earth. Under the direction of either of the nation’s two capitalist-imperialist parties, it may soon be setting new carbon emissions records in a deadly war over Taiwan with state-capitalist China, itself no carbon-spewing slouch despite its heavy investment in wind and solar.)

Thanks to how the war in Ukraine has deepened the dangers of both nuclear war and climate catastrophe, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has just moved its Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds to Midnight, its highest level in history.

Then there’s the endless diversion and flight from historical-material reality provided by a corporate media that fascinates millions with the sex lives and consumption patterns of mediocre celebrities and that—yes, Amy Goodman—commonly reports an endless and accelerating number of extreme weather events without mentioning the climatological context for those events, much less the capitalist context behind the climate calamity. Many more USAers could tell you the name of Gisele Bundchen’s possible new boyfriend (personal trainer Joaquim Valente) than could tell you what a Greenhouse Gas is.

“What kind of culture is it,” the Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams asked forty years ago, “when some serious analysis (of environmental menace—PS) appears and is almost at once placed as another installment of ‘doom and gloom?’ What kind of culture is it which pushes distraction, in its ordinary selection even of news, to the point where there is hardly any sustained discussion of the central and interlocking issues of human survival? There are times, in the depth of the current crisis, when the image materializes of a cluttered room in which somebody is trying to think while there is a fan dance going on in one corner and a military band blasting away in the other corner. It is not the ordinary enjoy-

ments of life that are diverting serious concern, as at times, in a natural human rhythm, they must and should. It is a systematic cacophony which may indeed not be bright enough to know that it is jamming and drowning the important signals, but which is nevertheless, and so far, successfully, doing just that” (Raymond Williams, *The Year 2000* [New York: Pantheon, 1983], p. 18.)

What kind of culture does that? A capitalist culture.

Greta’s right: revolution, nothing less

David Wallace Wells’ October 2022 *New York Times* essay, “Beyond Catastrophe,” is surprisingly and excessively impressed by the prospects for “decarbonization” short of eco-socialist revolution in this century? Is he right to suggest that environmental catastrophe can be avoided under capitalism, as numerous other progressive thinkers seem to think? No. We’d do better to take counsel from the 19-year-old climate justice icon Greta Thunberg, who recently told an audience in London that climate activists and others must overthrow “the whole capitalist system.”

She’s right. That system is far too deeply invested in fossil fuels to give them up before final tipping points are breached (and there are more than enough such fuels still in the ground for capitalism to extract and burn to the point of no return.) It is far too anarchic, competitive, exploitation-based, authoritarian, plutocratic, and decentralized, and too attached to nation states, imperialism, and war to be seriously reined-in by environmental considerations.

I’m not sure Ms. Thunberg has worked all of this out yet but she’s on the right track: it really does come down to the title of the U.S. Revolutionary Communist Party’s (RCP) weekly YouTube television show: “Revolution Nothing Less.”

The leading left intellectual Chomsky has recently been suggesting that the main problem is “savage capitalism,” not capitalism as such. My guess is that he knows better than this (he’s too smart not to)—that livable ecology is simply impossible under the class dictatorship of capital—but sees the prospect of eco-socialist transformation as so remote and the climate catastrophe as so urgent that we have no choice but to place our hopes in reversing climate destruction under the profits system.

I get it but I don’t. The only thing crazier than calling for global socialist/eco-socialist people’s revolution now is not doing so. Many older, white, and male left-identified people I know reflexively roll their eyes in response to me when I voice this opinion. To them, “saying that we need a socialist revolution is required to save chances for a decent future is to say that we are doomed. That’s not going to happen.” This judgement typically comes my way without any disagreement over my diagnosis that capitalism is killing us—without any Wellsyian or Chomskyan pretense that the environmental crisis could maybe be solved under bourgeois rule. But, to paraphrase Gramsci, the pessimism of my despairing correspondents’ minds has gotten the better of the “optimism of their will (as recent mind and body research would predict, incidentally.) They find it easier to imagine the end of life itself than to envision the end of capitalism. They find it more comfortable to surrender and fade away before capitalist eco-cide than to rise up with others against the system that cancels a livable environment—and they project this surrender on to younger and future generations cursed with trying to survive under the conditions imposed by the planet-poisoning bourgeois regime their predecessors failed to properly confront.

Enough with the idiotic and self-fulfilling cynicism, nihilism, and hopelessness. Of course, we can make a revolution. Or die trying. Because it’s not about the crystal ball, is it? Are the odds bad? Change them with human agency—yours and that of others with whom you join against a lethal system wired to destroy life on Earth. Make no mistake: capitalism isn’t done until it has made “a livable future” impossible. We have an existential duty to kill it

before it kills humanity along with the giant mass of other species it has already wiped out.

Paul Street’s latest book is This Happened Here: Amerikaners, Neoliberals, and the Trumping of America (London: Routledge, 2022.)

—CounterPunch, January 27, 2023

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/27/kill-capitalism-before-it-kills-us/>

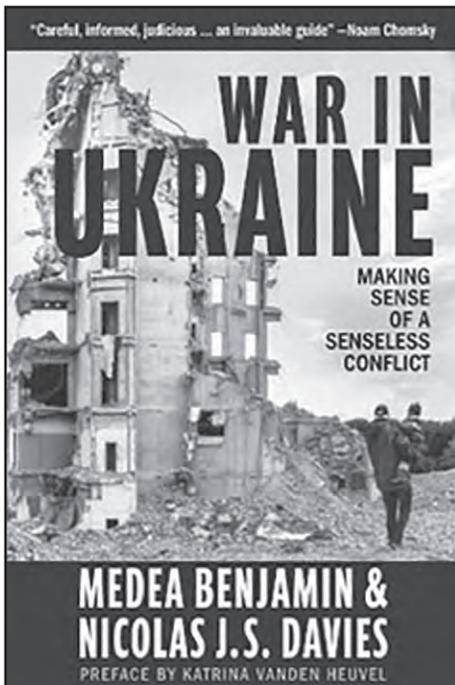
CAPITALISM KILLS



KILL CAPITALISM!

Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict in Ukraine?

BY DAVID FINKEL



War in Ukraine, Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict, Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J.S. Davies, OR Books.

First of two reviews of the new book, War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict.

Fair warning: this is a seriously misguided and disorienting book, even though useful in a certain sense. It's useful for some background material it presents, but (as we'll see) in a severely one-sided way—and important for what it reveals of the impasse of a U.S. peace movement in facing a tragic war in which “our own” side is not the main imperial aggressor.

Evading this reality requires constructing a narrative that depicts Russia's invasion of Ukraine—now becoming a wintertime medieval-type siege waged with 21st century military technology—as almost entirely a reaction to United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) provocation and

intervention in Ukraine's chaotic internal politics. It requires positing, therefore, that “diplomacy” between the U.S. and Russian great-power overlords is the only exit from a bloody disaster.

Laying out that case is the central task that the authors Medea Benjamin and Nicolas Davies set for themselves. And there's no doubt that their work is finding a ready market in a peace movement milieu that generally knows little about eastern Europe or Russia's own imperialist history. Our antiwar movement naturally knows much more about the U.S. record of aggressive wars and genocidal *coups* in the global South and the Middle East, understands all too well the cynical western rhetoric about a mythical “rules-based international order” (translation: the USA makes the rules and gives the orders,) and is prepared to accept the contention that Ukraine is basically more of the same.

Ukrainian left activists don't buy the “*coup*” story that it was all a CIA-State Department manipulation.

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the women-led CodePink organization, is a longtime well-respected antiwar activist. The group's work exposing U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia, for example, enabling the mass slaughter of Yemeni civilians in that country's civil war, has been powerful. It's also in the forefront of the struggle for abolition of nuclear weapons, among other critically important issues of U.S. global policy.

It is inconceivable to me that Medea Benjamin would author a book on Yemen, say, in which actual Yemeni voices would be almost absent, and the people of Yemen treated as objects of heartfelt sympathy but not viewed as agents of their own freedom struggle. It will become apparent why I raise this point in the context of the present review of her book on the Ukraine war.

Since the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Benjamin has been asked a basic question multiple times in person and in online forums: *Is Ukraine a “real country” (contrary to Vladimir Putin's claim,) and does it have the right to defend itself?* To my knowledge, she consistently refuses to answer. As far as I know, the same is true of other peace movement groups with a similar orientation—RootsAction and World Beyond War, to be specific (both of which I've repeatedly queried on the subject.)

That's why, before opening this book and to avoid prejudgment, I posed for myself the following questions:

1. Do Benjamin and co-author Nicolas Davies address Ukraine's right to defend itself, and if so, Ukraine's right to obtain necessary weapons, and how?
2. How many actual voices from Ukraine, and how many analytical and antiwar Russian views, are cited and uplifted in a book subtitled “making sense of a senseless conflict”?

Spoiler alert: the answers won't be happy ones. But posing these issues is critical to provide context for discussing the authors' own concluding section “How on Earth Will This End?” (pp. 179-182) and in particular their

contention that “(w)ithout a peace agreement to end the war, both sides continued to endure immense losses and inflict immense damage.” (p.180)

In itself the latter statement is clearly true enough—especially as Russia’s inability to defeat Ukraine’s army has turned to a campaign to systematically freeze and starve Ukraine’s civilian population. But only *if* we agree that Ukraine’s war of national defense and survival is legitimate and entitled to get support wherever it can obtain it, can we hope to have a morally defensible discussion of what “peace agreement” might emerge from this carnage—above all with the approval of *Ukraine’s* government and people, based on *their* assessment of risk and rewards.

Obviously, there are limitations to what’s realistically possible. President Zelensky’s desire for a “no-fly” zone, for example, was never going to be met, given the danger of direct confrontation between Russian and Western air forces—nor could those of us on the left in solidarity with Ukraine endorse it. But appeals for “diplomacy” at all costs are unsustainable.

Such a discussion must address what kind of “diplomatic settlement” might actually hold, rather than just hitting a pause button to prepare the next even bloodier round. If “diplomacy” is to succeed, it clearly will require Russia’s permanent renunciation of its annexationist, openly proclaimed “right” to possess Ukraine. That must mean that the costs of continuing the invasion become unsustainable.

But *without* the essential premise of Ukraine’s right to defend its sovereignty and chart its own future, pleas for “negotiated peace” reduce to saying that the war needs to be settled between the great powers U.S./NATO and Russia. And *opposing* military aid to Ukraine means that *its* wishes are cut out of the equation. I’m afraid that’s just about where Benjamin and Davies land. The following paragraph, if read carefully, is telling:

“Westerners supporting endless shipments of weapons to Ukraine sincerely hoped to defend Ukrainian freedom and sovereignty. But calling on Ukrainians to keep fighting until they won a total victory over Russia and reclaimed Crimea and the Donbas could only lead to massive Ukrainian death and suffering, and an increasingly dangerous proxy war between nuclear superpowers that threatened the life of everyone on earth.” (p.180)

What’s wrong here? Almost everything—beginning with the premise that Ukrainians are being egged on to “keep fighting” for impossible objectives, against their own better judgment. This goes along with a widely circulated fable that Ukraine was all set for a negotiated deal very early on, but was instigated by Biden and Boris Johnson to pull out of a promising peace settlement. The authors summarize this story (pp.83-85) without confronting the detail that *Russia would not renounce its annexationist claims* on Ukraine.

...the great majority of Ukrainians have chosen the course of armed struggle to protect their nation, and the partial democracy they’ve achieved, over surrender and enslavement...

Second, closely related to the first, is a view of the “proxy war” as the predominant factor in the conflict, in which Ukraine is seen as little more than a pawn subordinated in a U.S./NATO drive to weaken and ultimately disintegrate the Russian Federation. Indeed, in the authors’ account even Russia has very little independent agency: Vladimir Putin’s pronouncements for example that Ukraine “was never a real country,” is “run by Nazis”

and needs to be back in the Russian embrace are not mentioned, let alone taken as the existential threat they are to Ukraine’s people.

This is a very severe weakness, because the roots of the invasion in the multiple crises of Russia’s own mafia-type petro-capitalism and the Putin regime are essential to understand. The analyses of Russian leftist authors—Boris Kagarlitsky and Ilya Budraitskis, to name just two among many—are easily available in English online, but unmentioned in the book. Indeed, the authors’ sources do not include a single critical Russian voice.

