

#200: SEPTEMBER 10–OCTOBER 14

{SPECIAL ISSUE}

THE INDYPENDENT

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DAVID HOLLENBACH

TIME FOR ACTION

HISTORIC MARCH FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE IN NYC, SEPT. 21

COVERAGE STARTS P3



THE INDY AT 200

BY JOHN TARLETON

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In September 2000 world leaders gathered in New York for the United Nations Millennium Summit. Organized at the dawn of a new century, the stated purpose of this three-day conference was to alleviate global poverty. Outside in the streets, thousands of protesters weren't buying the official rhetoric, pointing to the outsized influence that large corporations wielded over the proceedings.

The main demonstration was held on September 8, or in the nomenclature of its organizers, "S8." At the protest, copies of *UnSt8ted*, a four-page black-and-white newspaper, were being handed out by members of the all-volunteer collective that published it. Headlines like "Demanding Human Rights, Fighting Corporate Power" and "Anarchist Conference Offers Viable Alternatives" in *UnSt8ted's* maiden issue reflected the political moment from which the paper emerged.

Shortly afterward, the *UnSt8ted* collective changed the paper's name to *The Independent* and published a second black-and-white issue of eight pages. The rest is history. We now find ourselves celebrating our 200th issue (and our 14th anniversary) as protesters once again target the United Nations, this time to demand action on climate change.

While the circumstances are familiar, the paper has changed considerably. Our issues are now printed in color, run from 20 to 24 pages and reach tens of thousands of readers every month through a citywide distribution network.

IN THE BEGINNING

Informed by a participatory, "be the media" ethos, *The Independent* began as the offshoot of a New York City website that was a part of Indymedia, a global network of leftist news websites. The website that spawned us is now defunct, but this newspaper has continued to flourish. More than 700 people have volunteered with us over the years. They include journalists with decades of experience, novice scribes who found a place to hone their craft, artists who have graced our pages with their illustrations, photos and graphic design and many others who have helped out behind the scenes doing the invisible work that makes a newspaper possible.

The Independent emerged during a moment of heightened protest activity on the radical left that began with the "Battle of Seattle" demonstrations in November 1999 and featured summit-hopping protesters who besieged the meetings of international financial institutions, national political conventions and just about any place where corporate and political elites gathered behind closed doors.

The alter-globalization movement was adept at mobilizing large street protests, and with its emphasis on consensus process and its aversion to leaders, prefigured Occupy in many ways. However, it left little in the way of enduring institutions once the post-9/11 security state made it virtually impossible for the movement to use the confrontational tactics that had initially catapulted it into the public eye.

We are one of the few institutions to survive from that era, and we've learned a few things along the way:

- Engage with the world. Don't be insular. The Indy sprang from a DIY (do-it-yourself) anarchist tradition but chose to embrace the Left, broadly defined, and to report on it in a way that would be accessible to activists and non-activists alike. This helped us draw more volunteers who brought with them a greater variety of interests and life experiences.

- Be open and transparent about hierarchies that exist within your organization. Structurelessness doesn't get rid of leaders, it just conceals them.
- Process matters, but it should not be fetishized. Endless meetings are no substitute for doing real work.
- You can be both idealistic and practical at the same time. Dealing with real-world challenges that pose contradictions (such as how to raise money for a radical newspaper) is a part of life. The solutions you develop can strengthen your organization and make it more resilient for the long haul.

While new media technologies enhance the individual's ability to be a channel of one broadcasting to the world, they can also leave us isolated. Publishing a newspaper, on the other hand, is a collaborative enterprise that involves not only the people who produce it, but also subscribers, donors, advertisers, sources who return our calls and even critics, who keep us on our toes.

More than anything, the Indy's first 200 issues suggest what people can achieve when we work collectively and do so with the support of a larger community. Thank you for sharing these first 14 years with us.

John Tarleton is a co-founder of The Independent.



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—NAOMI KLEIN
AUTHOR OF *The Shock Doctrine* &
This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate



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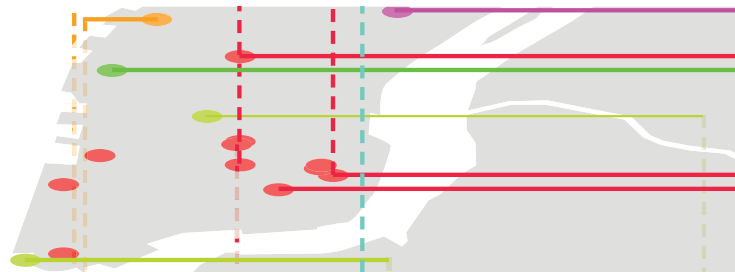
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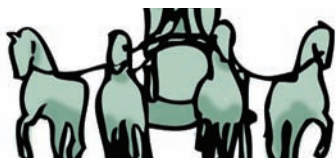
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WHY U.N. CLIMATE TALKS CONTINUE TO FAIL

BY CHRIS WILLIAMS

World leaders from government, business and civil society will gather in New York on September 23 for a United Nations climate summit. After two decades of failed talks, it will be the latest attempt to make progress on a global treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This time, legions of protesters will be on hand to press for meaningful solutions to the climate crisis to be implemented.