This makes it all the more difficult to grasp the specific character of the war. The full extent of massacres of civilians at Bucha, Irpin, Izium and other Russian-occupied towns may have been revealed after Benjamin and Davies did most of their writing—but these war crimes flowed directly from the nature of an annexationist and bordering-on-genocidal invasion that the authors fail to confront. They do not endorse or justify the invasion, which the first sentence of Katrina vanden Heuvel’s Preface calls “Russia’s illegal, brutal assault on Ukraine” (5), but their (and her) analysis of it doesn’t go much beyond dissecting NATO’s provocative behavior.

Third, the appeal here to the fear of nuclear annihilation is not entirely honest. It is certainly true that so long as nuclear weapons exist, we all live under that threat. But it’s misleading to suggest that the danger has become so much greater during this war that Ukraine’s independence should be sacrificed to avoid it.

The nuclear powers themselves, for their own reasons, are avoiding such provocations. What’s more, Benjamin and Davies don’t acknowledge that a Russian victory would ratchet up tensions and the risks of escalation toward nuclear war. It’s also unfair to ignore the fact that Ukraine, after the dissolu-

tion of the Soviet Union, was one of only two countries in the world to give up nuclear weapons—along with post-apartheid South Africa. The ever-present nuclear war threat must not be leveraged to compel Ukraine to accept surrender or a bloody amputation.

Provocation and the War

Back to the beginning: The bulk of the book covers the background, with chapters on “How 2014 Set the Stage for War,” “The Success and Failure of the Minsk II Peace Plan,” “The Russian Invasion of Ukraine” and “NATO: Myth vs. Reality.”

As a quick primer or refresher course on NATO’s reckless expansion after 1991, violating promises that U.S. diplomats had made to Soviet leader Gorbachev—and at a time when NATO itself could reasonably have gone away, along with the Soviet bloc’s Warsaw Pact—this account has some value. But some questions aren’t posed: for example, since NATO’s expansion to the main eastern European states was substantially complete by 2004, it can hardly fully explain Russia’s behavior toward Ukraine from 2014 to the present.

In a paragraph revealing more than the authors may intend, they write:

“In 2004, seven more Eastern European countries joined, including the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These countries *had not only been part of the Soviet Union, but were already part of the Russian Empire during the Czarist era.*” (p. 105, emphasis added)

Indeed, they had been—and knowing what Russian rule had been like for some decades or centuries, they weren’t going back. The authors evidently regard this as a provocation to *Russia*, without regard for the concern these countries had for preserving their own independence. In writing that “(e)very country in Eastern Europe that joins NATO becomes a threat to Russia” and enhances “the danger of a civilization-ending nuclear war” (p. 106), the

authors disregard these nations’ well-rooted fears of Russia’s threat to *their* security and self-determination.

They do recognize that the invasion, “putting Russia into the role of aggressor...brought a tremendous jolt of unity to U.S.-European relations and gave NATO a new lease on life,” and as a further result “Sweden and Finland put in applications to join NATO, which NATO eagerly welcomed.” (115)

All these are Putin’s free gifts to western imperialism. Does it mean that NATO expansion is a good thing? No—what it does show is the burning necessity of a global antiwar movement worthy of the name that demands the defunding, disarming and dissolution of all great-power war blocs, first of all NATO and the Russian-led CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). Only the power of mass movements in the main imperial powers can convince smaller nations living in their shadows of a positive alternative to throwing themselves under the dubious protection of one or the other.

...while opposing weapons for Ukraine, they don’t raise the most basic demand for the cancellation of Ukraine’s foreign debt, an essential first step toward meeting the colossal costs of reconstruction.

We’ve known this since the days of the Cold War, and it’s just as true today as the war in Ukraine drags the world in a horrible direction—not really toward nuclear war, but toward the bitter political winter of a new Cold War.

Benjamin and Davies undoubtedly want to see a global movement to confront this danger. Unfortunately, the

one-sided way they present the issues doesn’t point a way toward building it. Part of the problem I see is that they offer Ukraine and its people sympathy, but not *solidarity*. It’s astonishing that while opposing weapons for Ukraine, they don’t raise the most basic demand for the *cancellation of Ukraine’s foreign debt*, an essential first step toward meeting the colossal costs of reconstruction.

Missing voices

Here the questions I posed before opening the book are particularly relevant, and I’ve already indicated a partial answer: The question of the legitimacy of Ukraine’s military resistance remains not directly answered, and the number of Russian voices we hear is precisely zero.

What about the most important of all, *Ukrainian* voices? The answer is exactly one: Yurii Sheliashenko, a principled pacifist and “war resister who continued to publicly oppose war while the bombs and shells were blasting around him.” (p. 184) This is a view claiming a consistent conscientious objection to war and violence under all circumstances.

That’s a Ukrainian voice and viewpoint that surely deserves to be heard—but the *only* one? At a time when tens-of-thousands of Ukrainians from all walks of civilian life rushed to join the Territorial Defense Forces? When people have accomplished miracles of grassroots organization for mutual aid in their communities, and for sending material support to the front-line soldiers? When the great majority of Ukrainians have chosen the course of armed struggle to protect their nation, and the partial democracy they’ve achieved, over surrender and enslavement?

The absence of voices from the Ukrainian left is particularly crippling when it comes to the authors’ account of the chaotic events of the 2014 Maidan uprising, which they flatten into the story, too common in the western left, of a U.S.-sponsored and fascist-led “*coup*” against the elected Viktor Yanukovich government. (This is the

simplistic mirror image of the U.S. State Department narrative of a unified popular democratic revolution.)

Suffice it to say here that there are reasons why the majority of Ukrainians from right-to-left on the political spectrum reacted furiously when Yanukovich made a last-minute switch from an agreement with the European Union to signing up with a Russian-organized Eurasian competitor. Ukrainian left activists don't buy the "coup" story that it was all a CIA-State Department manipulation.

To attempt to understand the complex origins, the events and the struggles in eastern Ukraine following Maidan, it's necessary to see what those activists have to say. And they're readily available: to name one, Yuliya Yurchenko's work, *Ukraine and the Empire of Capital. From Marketisation to Armed Conflict* (Pluto Press, 2018) lays out the story of the oligarchic-capitalist devastation of Ukraine after 1991 under "(t)he combination of ill-prescribed market transition reforms, loaned fund mismanagement and misappropriation by the kleptocratic ruling bloc."

Yurchenko is among the members of the Ukrainian *Sotsialny Rukh* (Social Movement) group whose articles and interviews are readily available in English. This isn't the place to explore many important details, but the point here is that Benjamin and Davies appear to be unaware of these sources—or else don't care enough to consider them.

For readers who do care, the views of Ukrainian leftists are easily accessed

in English. To give just one example, the issue of negotiations, and valuable empirical survey results on the attitudes of the Ukrainian population, are laid out by Denys Bondar and Zakhar Popovych: [The left view on the prospects of peace negotiations](https://rev.org.ua) (*rev.org.ua*)

All these are Putin's free gifts to western imperialism. Does it mean that NATO expansion is a good thing? No—what it does show is the burning necessity of a global antiwar movement worthy of the name that demands the defunding, disarming and dissolution of all great-power war blocs, first of all NATO and the Russian-led CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization).

Readers of this book will also learn nothing about Putin's turning Belarus into a vassal regime (although its dictator Lukashenko hasn't sent troops into the war, knowing how explosive the popular reaction might be,) or what conclusions people in Eastern Europe

might draw from that, or from Russia's intervention to crush a powerful labor-led 2021 popular uprising in Kazakhstan.

The authors conclude with an eloquent statement: "This tragedy was not driven by the desire of ordinary Russians to conquer Ukraine, nor any wish by ordinary Americans or Europeans to return to a world divided by a Cold War and an Iron Curtain." (p. 181)

With that sentiment, one hopes, we can all agree. The book's failure, however, lies in giving no answers, or dreadfully wrong ones, to what "ordinary Americans or Europeans" should be trying to do about it, and refusing meaningful solidarity to what ordinary Ukrainians are actually doing. A peace movement worthy of the name, and capable of facing the enormous challenges that confront us in a world of intensifying imperialist rivalries, is going to have to do better than that.

David Finkel is an editor of Against the Current (<https://againstthecurrent.org>) and a member of the newly formed Ukrainian Solidarity Network (U.S.).

—CounterPunch, December 23, 2022

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/12/23/making-sense-of-a-senseless-conflict/>

Making (No) Sense of the Ukraine War

BY ERIC DRAITSER

Second review of War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict.

Several years ago, I was sitting in a Lower Manhattan café with a friend, the journalist Arun Gupta, lamenting the state of the Left and how so many ostensible leftists had become little more than cheerleaders for reactionary politics. While downing mediocre coffee and an overpriced lunch, I listened as Arun made an incisive observation: “In the U.S., the Left has never been close to power. But even powerless, the Left has had influence through correct political analysis. The Left has shaped politics by being right.” And as I thought about it, Arun had a great point. Whether it was the labor movement, civil rights movement, the Vietnam antiwar movement, the feminist movement, the environmental movement, or the anti-nukes movement, all were propelled into the mainstream of U.S. political life by the Left.

And so, there is a tradition that we on the Left in the United States—the diseased heart of the imperial “West”—have an obligation to uphold. Our job is not to cosplay as Little Kissingers, studying the global chessboard and basing our political views on the positioning of non-Western pieces. Instead, our responsibility is to discern what is real and to defend and propagate that truth in the service of internationalism and liberation from capitalist and imperialist oppression.

Our job is to help others understand violence: who is perpetrating aggression, who is victimized, and how we can stop it. Our job is to make sense of the senseless.

With that principle in mind, the new book *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict* by Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies (of the antiwar group CODEPINK) fails

on every level. It offers a myopic view of Russia’s war in Ukraine that sees the entirety of the conflict through the lens of U.S.-NATO aggression without making even a perfunctory attempt to engage with the many other critical aspects of the war: oligarch rivalries, capital accumulation, imperial revanchism, anti-communism, resource extraction, and more.

...our responsibility is to discern what is real and to defend and propagate that truth in the service of internationalism and liberation from capitalist and imperialist oppression...

The book makes no effort to understand Ukrainian perspectives beyond casting the entire society as nameless and faceless pawns of U.S. imperialism. Similarly, the authors don’t bother to engage with any Russian perspectives—except those of Vladimir Putin—let alone provide a materialist analysis of Russian society, economy, or political institutions. It makes little mention of the events leading up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, save for those that involve NATO, omitting Russia’s military intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022 to crush a worker uprising. The authors studiously avoid even a superficial analysis of the nature of the so-called People’s Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, how the situation came to be, or the players involved.

In fact, Benjamin and Davies ignore all the critical elements of this ghastly

and criminal war apart from the wrongs of the United States and NATO. And even with respect to NATO, the authors fail to capture the complexity of its role since the end of the Soviet Union, carefully sidestepping the inconvenient examples of NATO-Russia collaboration.

It is distressing to see leaders of one of the most prominent antiwar organizations in the United States, in effect, upholding Putin’s left flank, offering up hollow condemnations of the Kremlin while using its propaganda to badly misinform the public about the nature of a war that has already shaken the global capitalist system and has the potential to end human civilization.

With that in mind, I offer this review for those interested in a serious analysis of the war and its attendant complexities, one that jettisons the fundamentally flawed framework of Benjamin and Davies and instead maintains an internationalist, anti-colonial, and authentic anti-imperialist perspective.

A critical look at U.S./NATO-Russia relations

Benjamin and Davies are at their strongest when highlighting the vicious U.S.-NATO war machine, which sends arms and soldiers across the planet for military exercises, military interventions, and, of course, profits. The book provides an adequate, though uneven, introduction to the insidious role of NATO throughout the post-Soviet period, including most importantly highlighting how the U.S.-led military alliance expanded to include much of the former Soviet bloc. However, as with everything in this book, the analysis is partial and ignores many of the critical elements of the NATO-Russia relationship.

Reading Benjamin and Davies one could easily reach the conclusion that

Russia and NATO have been locked in a conflict since at least 2007, if not 1991, as NATO crept its way to Russia's border, thus presenting Russia with an "existential threat." That aligns them with Putin, who has made the same point countless times, including in his oft-quoted 2007 speech in Munich. Conveniently, however, both Benjamin and Davies, like Putin, ignore the fact that Russia was a critical NATO partner for much of the last 20 years.

Take, for instance, the fact that Russia hosted a NATO base inside its borders for many years, and that it was a critical linchpin of NATO's imperial infrastructure allowing the U.S. and its "NATO allies and partners" to rain death and destruction on Afghanistan for twenty-plus years. Sounds a bit odd for a country that allegedly views NATO as an existential threat. In fact, as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute noted, "Russia was the second largest supplier of major arms to the Afghan armed forces in the period [2001–2020], accounting for 14 percent of imports, by volume. All of these deliveries took place between 2002 and 2014."

Let us recall that Russia steadfastly refused to use its UN Security Council veto to prevent the NATO-led destruction of Libya, an egregious war crime carried out by the United States, United Kingdom, France, and other powers. At the time, Russia had no significant qualms with NATO's crime against humanity, with then-President Dmitry Medvedev—a placeholder for Putin due to constitutional term limits—saying that Russia did not veto Resolution 1973, which authorized the intervention, "for the simple reason that [Russia does] not consider the resolution in question wrong. [The resolution] reflects [Russia's] understanding of events in Libya too, but not completely." So much for "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" school of realpolitik.

And, in perhaps the most distasteful of ironies, Benjamin and Davies, like

some segments of the Left, allow Putin's iteration of Bush-era neoconservative imperialism to go entirely unnoticed. How hard would it have been to point out, as I did in *CounterPunch* within the first two weeks of the war, that Putin was following the Bush-Cheney playbook? A little Azov Bandera Nazis in place of al-Qaeda terrorists, a few Ukrainian biolabs and a non-existent nuclear weapons program in place of "Saddam's Weapons of Mass Destruction," make a nice little neocon war.

**...both Benjamin and
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Don't take my word for it. Here's Putin in his now-infamous speech just before officially ordering the invasion:

"If Ukraine acquires weapons of mass destruction, the situation in the world and in Europe will drastically change, especially for us, for Russia. We cannot but react to this real danger, all the more so since, let me repeat, Ukraine's Western patrons may help it acquire these weapons to create yet another threat to our country."

Like a cheaply made Russian knock-off of a carcinogenic Western consumer product, Putin attempts to replicate the worst of U.S. imperialism and adapt it to his own needs. While such cynicism is to be expected from the undisputed leader of the global far right, the credulity of some on the Left, including Benjamin and Davies, toward Putin's words is unacceptable.

About that Putin speech...

It is interesting to note that Benjamin and Davies quote liberally from numerous Putin speeches, including the now infamous February 21, 2022, address to the Russian people in which he formally announced the invasion. And yet the authors studiously ignore all of it save for the bits about NATO. I wonder why?

Could it be because in the same speech, Putin made very clear that the war was about righting a historic wrong perpetrated by the dastardly Vladimir Lenin and those insidious Bolsheviks with their crazy ideas about the right of nations to self-determination? Could it be because Putin quite openly declares the conflict to be neocolonial in nature? Don't believe me? Here's Putin:

"I would like to emphasize again that Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space. ... Since time immemorial, the people living in the southwest of what has historically been Russian land have called themselves Russians and Orthodox Christians. ... So, I will start with the fact that modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia or, to be more precise, by Bolshevik, Communist Russia. ...

"This process started practically right after the 1917 revolution, and Lenin and his associates did it in a way that was extremely harsh on Russia—by separating, severing what is historically Russian land. Nobody asked the millions of people living there what they thought... When it comes to the historical destiny of Russia and its peoples, Lenin's principles of state development were not just a mistake; they were worse than a mistake, as the saying goes. This became patently clear after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991... Soviet Ukraine is the result of the Bolsheviks' policy and can be rightfully called 'Vladimir Lenin's Ukraine.'

“And today the ‘grateful progeny’ has overturned monuments to Lenin in Ukraine. They call it decommunization. You want decommunization? Very well, this suits us just fine. But why stop halfway? We are ready to show what real decommunization would mean for Ukraine.”

What Putin’s address reveals, and what Benjamin and Davies go to great lengths to ignore, is the fact that this war is, at its root, an imperial, revanchist, neocolonial war. From regarding much of Ukraine as “historically Russian land” to identifying it with Orthodox Christianity, Putin is quite openly declaring that Ukraine does not, in fact, have a right to exist. Or, to the extent that it does, it is exclusively Catholic, Western Ukraine, with the rest of the country belonging to Russia and Orthodoxy.

What do you call a war that has as its explicit goal the erasure of an entire nation? Supremacist? Genocidal? Colonial? Take your pick. Benjamin and Davies prefer to call it “self-defense.” Or to just not comment at all.

Seen from this perspective, perhaps we can finally “make sense” of Russia’s “senseless” criminal attacks on civilian infrastructure, such as Ukraine’s energy system, which Amnesty International, along with every other human rights body, describes as war crimes. Similarly, one can understand why Putin seems so cavalier about holding Europe’s biggest nuclear plant hostage, risking a catastrophic nuclear accident, since it would most acutely affect Ukrainians, who don’t really matter anyway. Likewise, we now can understand the attacks on Ukraine’s cultural institutions, including art and science museums, because a nation that has no right to exist surely has no right to its own unique culture. For Putin, Ukrainian culture is a figment of the Bolshevik imagination. (I’ve written about this erasure of Ukrainian identity elsewhere.¹) And, naturally, a people who do not exist have no rights.

Benjamin/Davies and Putin agree: Ukrainians (mostly) don’t exist

One of the most stunningly asinine aspects of the book is the fact that it completely ignores Ukrainian society, Ukrainian voices, and Ukrainian perspectives. There is a grand total of one Ukrainian activist cited in the book, despite the fact that every day on both traditional and social media there are countless Ukrainians from all political persuasions active on every front of this war.

The sole Ukrainian voice belongs to Yurii Sheliashenko, a pacifist and war resister. While one can certainly respect a person’s decision to be a pacifist, it raises the question of why this was the only voice included in the book.

What Benjamin and Davies omit is that nearly all significant early leaders of the “People’s Republics” were Russian-backed intelligence operatives and/or fascists with deep connections to the Russian state and fascist tendencies within it.

Benjamin and Davies could certainly have spoken with the comrades of Maksym Boutkevych, the antifascist, anarchist, and human rights defender who co-founded the “Without Borders” project, and who since June has been a prisoner of the Russians, who dishonestly claim he’s a “Nazi.” Benjamin and Davies would have had no difficulty speaking with Taras Bilous, a Ukrainian socialist historian, editor of *Commons: Journal of Social Criticism*, and an activist with the left-wing Social Movement. Or Dmytro Mrachnyk, a political activist, journal-

ist, and tattoo artist turned soldier who participated in the liberation of Kharkiv and who has seen frontline combat since the Russian invasion began. Or journalist turned soldier Yevgeny Leshan. Or, until this past Fall, Yuriy Samoilenko, the head of the antifascist football hooligan crew Hoods Hoods Klan, who became an officer in the Ukrainian Army and was killed in combat. Or members of the Solidarity Collectives, which has organized medical aid and foreign medical volunteers in places on the frontlines like Bakhmut where the reality of Russian aggression is inescapable.

So, what’s the difference between those Ukrainians listed above (and many others not mentioned) and Benjamin and Davies’ preferred Ukrainian voice? Resistance. For Benjamin and Davies, the only Ukrainian worth talking to is one who does not resist Russia’s aggression.

Russia is Putin, Putin is Russia

Another inexcusable omission in the book is the complete absence of any Russian voices and analysis of Russian society and domestic issues that may have motivated Putin’s invasion. One gets the impression from Benjamin and Davies that Russia can be reduced to Putin and his ideas about the West, the world, and Russia’s place within it. How else is one to interpret the complete lack of any Russian perspectives? The authors mention in passing the repression by the Putin regime, the suppression and outright criminalization of independent media, and other measures taken by the Kremlin, but conveniently they do not seek analysis from Russian experts.

Had they bothered to do so, they would have discovered a wide range of factors complicating the simple, myopic Russia vs. NATO narrative that is the lifeblood of the book. For instance, they could have spoken with renowned historian, sociologist, and author Boris Kagarlitsky, whom I interviewed in

September 2022 about the political, economic, and social factors behind the invasion. Benjamin and Davies might have been surprised to hear Kagarlitsky explain that, while it's self-evident that NATO expansion was imperialist, it's also true that much of the U.S. motivation was rooted not in targeting Russia but in absorbing the post-Soviet militaries of Eastern Europe into NATO (along with their hardware) in order to use them in far-flung operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Poland and Ukraine rank fourth and fifth in combat deaths in Iraq, for example.

As Kagarlitsky noted, "The eastward expansion of NATO was part of Western imperialist policies...but up to at least 2014 it had very little to do with Russia. It was much more about Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and maybe China to some extent." Kagarlitsky explains:

"[NATO expansion] is one side of the coin. And the other side is Russian sub-imperialism. Russian elites accumulated enormous quantities of hard currency throughout the Putin era, and this is a very typical crisis of overaccumulation as described by Rosa Luxemburg...the Russian elite accumulated much more capital than it could use and invest inside its own country...this accumulation by both the state and private sector was enormous and led to a specific type of expansionism because Russian corporations were interested in taking over companies, and especially resources, of former Soviet Republics; Ukraine was of special interest but also Moldova, Kazakhstan, *etc.* And here you have a classic capitalist-imperialist conflict between competitors [as] Western capital and corporations were moving into the same markets."

Perhaps such an analysis might have proven useful in making sense of this senseless conflict?

The "People's Republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk: A Fairy Tale

In what is a running theme of War in Ukraine, the authors spend many pages detailing the events of 2014 and the establishment of the "People's Republics" without ever asking any of the key questions: Who created them? How? What is daily life like there?

Indeed, an uninitiated reader would be hard-pressed to identify anything about the "People's Republics" from the book other than some vague explanation about "anti-coup" uprisings that led to their creation. Benjamin and Davies write:

"On April 7 [2014], anti-coup protesters in Donetsk stormed a government building, declared the formation of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and announced a referendum on independence from Ukraine to take place on May 11. Luhansk followed suit on April 27, declaring the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and announcing a referendum for the same day as Donetsk."

And that's it. What Benjamin and Davies omit is that nearly all significant early leaders of the "People's Republics" were Russian-backed intelligence operatives and/or fascists with deep connections to the Russian state and fascist tendencies within it. For brevity, we'll highlight just a few.

Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov), a Russian FSB (Federal Security Service) colonel, was an early leader of one of the primary paramilitaries involved in fomenting the conflict in Donbas. Girkin admitted as much himself when he brazenly boasted about creating the war, stating, "If our unit had not crossed the border, everything would have ended as it did in Kharkiv and in Odesa." One would think that a book written by leaders of a prominent anti-war organization would perhaps have included such relevant information about how the war actually began.

Pavel Gubarev rose to prominence in the early days of protests in Donetsk, leading anti-Maidan rallies, the seizure of government buildings, and eventually appointing himself the first "People's Governor." Gubarev spent formative years as a member of Russian Nation Unity (RNE), a far-right, neo-Nazi group where he participated in training camps, and internalized a Russian imperial revanchist politics aligned with Alexander Dugin, the influential Russian fascist ideologue and political operator. Konstantin Skorkin, a Russian journalist specializing in Ukrainian politics, noted that Gubarev is understood to have been connected to, and financed by, Russian fascist oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev, who is both Dugin's patron and was named in a federal indictment as one of the "main sources of financing for Russians promoting separatism in Crimea."

Malofeyev, Dugin, and Gubarev are all unreconstructed imperial revanchists who see the Russian-fomented war in Donbas as an opportunity to re-establish "Novorossiya," the Russian imperial name for the region. Dugin himself is on record saying that the goal in Donbas was not incorporation into the Russian Federation but "restoration of the old Russian Empire."

Andrey Purgin is another of the early instigators of the conflict. He founded the "Donetsk Republic" in 2005 in direct response to the Orange Revolution of 2004, which brought the pro-western Viktor Yushenko to power. Like Gubarev, Purgin was also connected to Dugin and Malofeyev, with activists of his organization having been trained in Dugin's International Eurasian Movement camps. Also, like Gubarev, Purgin was sidelined by the end of 2014 in favor of more reliable United Russia party apparatchiks like Alexander Zakharchenko (succeeded by current Donetsk warlord Denis Pushilin.)

But aside from the “activists” on the ground doing Russia’s bidding in fomenting the war on Donbas, there was also pro-Russian neo-Nazi infiltration of the region that helped spark what became called a “civil war.” Among those groups were the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), described by Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation as:

“An extreme-right, white supremacist militant organization based in St. Petersburg, Russia [which] promotes ethnic Russian nationalism, advocates the restoration of Russia’s tsarist regime, and seeks to fuel white supremacy extremism in the West. RIM maintains contacts with neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups across Europe and the United States... Members of RIM’s armed wing, the Imperial Legion, have fought alongside pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine and been involved in conflicts in Libya and Syria. In addition to its ultra-nationalist beliefs, RIM is known for its anti-Semitic and anti-Ukrainian views.”

RIM was joined by Task Force Rusich, a Russian neo-Nazi mercenary outfit understood to be a cadre of the infamous Wagner Group. Task Force Rusich was especially brutal in summer 2014 when it was deployed to Donbas at the peak of the fighting that year.

I could go on and on naming all the individuals, groups, and oligarchs that are never even mentioned in a book purporting to make sense of a senseless war, but this is not a full catalog of all the players or the innumerable human rights abuses occurring in Donbas every day. Rather, it is an attempt to ask a fundamental question of both Benjamin and Davies as well as others parroting Russia’s talking points about Donbas: Why didn’t they bother to study the war before forming their political position on the issue?

Similarly, why didn’t Benjamin and Davies examine the financial flows to and from Donbas? Had they done so

they might have discovered a company called VneshTorgServis, which is headed by a Putin ally and former governor of Irkutsk region, Vladimir Pashkov. The company was established to take control of seized Ukrainian factories and funnel the revenues, resources, and capital goods into the pockets of Kremlin-connected insiders. Some of the factories seized by Russia’s proxies and turned into money-makers for Russia’s oligarchs and elite include Donetsksteel Iron and Steel Works, Yenakiieve and Makiivka Iron and Steel Works, Yenakiieve Coke and Chemicals Plant, Yasinovka Coke Plant, Makiivkoks, and Khartyszsk Tube Works.

Why understanding the war matters so much

Were this a simple disagreement among U.S. leftists, I would never have bothered to critique this book. But how we understand the nature of this war directly informs how we develop a sound leftist position on it and how we rebuild our international movement.

Reading Benjamin and Davies leaves one with the simple, straightforward analysis, dominant in some corners of the Left, that this is an easily understood proxy war between NATO and Russia. Seen through this distorted lens, one could understand why some on the Left call for an end to the war via “peace negotiations” (and dismembering of Ukraine) and oppose sending vital weapons to those fighting the Russian invaders.

However, a serious examination of the war and its many dimensions leads to the very different conclusion that Ukraine has been invaded by an aggressive sub-imperial state, which also happens to be the traditional colonial power in the region, and that resistance to such aggression is not only justified, but a prerequisite for the survival of the people of Ukraine and the defense of their right to self-determination. In fact, such an analysis leads to the logical conclusion that opposing Ukraine’s right to defend itself and eject its invaders is an aban-

donment of every principle of internationalism, solidarity, and anti-colonial and anti-imperialist politics.

Some concluding thoughts

While I don’t know Davies, it is truly a shame to see Benjamin, whose work I’ve often found valuable and whom I’ve hosted on my podcast, degrade herself with such an embarrassing distortion of an extremely complex and exceedingly dangerous war.

Benjamin and Davies, like Noam Chomsky and Katrina vanden Heuvel (who contributed the preface to this book,) are correct that the threat of nuclear war still looms over everything happening in Ukraine, and everyone globally should be concerned about that. They are also correct that U.S.-NATO imperialism is critical to understanding the invasion. Unfortunately, the book they’ve produced misinforms more than it informs and distorts more than it clarifies.

Benjamin and Davies have done a tremendous disservice to the people of Ukraine resisting an invasion, the people of Russia living under (especially those resisting) a criminal regime, and the international Left as a whole. And in so doing, they provide left cover for Putin’s war machine. Echoing my pal Arun Gupta, even if the Left in the United States lacks effective power at the moment, we must at the very least provide a serious analysis, based on historical truths as well as current political realities. Anything less fails all those suffering under the guns of imperial aggressors—in this case, the forces led by Vladimir Putin.

Eric Draitser is an independent political analyst and host of CounterPunch Radio.

—CounterPunch, January 27, 2023

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/27/making-no-sense-of-the-ukraine-war/>

1 “Ukrainian Folk Tales: An Anti-Colonial Perspective”

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/11/04/ukrainian-folk-tales-an-anti-colonial-perspective/>

Marx's *Communist Manifesto* Has Much to Teach Us in 2023

C.J. POLYCHRONIOU INTERVIEWS CHINA MIÉVILLE

The *Communist Manifesto* is one of the most widely read political documents in the history of the world. It influenced millions of people against capitalist oppression and toward a more just and humane social order. It is also a brilliant display of literary and poetic expression by its author, the German revolutionary philosopher Karl Marx, which few, if any, political commentators since have been able to match. But is *The Communist Manifesto* politically relevant today? The renowned British and New York Times bestselling author of “weird fiction” and non-fiction books China Miéville thinks so, which is why he wrote his latest book, *A Spectre, Haunting: On the Communist Manifesto*, published in May 2022 by Haymarket Books. The book, incidentally, has been described—correctly so, I might add—as “a lyrical introduction and a spirited defense of the modern world’s most influential political document.”

Miéville studied at Cambridge University and received a Ph.D. in international relations from the London School of Economics. He has published scores of highly acclaimed fiction works, such as *King Rat* (1998), which was nominated for both the International Horror Guild and Bram Stoker Awards for best first novel; *Perdido Street Station* (2000), which won the 2001 Arthur C. Clarke award for best science fiction and a 2001 British Fantasy Award; *Iron Council* (2004), winner of the Arthur C. Clarke award and the Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel; *The City & the City* (2009), a further winner of an Arthur C. Clarke award, Hugo Award and World Fantasy Award for Best Novel; and *The Last Days of a New Paris* (2016). A self-proclaimed Marxist, Miéville has also published *Between Equal Rights: A Marxist Theory of International Law* and *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution*.

In this exclusive interview for Truthout, Miéville discusses his latest book, why it’s still important to engage

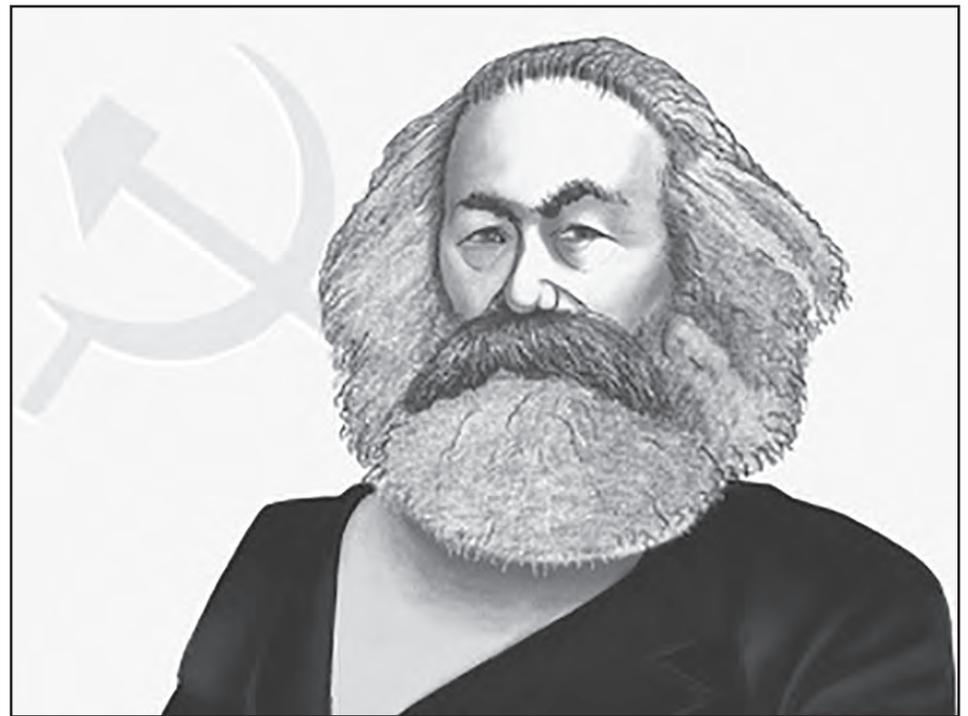
with *The Communist Manifesto* and why we must approach ecological catastrophe with radical theory.

C. J. Polychroniou: *The Communist Manifesto*, originally known as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, was written by Karl Marx with the assistance of Friedrich Engels and published in London on February 21, 1848. Its original aim was to serve “as a complete theoretical and practical party program” for the Communist League, but ultimately became the principal political pamphlet for the European communist parties in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also widely recognized as one of the most important and influential political documents in the history of the world. Of course, history has taken a very different route from that envisioned by Marx and Engels. True, communism (or some variant of it!) was tried out in different parts of the world, but capitalism still reigns supreme. With that in mind, what

prompted you to write a book on *The Communist Manifesto* in the second decade of the 21st century? Historical curiosity or political relevance?

China Miéville: There’s no necessary contradiction between the two, of course. I do think that the manifesto should be an object of historical curiosity to anyone interested in the shaping of the modern world, and/or of great and historical ideas. And to that extent, I’m well aware that plenty of potential readers of *A Spectre, Haunting* will be highly skeptical about communism in any form, and thus of the modern applicability of the book.

Part of the argument is that it is still worth engaging with the manifesto. To preempt the second half of this answer, I disagree with that sense that it’s a purely historical curiosity, for reasons that I try to make clear in the book. But I’ve also long been frustrated by the profoundly dunderheaded and either bad faith or ignorant (or both) nature of the



Ayo Walker/Truthout

so-called debates around the manifesto. One of the ideas of this book is to say precisely to people who do not see the pamphlet as politically relevant that the great majority of the arguments usually adduced for that position are just intellectually lazy and embarrassing, and that surely it is critics who should give their intellectual and political opponents the courtesy of taking them on at their strongest, and with the most curious and generous and engaged reading, rather than airily reciting completely unthinking bromides and nostrums. I hope if I were to pronounce on a book with which I profoundly disagreed, I would try to engage with it seriously.

All of which is to say that I hope *A Spectre, Haunting* invites an engagement from people who profoundly disagree with me, and with the manifesto, at a serious, interesting, and worthy level. In other words, even if you don't find anything politically relevant in the manifesto, you can't, surely, dismiss its historical and social importance, and if the book does nothing else than to plead for a more serious discussion of it at that level, I would be pleased. Because—again, as I try to say and illustrate in *A Spectre, Haunting*, and with some honorable exceptions—most of the discussions of the manifesto from its critics, including very celebrated critics and those who, I think, should know far better, is based on piss-poor and miserly reading.

Of course, on top of that, I absolutely do think that the manifesto remains politically relevant. Indeed, inspirational. Not that I have, or anyone should have, an uncritical or dogmatic relationship to it. In the book, I try to make clear the various ways in which, and issues on which, I think the manifesto is inadequate, or contradictory, or simply wrong. But for me, the manifesto read as it deserves to be read, flawed, and rushed and partial as it is, is a work of incredible political importance—as well as great literary urgency and beauty.

Every day, capitalism proves that it is absolutely indifferent to human flourishing, or life, and therefore it really shouldn't be a surprise that so many of the grotesque and monstrous phenomena of our society—inequality, racism, misogyny, imperialism, ecological catastrophe, mass extinction, mass unnecessary death—are inextricable from capitalism. The demand for a system that prioritizes human need over profit is a demand for the end of capitalism. We can debate what that might look like, but if we take seriously the idea that the only way to get to a world fit to live in is to get beyond capitalism, we have to move beyond the “common sense”—which is to say, the deadening propaganda—that it is “obviously” impossible to have anything other than capitalism. The manifesto's unremitting insistence on the dynamics of class history that got us here, and its ruthless denaturalizing and questioning of supposedly eternal truths, all in the service of liberation, is profoundly important.

C. J. Polychroniou: “Workers of All Countries, Unite” is one of the most fundamental political slogans of “The Communist Manifesto.” Was this a call for world revolution or merely political rhetoric? Indeed, there is an entire genre of political writing devoted to the idea that Marx was actually in favor of restricting immigration (Irish immigration, as a case in point) because it was driving down wages for (English) workers. Do you have any thoughts on this matter? Would Marx be favoring immigration restrictions today?

China Miéville: It was certainly not “mere” rhetoric, though it was part of a rhetorical masterwork. But it was rhetoric deployed as part of—whether you agree with it or not—an absolutely sincere political project, a commitment to world revolution. On the vexed question of Marx and immigration: Mature Marx was absolutely and explicitly clear that English workers' racism against Irish workers was a profound plank in their own oppression

and had to be overcome before political liberation could be pursued. In addition, he and Engels were unstintingly suspicious of the bourgeois state, which of course is the proponent, perpetrator, and police of immigration controls. I think Marx and Engels would treat immigration restrictions today with the contempt and suspicion that, as tools predicated on and bolstering racism, and that undermine the international solidarity of the working class—which, the manifesto insists, “has no country”—they deserve. That said, it's worth stressing that I'm very suspicious of the kind of apologetic theology approach to Marxism that tries to derive a political position today from what Marx would or would not have thought. First of all, the judgment of what he “would have thought” (which has a discomfiting hagiographical ring to it) always involves an act of historical translation at very best, and violence at worst: because context is everything. Fredric Jameson is right: always historicize. Secondly, because it's hardly surprising that one could find in Marxism as a system an indispensable tool for analysis, and also disagree with Marx—even if we could be confident in what he would say—in particular concrete instances. The key points are what the truth is, and what is the best political approach in principle and strategically and tactically. Without question, finding as I do such great resources in the Marxist tradition, I think that Marx's opinions are crucial data with regard to that, but it's perfectly possible to cleave to the method and tradition, and yet to disagree with Marx on this or that.

C. J. Polychroniou: As noted earlier, communism was tried out in different parts of the world throughout the 20th century. From your own perspective, was Marx's vision of communism realized in any form or shape under “actually existing socialism” regimes?

China Miéville: Simply put, no. That's not an adequate answer, of

course. And to be clear, though I do go into this a little bit in my book, in-depth of the “actually existing socialisms” is some way beyond its remit, so I’m not pretending to have made a conclusive argument on this issue. What I do want to do is stress what I think should be a given starting point for any good-faith debate, but which absolutely isn’t, which is that seeing those regimes as “communist” simply because they say so is absolutely absurd. It’s absurd whether that’s from the side of critics, who use it to argue that communism is inevitably oppressive, or from the side of apologists and partisans, who take the side of those regimes out of some commitment to something called “communism.” Again, I make no bones about the fact that I find *The Communist Manifesto* to be an inspirational text, but even if you are purely and deeply critical of it, it is simply embarrassingly ignorant not to engage with the fact that there have, for over a hundred years, been debates within Marxism over exactly what the shape of political fidelity to the manifesto should look like, and indeed over the directions taken by the various regimes traceable to the Russian Revolution of 1917, in one form or another. Whatever you think of any of the various sides in any of these debates, to argue in ignorance of all those incredibly critical communist currents implacably set against the dead hand of Stalinism just won’t do.

I try to make the case in the book that inextricable from the vision in the manifesto is a grassroots democratic control of society, a democracy infinitely greater than any of the etiolated versions we’ve hitherto seen. And that the structural antipathy of actually existing socialism—to varying degrees, to be sure, and taking highly different shapes—sets it against the vision of the manifesto. I try to at least advert to the specific historical circumstances that I think gave rise to this tragedy. And, to repeat myself, to have a good-faith

debate about whether or not my analysis is correct is one thing, and I welcome it, including with those profoundly opposed to my position. But simply to gesture vaguely at Stalinism and say that it disproves the manifesto is just intellectually embarrassing and, again, incurious.

The demand for a system that prioritizes human need over profit is a demand for the end of capitalism.

C. J. Polychroniou: Be that as it may, Marx’s vision of a future social and economic order beyond capitalism has come under criticism by ecological economists because it is supposedly driven by technological determinism and human domination over nature. In sum, Marx’s vision of communism as a form of human development is deemed unsustainable in the eyes of those who embrace the “degrowth” perspective due to its treatment of natural conditions as effectively unlimited. Personally, I find this criticism quite puzzling since both Marx and Engels treated humans and nature as “not separate things” and even defined communism as the “unity of being of man with nature.” Do you agree with those who view *The Communist Manifesto* as embracing an essentially anti-ecological view?

China Miéville: This is one of those instances in which I take a position somewhat analogous to Victor Serge’s position with regard to the Bolsheviks and Stalinism (to echo your previous question.) He said: “It is often said that ‘the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning.’ Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained many other germs, a mass of other germs, and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first

years of the first victorious socialist revolution ought not to forget it. To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in the corpse—and which he may have carried in him since his birth—is that very sensible?”

I agree with you, in that a rigorous analysis of Marx’s and Engels’s position does indeed stress their view of the false distinction between nature and humanity, and to that extent you could even say nature and society. I think there is much fertile ground for an ecologically conscious democratic communism in notions such as the fulfillment of “species-being,” and in Marx’s conception of the “irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism” under capitalism, that John Bellamy Foster calls the “metabolic rift,” and the ecological catastrophe concomitant on it. All of which said, I think there are also germs of a somewhat less nuanced Prometheanism in the manifesto. (I’m not at all averse to a Prometheanism worthy of the name, but many tendencies so-glossed lean toward a kind of vulgar productivism.) The manifesto’s visions of a post-scarcity classless society are bracing and inspiring and convincing to me. But they can be—not must be, but can be and have been—interpreted in ways that, from my perspective, are predicated on a vaguely utopian position about the social good of “human ingenuity” nebulously inextricable from productivism, as manifested in what is sometimes called ecomodernism (though I wish it were another label.).

This is an argument that I and my comrades in the Salvage Collective engaged with in our short book *The Tragedy of the Worker*, and the perspective therein informs this book on the manifesto. Relatedly, I think any thinking inspired by the manifesto that understates the task of repair and salvage necessary in any post-capitalist world, given the ecological depredations of capitalism and the dynamics of ecological crisis already in place, is not

being realistic. What that doesn't mean is either the stasis of despair—I think despair gets a bad rap, but I'm pro what John Berger called "undefeated despair" rather than surrender—or a belief in the necessity of some ascetic communism, against which the manifesto explicitly set itself. And I think it was right to do so, on ethical and analytical grounds.

One of the few positive things about the recent years is that a sense of the pressing nature of ecological catastro-

phe is clear and present, and embedding into radical theory in a very positive way. So, to return to your question: No, I certainly don't think *The Communist Manifesto* is intrinsically ecologically vulgar or worse. But nor do I think that, in this epoch, we can do without posing such questions explicitly as part of a radical left agenda, and mindful that the work of repair capitalism will bequeath us will be enormous.

Conversely, I should add, I think any attempt to forge an ecological

politics that is not predicated on an analysis that capitalism's prioritization of profit over need, and the urgent human necessity of moving beyond capitalism, to a true democracy of grassroots control, is on a hiding (severe defeat) to nothing.

—*Truthout*, January 16, 2023

<https://truthout.org/articles/china-mieville-marxs-communist-manifesto-has-much-to-teach-us-in-2023/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=c40f33a7-cf73-4406-990f-227c8a6a13a2>

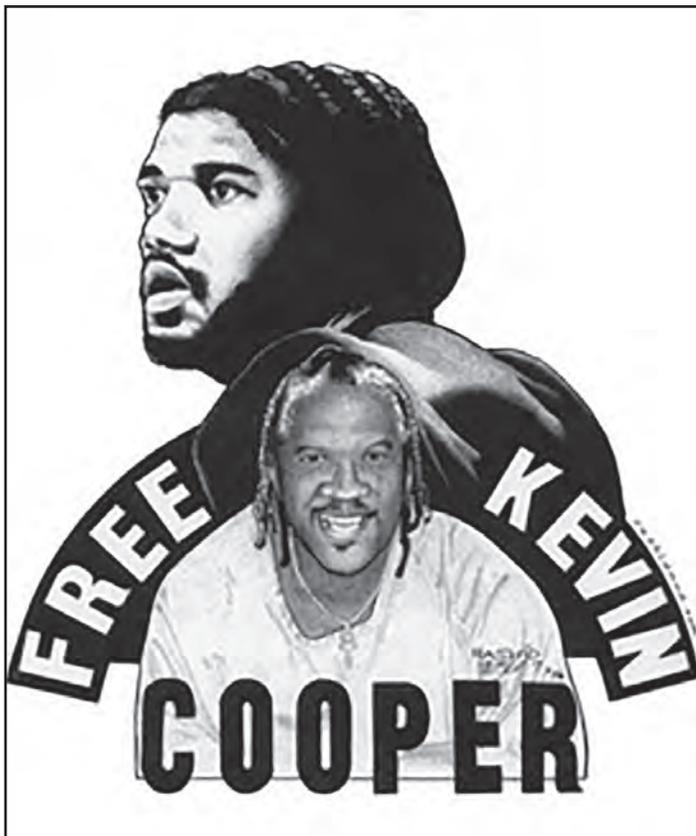
INCARCERATION NATION

Kevin Cooper Suffers New Blow

Introduction

The following articles outline the devastating new development in Kevin Cooper's case. An innocent man on California's

Death Row at San Quentin State Prison, Kevin Cooper has already served 40 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit—a brutal



Artwork by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson.

murder of two adults and two children and the severe wounding of another child. The D.A.'s case against Mr. Cooper and the conviction has been thoroughly analyzed and totally disproven by his lawyers and a book by J. Patrick O'Connor, Scapegoat, The Chino Hills Murders, and the Framing of Kevin Cooper.

Governor Newsom assigned Morrison Foerster (MoFo), a prominent law firm, to conduct a full investigation of Kevin Cooper's

case, but no such investigation took place. What happened instead was that a completely biased "investigation" that produced a lengthy report backing up all the elements of the San Bernardino cop and prosecutorial frame up of Kevin Cooper. The report's conclusion: Cooper guilty as charged. The phony report ignored all the constitutional violations in the court rulings and all the evidence of racial discrimination in the case. There are multiple examples of both of these elements in the frame-up.

A defense examination of the biased report is now underway. It will be forthcoming shortly and will answer every falsehood in the biased report. It will be made available to the public and media outlets including Socialist Viewpoint.

We print the article from the newsletter of Death Penalty Focus, the preeminent organization to abolish California's death penalty permanently as well as Kevin Cooper's own response to this harmful setback in his quest for exoneration and freedom.

—The Editors

The Kevin Cooper “Investigation”

BY DEATH PENALTY FOCUS



Kevin Cooper 2022

California Governor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Order in May 2021, calling for an investigation into Kevin Cooper’s 1985 death penalty conviction for a quadruple murder in San Bernardino County in 1983. The order tasked the Los Angeles law firm Morrison Foerster to “conduct a full review of the trial and appellate records in this case, and of the facts underlying the conviction, including facts and evidence that do not appear in the trial and appellate records. The firm’s review shall include an evaluation of all available evidence, including the recently conducted DNA tests.”

Two weeks ago, Morrison Foerster released its report. It didn’t do what was asked.

“Among other things, the investigation failed to even subpoena and then examine the files of the prosecutors and interview the individuals involved in the prosecution. For unknown reasons and resulting in the tragic and clearly erroneous conclusion that he reached, the special counsel failed to follow the basic steps taken by all innocence investigations that have led to so many exon-

erations of the wrongfully convicted,” Orrick attorney Norman Hile, who is Cooper’s lawyer, said in a statement.

Hile added, “In effect, the special counsel’s report says: the Board of Parole Hearings can and will ignore Brady violations, destruction of exculpatory evidence, planted evidence, racial prejudice, prosecutorial malfeasance and ineffective assistance of trial counsel; since I conclude Cooper is guilty based on what the prosecution says, none of these Constitutional violations matter or will be considered, and we have no obligation to investigate these claims.”

“Kevin Cooper . . . is on death row because the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department framed him.”

An openly biased report

It was shockingly and openly one-sided. “We find it interesting that Morrison Foerster, which appears to have taken a very pro-prosecution position, released its report to the news media at about the same time they sent it to the governor rather than holding it close until the governor had a chance to respond,” Death Penalty Focus President Mike Farrell noted.

“Given that (1) we have already uncovered seven prosecutorial violations of *Brady¹ v. Maryland* during Mr. Cooper’s prosecution, (2) one of the likely killers has confessed to three different parties that he, rather than Mr. Cooper, was involved in the Ryen/Hughes murders, and (3) there is significant evidence of racial bias in Mr. Cooper’s prosecution, we cannot understand how Mr. Cooper was not declared wrongfully convicted. The special counsel specifically declined to address ineffective assistance

of counsel at the trial or the effect of race discrimination,” Hile stated.

An investigation “is very simply the gathering together of facts to form a cohesive and logical picture of a given situation,” according to the National Association of Legal Investigators. By that definition, Morrison Foerster failed to fulfill its assignment. It was so dismissive of any of the serious questions surrounding Cooper’s arrest and conviction that one wonders if the special counsel was aware that former American Bar Association President Paulette Brown, social and criminal justice leaders, three California Innocence Projects, and *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof have publicly stated that they are convinced Cooper didn’t commit the murders, and that in May 2009, when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request for a rehearing of the full court (*en banc*) of its 2007 denial, five of the judges filed dissents, with six judges joining. The judge who wrote a denial in 2007 filed a concurrence.

Weren’t they curious why Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge William A. Fletcher, wrote in the *New York University Law Review* in June 2014, “Kevin Cooper . . . is on death row because the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department framed him.”?

As Norman Hile said in his statement, “We call on the governor to follow through on his word and obtain a true innocence investigation.”

—*Death Penalty Focus*, January 25, 2023

<https://deathpenalty.org/the-kevin-cooper-investigation/?eType=EmailBlas&tContent>

¹ A “Brady violation” occurs when a prosecutor fails to provide a defendant or criminal defense attorneys with any evidence that is favorable or helpful to a defendant’s case.

End Game

My letter to supporters

BY KEVIN COOPER

Since the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP took over my case in 2003/04, and stopped this state and prison from murdering me by way of poisonous lethal injection, many people in this state were then, and are now very upset.

But this law firm did more than just save my life. Under the leadership of Mr. Norman C. Hile, this law firm has, over time, taken apart the state's very weak and bogus case against me.

They, along with others such as *New York Times* writer Mr. Nicholas Kristof, *48 Hours* correspondent Erin Moriarty, University of San Francisco Law Professor Lara Bazelon, author Patrick O'Connor¹ just to name a few of the numerous people, and organizations who exposed the truth about the case against me did such a good job that we were granted the first of its kind—at least on paper—independent innocence investigation.

The more we did to expose the truth, the more certain people got more worried that I would not only not be executed, but that I would get out of prison.

I remember when Kim Kardashian first made it known publicly that she was supporting me, the family of one of the murdered victims had their attorneys get in touch with Kim's attorneys and ask her not to help me. But Kim helped anyway.

Throughout the tortured history of this case, the county of the San Bernardino sheriff's department, district attorney's office, and other parts of this state's criminal justice system have never been fair or played fair. But we all honestly thought that because we had disproved the state's entire case against me, and that we were no longer within the court system, but were outside of it

dealing with the governor's office, we had a chance, a great chance to win.

When Morrison Forester (MoFo) recently came down with its biased and one-sided decision in this case, damn near everyone who knew about this case, and all that was done to refute what the D.A. in San Bernardino County and the courts allowed for them to do, was shocked to see what was written by MoFo, and their pro-prosecution, and pro-police "experts."

This is because we all knew what was done to refute all that was said about this case, and me. Everyone knows that this was not a fair or unbiased, or even an independent innocence investigation, by MoFo. It couldn't of been when they did not even address or deal with most of the issues that went to prove that my constitutional rights were violated, that even the then Warden of the prison I walked away from told the prosecutors and sheriff's department that those tennis shoes that the prosecutor told the jury were "prison issued" were not prison issued, that she checked and they could be bought in a retail store like Sears. She told the truth as we now know it.

They did not deal with the real racism in my case, or any of a number of other issues that put all together go to show and prove how and why I was framed, which in turn goes to my innocence. Seven Brady² violations were not dealt with, and they even said that 9th circuit court of appeals Justice William Fletcher was wrong in what he wrote and spoke about. That the destroyed bloody coveralls had no meaning, and the missing blue shirt was the tan t-shirt.

In other words, this was not a true or real innocence investigation, and this is why so many of us are shocked

about what took place. We all know what a real innocence investigation is, and we know that this was a "fake" investigation really designed and meant to make me guilty in this forum, as I was made guilty in others. Especially in the eyes, hearts and minds of the people who already were convinced that I was guilty despite all the things we proved to show that I am innocent.

So, the end game for those people is the same now as it was in 2004 when they thought I was going to be tortured alive on the death gurney here at this prison. Now that the governor of this state is going to empty out death row and send all death row inmates to other prisons, one has to wonder where will I be sent!?

Will I be sent back to CIM (Chino Institution for Men) in San Bernardino County, which is the prison that I walked away from in 1983 before I was accused and convicted of murdering four people after I walked away, or escaped, as they call it?

What will happen to me once I get there, will I get set up, stabbed, and murdered by another inmate, or shot by a guard or will I be set up to be murdered. Remember what happened to Hugo Pinell³?

As it stands now, the law firm of Orrick still represents me, but Norman is retired, and I was the only case that he had. His health is making it so that whenever his doctor tells him to quit my case, he will. Then who will be my Orrick attorney? Good question that I do not have an answer to.

Other members of my legal team say they are staying on, but more help will be needed.

In the meantime, I will keep fighting—I have to continue if I ask all of you to continue fighting as well.

We have a plan in place concerning what we, or my legal team will do next. When I am able, I will let you know. But for now, it's very important that we all understand that what recently took place with MoFo was a pre-planned event.

While I now know that my plans to get out of here anytime soon have been put off, and possibly for a very long time, if not forever. I will continue as best I can to contribute to the struggle, and of course fight for my life.

I thank each and every one of you for your continued help, support, prayers and strength at this most important, but disappointing time in my life.

Write and call Governor Newsom:

U.S. Mail letter can be sent to: Governor Gavin Newsom, 1303 10th Street, Suite 1173, Sacramento, CA 95814—Email Governor Newsom: GOV.CA.GOV/CONTACT

Phone: 1-916-445-2841

Write to Kevin:

Kevin Cooper #C-65304, 4-EB-82,
San Quentin State Prison
San Quentin, CA 94974

1 *The China Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper*

By Patrick O'Connor

2 A "Brady violation" occurs when a prosecutor fails to provide a defendant or criminal defense attorneys with any evidence that is favorable or helpful to a defendant's case.

3 Hugo Pinell, a Black revolutionary who attempted to escape from San Quentin State Prison in 1971, along with George Jackson and five others. He spent nearly 45 years in solitary confinement until August 12, 2015, when he was finally released into general population of high security inmates. Soon after he was let out of solitary, at the age of 71, he was stabbed to death on the exercise yard.

<https://www.latimes.com/local/political/la-me-slain-prisoner-hugo-pinell-was-a-target-of-prison-gangs-20150813-story.html>

Anything But Justice for Black People

Statement from Kevin Cooper concerning the recent decision on his case by Morrison Forester Law Firm—an excerpt

I will continue to fight not only for my life, and to get out of here, but to end the death penalty as well. My entire legal team, family and friends and supporters will continue as well. We have to get to the Governor and let him know that he cannot accept these bogus rehashed results.

MoFo and their pro-prosecution and pro-police friends did not even deal with, or even acknowledge the constitutional violations in my case. They did not mention the seven Brady violations which meant the seven pieces of material exculpatory evidence were withheld from my trial attorney and the jury, and the 1991 California Supreme court that heard and upheld this bogus conviction. Why, one must ask, did they ignore these constitutional violations and everything that we proved in the past that went to my innocence?

Could it be that they just didn't give a damn about the truth but just wanted to uphold this conviction by any means necessary?

No matter their reasons, they did not do what Governor Gavin Newsom ordered them to do in his May 28, 2021, executive order and we cannot let them get away with this.

I ask each and every person who reads this to contact the Governor's office and voice your outrage over what MoFo did, and demand that he not accept their decision because they did not do what he ordered them to do which was to conduct an independent investigation!

In Struggle and Solidarity

From Death Row at San Quentin Prison,

Kevin Cooper

"Freedom"

BY KEVIN COOPER

In February 2023, during another Black History Month, we African Americans, to a large degree, are still searching for, living for, dying for, dreaming about, working to get, and fighting for that mythical thing, and as some people believe, that mystical thing, called freedom.

Real freedom: it is the exact kind of freedom that the majority of white people have taken for granted ever since they first started living on this land.

This is freedom that Black people have been denied since we first came to this land in 1619 in chains as an enslaved people. Throughout the tortured history of Africans and their descendants in this country, we have been purposely

left out of many things, including our birthright, which is freedom.

It seems that America as a whole sees itself as an individual standing alone, and on top, and all the other white people within it are part of this individualism. But the different non-white people in this country, and even before this land became a country, are seen as other individuals who are not part of this entity, or the manifest destiny that certain powerful people believed in back then, and still do today.

At the same time, they are purposely ignoring, and giving very little credit to the vast contributions that Black people have given and still are giving to the growth of this country and making it

what it is today in every aspect, from our fighting, suffering and dying in each and every war that was on this land, both before and after it became a country, to elsewhere in the world, to everything else that we as a people have contributed in what remains the “Divided States Of America,” despite our efforts.

Yet, we are the least free of all people in this country—except the Indigenous peoples who once took care of this land but never owned any. It was the capitalist who came to this land and wanted to own everything on it, including certain people.

Why is this? Why is damn near every part of life in this country, in everything that is considered “positive,” Black people remain at the bottom of the list? But when it comes to everything negative in this country, Black people are still at the top of the list!

As an oppressed people, and a poor people, we Black people are triple traumatized by our race and class, and our real-life pain and suffering has led to an existence in this country that has been anything and everything but free, from the infant mortality rates suffered by Black people in this country to maternal mortality rates suffered by Black women, to our disproportionate hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 and other medical issues, and of course mental health issues.

The housing market is just as bad. If one looks at the housing crash that took place several years ago, it was Black people who lost the vast majority of homes because of the bad housing loans that they took on. At the same time or shortly thereafter, when those Black people did get good loans and were able to purchase their homes, their homes were appraised for less than they paid for them, and less than their white neighbor’s home, or white people’s homes in a similar neighborhood.

The criminal justice system

Then there’s the ever-present criminal justice system, which here in 2023 has more Black people enslaved than in

1823. This is just counting those incarcerated because they survived, unlike so many others, their first contact with the criminal justice system—the police.

Every Black person the police murdered at the front end of this so-called justice system had to honestly believe that they were free, whether it was Mr. George Floyd or Ms. Breonna Taylor and the thousands of others that were innocent yet murdered by law enforcement. They were led to think that they were free, and that despite our ongoing and known oppression, that we as a whole people were free.

It was the capitalist who came to this land and wanted to own everything on it, including certain people.

But these truthful inhumane things that happened to them happened because they all were wearing their birthday suit—their Black skin. These inhumanities do not happen to a free people. They happen to oppressed people, to poor people, to people who are seen as and are deemed an inhumane people, an unwanted and expendable people, but not a people of worth, humanity or freedom.

These brief but undeniable truths are taking place in every part of the lives of Black people, and the powers that be within this country know this, yet very few of them will do, or are doing anything, to stop it from happening.

Does anyone actually believe that the water crisis that first happened in Flint, Michigan and is now happening in Jackson, Mississippi and elsewhere where poor Black people live, would be happening in a city where rich white people live, where wealth and whiteness in this country equal real freedom?

It appears to many Black people that the main way to become free in this

country, without having a skin color change like the late singer Michael Jackson, is either to be born rich or become rich by any other means, because in most cases in this country, wealth supersedes race. Do you think that Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, would—or could—be anywhere near Donald J. Trump or those white supremacists that he hangs around with if he was a poor Black man? I think not.

Without wealth, which is the case for the vast majority of people, especially Black people, then what’s left? Becoming a modern-day slave on a modern-day plantation, called a penitentiary, or a working-class poor person who lives from paycheck to paycheck chasing the so-called American Dream while in fact living the American Nightmare of no healthcare, inferior housing, and everything else negative that will happen to a poor person who’s not living in America the beautiful, but who’s relegated to America the Ugly.

A racial and truth reckoning

As it stands now, this country is not just having to deal with a racial reckoning that it refused to deal with in the past, it’s also having to deal with a truth reckoning when it comes to class as well as race combined with oppression and all the evils that oppression brings to the table with it.

The only way for this country to deal with these all-too-real-life issues is to start by having an open and honest conversation to bring about the real change that is sorely needed in this land of not-the-free and home of the oppressed, changes that need to be done in all parts of this American experiment, where all people are given the chance to be “Free!”

This is why in 1963 the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have A Dream” speech, ending it by saying: “Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.”

Many of us are still asking in 2023 when will we finally be able to have not

just a dream, but a reality of being free at last. I could go on and on with example after example why we Black people still are oppressed and not free, but I don't believe I need to because our collective hurt and pain has been shown to be true and has been discussed by so many different people, groups, and organizations.

But the insults, the racism, the classism, the sexism, the homophobia, the trauma, the crimes against humanity, the incarceration, the death penalty, homelessness, police brutality, poverty and hunger and so many other preventable and unnecessary things are still happening to us because in this, the wealthiest country on this planet, either because of our skin color, or our class, or both, no one seems to really give a damn about us as a people, or whether we live or die.

These truths, and the raw realities of life in this country for poor and

oppressed Black people make it so very, very hard for most of us to honestly believe that we are in fact a free people.

No matter what we do, or no matter how hard we try, the majority of us cannot escape from feeling the history of yesteryear is still upon us. Yes, it's true that things are much better now for Black people in this country than they once were. So as bad as it used to be, and still is, everyone should know just how much work still must be done.

As a freedom song was repeatedly sung during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s stated, "Freedom Is a Constant Struggle:"

They say that freedom is a constant struggle,

they say that freedom is a constant struggle,

they say that freedom is a constant struggle,

O Lord, we've struggled so long,

We must be free, we must be free.

They say freedom is a constant dying,
we died so long we must be free,
we've struggled so long,
we've cried so long,
we've sorrowed so long,
we've moaned so long,
we've died so long,
we must be free, we must be free!

No one can say that we haven't struggled, and still aren't struggling, for that thing called "Freedom."

If anyone can truly encapsulate what can be a necessary step towards progress, it is Martin Luther King Jr.:

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity..."

Amen.

—Sheerpost, February 2, 2023

<https://scheerpost.com/2023/02/02/freedom/>

Wadiya Jamal, 1953-2022

Farewell Message to Wadiya, My Beloved

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

She was a springtime baby, born in the first week of April 1953. A girl from West Philly whose beauty made her stand out in a crowd.

She loved fiercely, like a lioness. This love blessed the lives of five beautiful children and blessed mine.

As a mother and grandmother, she was truly a sun on the planet, and when someone was disappearing, her strong love was shattered by each loss—of her mother, her father, and her son Jimmy, and above all that of the baby of the family, Samiya, which was the most profound fissure.

After that, each month of December was a trial by darkness. We would all wait for the first lights of spring that would dissipate this somber fog. But

that was not the case. Her heart—her strong heart let go.

She loved like no one else.

I love her, I will always love her. All the children and grandchildren love you and will always love you.

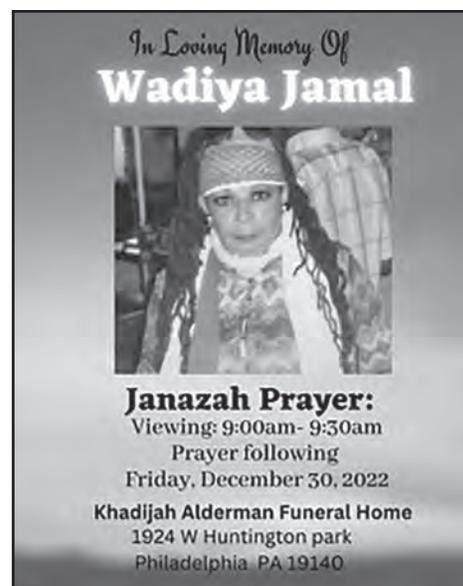
Her smile was the only sun we needed, and we still need it now.

We love you, Wa-Wa. We miss you.

With all my love,

Mumia

Send condolences to Mumia at:
Smart Communications/PADOC
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
SCI Mahanoy
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733



In Loving Memory Of
Wadiya Jamal



Janazah Prayer:
Viewing: 9:00am- 9:30am
Prayer following
Friday, December 30, 2022
Khadijah Alderman Funeral Home
1924 W Huntington park
Philadelphia PA 19140

Islamic funeral service announcement for Wadiya Jamal, wife of Mumia for 43 years.

Straight out of Memphis

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It could have been anywhere, but fate chose Memphis, Tennessee, the place where Martin Luther King, Jr. breathed his last breath, and a musician named Elvis was crowned king. Memphis. In ancient Egypt, it was a city on the Nile. In the U.S., it's a city on the Mississippi.

Now it's known as the city where a young black man, Tyre Nichols, was brutally beaten by five Black cops. On camera, the five members of a so-called Anti-

Crime Unit, known as the SCORPIONS, forced the 29-year-old Nichols to exit his car while they tasered him, chased him, and literally beat him to death.

Protests have erupted across America, but who really believes that real substantial change will come? These cops had body cameras on them, but it didn't stop them from punching, kicking, tasing, and assaulting Nichols with a metal retractable baton. So

much for thinking that body cameras would slow down brutality. Indeed, it didn't even deter such events.

Once again, a Black man in the hands of cops, sensing impending death, calls for help from often the only person who loves him: his mother. The video of the beating is a lesson after George Floyd of how much nothing has changed.

With love, not fear, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Union Action Calls to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

BY CAROLE SELIGMAN

As we go to press, important international union actions calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal are in the works. The International Longshore Workers Union, ILWU local 10, has called for a work stoppage shutdown of the Ports of Oakland and San Francisco, California on February 16th to free Mumia. Solidarity demonstrations at U.S. Embassies and Consulates are set for Pretoria and Durban, South Africa, and Tokyo, Japan, organized by large labor unions there. Several California Teachers

Unions, acting in solidarity, have also passed resolutions calling for Mumia's freedom and are organizing curricula to teach about his case, the death penalty, and the racist U.S. "justice" system.

These actions are timed to coincide with the legal appeal in the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where in a December 16, 2022, ruling, Judge Lucretia Clemons ordered a huge number of materials (as many as 200 boxes!) previously hidden

in the D.A.'s office from the defense—an egregious violation of constitutional rights—turned over for examination by Mumia's defense team.

In the California Bay Area, and beyond, these union actions are attracting attention and support from the supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Ruchell Magee, and all political prisoners, as well as supporters of innocent death row prisoner, Kevin Cooper.

Ruchell Magee Must Be Set Free!

POEM BY RAYMOND NAT TURNER

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

If 1619 started it—ebony/ivory—
teenage attraction

Jim Crow's watch—upped the ante!
Deep South apartheid stench/Emmett
Till terror/pitched battles on blood rivers...
What could the boy be but Black rapist?

Bullwhip warped minds of white men—
What could this be but 'Master's'
midnight visits to slave quarters—Prying
apart Black thighs—overruling cries, pleas,
Love?

What could the boy be but Black rapist?

Crackers coveted Choctaw land—
Black soil mattered...
More than visiting terror—or
Another muddy, mutilated body in Mississippi
or other Dixie river. Crackers coveting
Choctaw land put boy in plantation place...

Gifted 8 Angola yrs...Under King Cotton's rule...
Under horseback-ridin, shotgun-totin, tobacco-
spittin gaze... Gifted target embroidered
Jacket— Gifted exile: City of Angels/ruled by devils...

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

His numbers are no longer:
"6-3-4-5-7-8-9"
no longer:
"Beechwood 4-5-7-8-9"
far too long his numbers been:
#A92051 #T115— 83—Caged since '63—
60 yrs vengeance-driven torture!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

Visualize him home—sun splashing light comic
book bright colors of L.A. murals!
Visualize him home, holding youth centers,
Senior centers, libraries, bookstores
Captive. Pulling three-deep lines snaked 'round
crooked corners...
Space, light, air, freedom to stretch out in sensory
overload!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

Elder, brother, comrade...Been gone
too long...
Wanted in the Black Community—
Watts writ large!

No mo' Golden State gulag/COVID
concentration camp—
No mo' Octogenarian barrister behind bars
law book-lifting—iron-pumping mind:

No mo' memoranda, motion, writ and plea
No mo' heroic, litigious—War of the Flea—
No mo' symbol of strength/wisdom of tree—
People, Ruchell Magee must be set Free!
Governor, Ruchell Magee must be set Free!
People, Ruchell Magee must be set Free!

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Ruchell is imprisoned in California, but it is important for the California Governor to receive your petitions, calls, and emails! Sign the petition: bit.ly/freeruchell—Send digital letter to Governor Newsom: bit.ly/write4ruchell—Call Governor Newsom: (916) 445-2841—Send a letter via U.S.P.S. to: Governor Gavin Newsom, 1303 10th Street, Suite 1173, Sacramento, CA 95814—Email Governor Newsom: GOV.CA.GOV/CONTACT

“Plant A Tree for Me”

Leonard Peltier reflects on hitting 48 years in prison

BY JENNIFER BENDERY

February 6, 2023, marks 48 years in prison for Leonard Peltier, the Indigenous rights activist who the U.S. government put behind bars after a trial riddled with misconduct and lies—and who definitely doesn’t belong there anymore.

The FBI and U.S. Attorney’s Office made a fall guy out of Peltier, now 78, when they convicted him of murdering two FBI agents during a 1975 shootout on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They never had evidence that he murdered anyone, and the amount of wrongdoing that took place in his trial is mind-boggling: Government prosecutors hid exculpatory evidence. The FBI threatened and coerced witnesses into lying. Peltier was separated from his co-defendants, all of whom were acquitted on grounds of self-defense. A juror admitted she was racist against Native Americans on the second day of the trial but was allowed to remain on the panel.

Peltier has maintained his innocence for all of these years, even as it almost certainly prevented him from being paroled.

His decades-long parole process has been so problematic that United Nations

legal experts last year made the unusual decision to revisit his case. Over the summer, they called on President Joe Biden to release Peltier immediately.

Mr. Peltier continues to be detained because he is Native American.

Their working group concluded in a damning 17-page legal opinion that between Peltier’s advanced age, deteriorating health, frequent placement in solitary confinement and the difference between his time in prison compared to non-Native Americans convicted of similar offenses, “Mr. Peltier continues to be detained because he is Native American.”

Peltier is still sitting in a Florida penitentiary despite all of these problems; despite pleas for his freedom by international human rights leaders including Pope Francis, Nelson Mandela and Coretta Scott King; despite nearly 50 years of concerts and letter-writing campaigns and petitions circulated by thousands of supporters, politicians,

Indigenous leaders and celebrities urging his release. He uses a walker now. He is blind in one eye from a partial stroke. He has serious health concerns related to diabetes and an aortic aneurysm.

Why is he still in prison? The FBI simply doesn’t want

him to get out, ever, even as its stated argument for keeping him there is wildly outdated, misleading, and flat-out wrong.

Biden, who has been a strong advocate for policies that lift up tribes and Native American communities, could unilaterally release Peltier if he wanted to. Two years into his presidency, though, he has stayed silent.

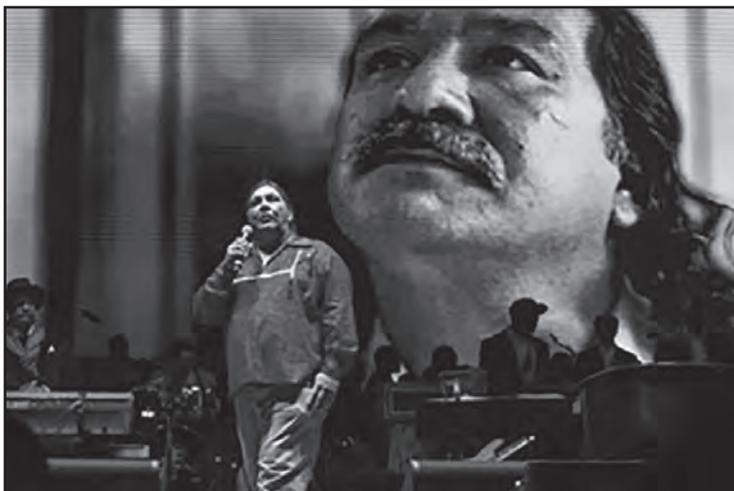
Asked Monday if Peltier is on Biden’s radar and if he is considering granting him clemency, a White House spokesman referred to the last statement sent to *HuffPost* on this topic. *HuffPost* routinely asks the White House about Peltier but does not get a response.

The last time *HuffPost* remembers getting a response was in February 2022, with this statement from a Biden spokesman: “We are aware of Mr. Peltier’s request for a pardon and the outreach in support of his request. As many of you know, President Biden has a process for considering all requests for pardon or commutation, which is run through our White House Counsel’s Office. I don’t have more to share on Mr. Peltier’s request at this time.”

The Office of the Pardon Attorney, which reviews inmates’ clemency petitions, does not respond to questions about the status of clemency petitions. A February 6, 2023, email to this office triggered an auto-response that directed *HuffPost* to the office’s website to search for information on the status of any inmate’s clemency petition. The status of Peltier’s petition, which was filed more than a year-and-a-half ago, simply says, “Pending.”

—*HuffPost*, February 6, 2023

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/leonard-peltier-prison-joe-biden_n_63e16682e4b0c8e3fc86b128



Chauncey Peltier, Leonard’s son, speaks at a 2016 festival in support of his father’s freedom.

Bring Our Elders Home!

An initiative to free Amerikan political prisoners and prisoners of war (2023.)

By KEVIN "RASHID" JOHNSON

The National Coordinating Committee of Prison Lives Matter (PLM) has taken on the work of organizing to bring home our elder political prisoners and prisoners of war, who, as Comrade Kwame Shakur has pointed out, have been in many cases condemned to *de facto* death sentences within Amerika's razor wire plantations. Many have been subjected to the hardships and torture of denied treatment for life threatening medical conditions like cancer and hepatitis C. Some have died as a result.

Amerika's is the most sinister and deceitful of political systems. Built on genocide and forced enslavement of people of color, capitalist robbery of workers and robbery of the entire underdeveloped world through colo-

nialism and now neocolonialism, public lynchings of those who struggled to gain a foothold against its racist terror, and mass imprisonment to dispose of those who cannot be put to profitable use by the corporate forces that own and control the wealth and political power in society. No one should doubt the depths to which this system will descend to repress those who dare expose and challenge it. Counterintelligence has always been a part of its notions of self-preservation. Hence the forced exiles, and imprisonment and attempted eradication of political opponents.

It's imperative that we bring these designs and the roles and plights of the victims of U.S. repression to public

light. And not just to inform the masses but to mobilize them to defend those who are being abused, neglected, and targeted with death because they struggled to expose and challenge this system in service to the people.

In addition to other initiatives, PLM is organizing a webinar for the summer of 2023 aimed at mobilizing awareness and support for freeing our elder political prisoners and prisoners of war.

We need maximum attention and support given to these events.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

Visit Prison Lives Matter website at:
www.supportprisonlives.org



Artwork by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson.

Comrade Jonathan Jackson (2022)

BY KEVIN "RASHID" JOHNSON

Comrade Jonathan Jackson
Our communist Black son
Your name be still ringing
Your praises we still singing
Took courage in hand
And ran wild
Across the history
Page
Took on the capitalist system
Dared to resist them
With righteous rage
And the vision
Of a guerrilla tactician
A weapon forged
By his brother George
Had a revolutionary plan
And assault rifle in hand
On that fateful day

Took judge jury and D.A.
All the way
With demands to free
Three Black men
On a staged trial
This Black man child
17 years old
Defying what we been told
About futile resistance
Persistence
In the tradition of
The rebel slave
Demanding freedom
For his people
Or the grave
He put it all on the line
It was terrible but fine
Gave his life in a hail of bullets

To counter the bullshit
Of plenty people talking
But few people walking
That "by any means necessary"
Road to freedom
But know
We gone meet him
In the worldwind
Where the ancestors been
Shining down
On us since way back when
So we never forget
Know we never regret
The example he set
His name still be ringing
His praises we still be singing
Our communist Black son
Jonathan Jackson



(Artwork by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson)

Write to Kevin "Rashid" Johnson:
Kevin Johnson #1007485
Sussex 1 State Prison
24414 Musselwhite Drive
Waverly, VA 23891

Visit Rashid's website at:
www.rashidmod.com

Dear Editors,

On the morning of January 9, 2023, Collier Gwin, owner of the Foster Gwin Gallery in downtown San Francisco blasted water from a hose on an unhoused woman sitting on the sidewalk in front of his business. When the woman cried out in distress, Gwin calmly told her to “Just move,” before he sprayed her again. The incident was caught on video and spread far and wide.¹

What we’re witnessing is the exact nature of capitalism and gentrification holding the value of profit over people and the attitudes of indifference and intolerance to boot.

Businesses coming in the cities take advantage of opportunities without giving back to the community. Then blame the individual for being out on the street when gentrification keeps evicting people, and the Airbnb industry keeps the cost of living blown out of proportion. Tens-of-thousands of empty dwellings while thousands are unhoused on the street, is a crime against humanity. And these anti-civil rights/gestapo-style/Zionist vigilante acts being taken out on the most vulnerable castes of society are a crime against humanity.

The nature of this vicious cycle is insidious and cunning, fooling us into thinking that capitalism is the only way to live and the best way to live, and that we can’t do better. And that this business owner is free to commit vigilante assaults on vulnerable people to protect the interests of his business. As if people on the street are responsible for the failing economy when it’s the exact opposite. Homelessness as well as addiction are merely symptoms and evidence of a failing economic system and society as a whole. We can change it.

The Airbnb industry in San Francisco and the Bay Area as a whole is like the Diamond industry, continu-

ously mining diamonds and hoarding them in vaults to keep the price of these, beautiful indeed, but not so rare, not so precious stones blown out of proportion. And that’s not taking into account the cost on humanity of the mining process itself. Diamond miners don’t mine them for the love of their beauty, they are mined for survival under capitalism, in unsafe and inhumane working conditions. Just like the conditions created by gentrification casting vulnerable people into unsafe and inhumane living conditions.

The Airbnb industry keeps tens-of-thousands of dwellings vacant for possible temporary rental use, while victims of eviction and economic inequality live in the street in unsafe and inhumane conditions created by an unbalanced system. Whether intentional or not, the Airbnb industry keeping dwellings empty and inaccessible for permanent housing and keeping the demand for available spaces blown out of proportion, just like the hoarding in the Diamond industry. It’s a systemic problem down to its root, which is the profit motive of production.

It’s a form of austerity but instead of at the hands of the government, which is happening too, it’s directly at the hands of the capitalist class itself. Today’s pay rate is relatively lower than it was in the ’60s, today’s quality of products is relatively lower than it was in the ’60s, but it seems like we have more choices, so we think we have it better than we did then.

Social services and public education are dwindling. Meanwhile Amazon is monopolizing and homogenizing what we knew of as capitalism. We have more options of designed obsolescence. The very thing that people feared communism for is happening under the capitalist monopoly—putting small businesses out of business thereby losing the culture that comes along with

those businesses. The hoarding of wealth, at the end of the business day, amounts to a decimal point in a computer. It’s not tangible material, but a representation of authority by way of controlled information and violence.

Socialism doesn’t take rights and freedoms away from the people, socialism provides more rights, freedom, and power to the people. Socialism is a system geared in the interest of the common welfare of people and the environment at the same time. Socialism brings justice to the front side of how decisions are made instead of the backside of poverty which is a direct result of the capitalist profit motive of production.

Our common welfare as people on this planet is the main objective of the revolutionary spirit, which at its core is a foundation of love for humanity and life on earth.

—Johnny Gould

¹ “Business Owner Douses Unhoused Woman with Water”

By Maanvi Singh, January 11, 2022

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/11/san-francisco-business-owner-homeless-water-attack>



Collier Gwin, owner of the Foster Gwin Gallery in downtown San Francisco blasted water from a hose on an unhoused woman sitting on the sidewalk in front of his business. (Screenshot)

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

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Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of Socialist Viewpoint magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

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To help us know who our subscribers are,
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or organization.

Statement from Leonard Peltier

Leonard Peltier released this statement from his prison cell to mark the 48th anniversary of his unjust incarceration.

Greetings my friends, supporters, loved ones. I know I've probably said this, or things like this, many times. Every time I say it, it is as heartfelt as the first time. From the bottom of my soul, I thank you for your support. Living in here, year after year, day after day, week after week, plays on your concepts of time and your process of thought beyond what you can imagine.

Every day, I have to say a prayer in the morning, about keeping my spirit up and the spirits of our people.

The struggles of the American Indian Movement, which are the struggles of all of us, have never ended for me. They go on, week after week, month after month, year after year.

When I speak, sometimes I think I may sound a bit too sensitive, but my love for my people and the love supporters have shown me over the years is what keeps me alive. I don't read your letters with my intellect. I read them with my heart.

My imprisonment is just another example of the treatment and policies our people have faced since the arrival of the first Europeans. I'm just an ordinary man and I come from a live-and-let-live society, like all our people. And yet we have had to live in a state of survival ever since Columbus landed.

There is nothing about my case, nothing about the Constitution, which is a treaty between the American people and the government, that warrants my continual imprisonment.

They have historically imprisoned or killed our people, taken our land and resources. Any time the law was in our favor they ignored the law or changed the law to benefit their agenda.

After they have gotten what they wanted, a generation later, some politician would apologize. They have never negotiated sincerely with us unless we had something they wanted and could not take, or we were an embarrassment before the world, or we were some sort of opposition. The opposition has always been the dominant reason for them making treaties with us. I could go on and on about the mistreatment of our people and on and on about my case, but the United Nations said it.

That the United States has kept me locked up because I am American Indian. The only thing that really makes me different from other American Indians who have been mistreated, had land taken, or been imprisoned by our government, is that it is all a matter of court record in my case. The violation of my Constitutional rights has been proven in court. The fabrication of every piece of evidence used to convict me has been proven in court.

The United Nations itself, comprised of 193 nations, has called for my release, noting I am a political prisoner. In my case as a political prisoner there does not have to be a prisoner exchange. The exchange they need to make is from their policy of injustice to a policy of justice.

It does not matter what your color and ethnicity are. Black, red, white, yellow, brown—if they can do it to me, they can do it to you. The Constitution of the United States is hanging by a thread. Again.

I want to say, from my heart to your heart, most sincerely—do your best to educate your children. Teach them to defend themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually. Make them aware of our history. Teach them to plant a food forest or any plant that will provide for them in the future.

Again, from my heart to yours, plant a tree for me.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse.

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier

—*Liberation*, February 6, 2023

<https://www.liberationnews.org/statement-from-leonard-peltier/>

Write to:

Leonard Peltier 89637-132

USP Coleman 1

P.O. Box 1033

Coleman, FL 33521

Note: Letters, address and return address must be in writing—no stickers—and on plain white paper.





Biomass plant near Boardman, Oregon. Photo: Jeffrey St. Clair. Read *Kill Capitalism Before It Kills Us* on page 37.

On the Front Cover: The Public and Commercial Services Union strike and rally in London, England, February 1, 2023, seeking a pay increase for workers. Credit: Loredana Sangiuliano (Shutterstock) Read about the European strike wave on pages 9 through 13.



WRead Book Reviews on page 42 and 46.



Read *The Kevin Cooper "Investigation"* on page 55.

★ ★ ★ Attention Prison Mail Room: ★ ★ ★

Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”