Resolving the climate crisis requires the world's leading industrial nations to collectively agree to legally binding cuts in their emissions and to forego the short-term benefits to their economies of continuing to burn more fossil fuels. To look back on the history of the failed U.N. climate talks is to understand how maddeningly elusive this goal is and to come face to face with a global economic order that is incapable of making the kind of deep systemic changes needed to adequately address the climate crisis.

EARTH SUMMIT

The origins of the U.N. climate talks date back to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At that gathering, 154 na-

THE DETERIORATION OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD HAS GONE HAND IN HAND WITH THE RISE OF NEOLIBERAL IDEOLOGY WHICH SANCTIFIES ALL THINGS PRIVATIZED AND MARKET-DRIVEN.

tions, including the United States, signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) treaty. The agreement's stated goal was to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent "dangerous anthropogenic interference" with the climate system. However, the signatories to the treaty rejected mandatory cuts in their greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, they decided to hold a future round of climate talks.

The negotiations resumed in 1995 in Berlin. When the first Conference of Parties (COP 1) was convened that year, participants agreed that binding emissions cuts needed to be implemented and wealthy industrial nations should take the lead, as they were responsible for the largest share of past and present greenhouse gas emissions. Two years later agreement was reached on the Kyoto Protocol, which required 42 developed nations to lower their emissions by an average of 5 percent from 1990 levels. This was done with an eye toward forging new agreements that would mandate much deeper emissions cuts in the future.

The Kyoto Protocol was signed with great fanfare, though the goals it set were completely inadequate. To make matters worse, the U.S. Senate refused to approve

the treaty and no U.S. president (including Democrats Bill Clinton and Barack Obama) has been willing to risk any political capital to push for its approval.

Kyoto expired at the end of 2012. No successor agreement has been reached that would move the world toward the 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that many scientists believe is necessary to avoid destabilizing the planetary climate system. Instead, atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas, have increased every year and recently surpassed thresholds not seen since three million years ago.

COP 21 will be held in Paris in 2015 and is meant to finalize a global deal to replace Kyoto with real and significant pledges on carbon reductions. However, according to participants in the process, COP 21 is already dead in the water. There will be no specific limits on emissions or targets for doing so; nothing will be legally enforceable; and whatever happens will be mere-

ly voluntary, as the United States — the world's largest economy — has long insisted.

The deterioration of the physical world has gone hand in hand with the political degeneration of international climate talks, as neoliberal ideology, which sanctifies all things privatized and market-driven, has tightened its grip on the minds of elites.

As the science has become more definitive and the impacts of climate change increasingly obvious through the increased number of unusual and extreme weather events, the question is, why has there been so little action to address an issue that puts the whole of human society at risk?

'STRANDED' ASSETS

An important part of the answer certainly lies with the economic and political power wielded by energy corporations that have a direct stake in selling more fossil fuels. As we now know from a 2014 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, 80 percent of known fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground in order to have any chance of remaining under the critical threshold of 2 degrees Celsius of average warming. That is equivalent to writing off \$20 trillion in assets from the largest corporations on the planet.

The idea that those reserves, which are the basis for the stock market valuation of oil companies, could become "stranded" led ExxonMobil to

declare in a report to shareholders, "the scenario where governments restrict hydrocarbon production in a way to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions 80 percent during the outlook period [to 2040] is highly unlikely." Instead, a top company executive explained, "all of ExxonMobil's current hydrocarbon reserves will be needed, along with substantial future industry investments, to address global energy needs."

The profit-maximizing imperative of corporate titans like ExxonMobil, Chevron, British Petroleum and Shell is only part of the story. Economic competition between corporations is replicated on the international stage by economic and political rivalry among nation states. In a world run along capitalist lines, every country is engaged in geopolitical maneuvering for economic and political advantage. As the ecological situation has become both more dire and more clearly tied to the countries that have the most geopolitical power and the biggest stake in fossil fuel production and consumption, so those powers have become ever more unwilling and unable to take serious action. The problem is compounded by intensifying competition for resources and international markets as new competitor states, such as China and India, emerge on the world stage.

As evidence, one only needs to look at the recently concluded U.S.-Africa Summit, which revolved almost exclusively around how the U.S. government needed to do more to support U.S.

corporations entering and exploiting African countries for natural resources, energy production, labor and consumer markets. "We kind of gave Africa to the Europeans first and to the Chinese later, but today it's wide open for us," commented General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt.

This kind of thinking makes perfect sense for corporations as they pursue their own interests, but it's suicidal for the rest of us. The protests we will see here in New York this month give us a chance to publicly call out the climate crisis and its root causes and to begin to envision and build a very different world. As we do so, it's crucial to build a movement that understands that capitalism — with its relentless emphasis on growth and private profit over all other human and environmental concerns — cannot solve the problem it has created.

Chris Williams is the author of Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis (Haymarket Books, 2010).

RUNAWAY GLOBAL WARMING?

The earth has warmed by 0.8 Celsius (1.4 F) since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Climate scientists expect the world to continue warming in the 21st century. The question is, how much?

Based on evidence from past global warming episodes, scientists worry that if global temperature increases pass the 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 F) mark, it could set in motion a cascading series of environmental calamities — melting ice sheets that reflect less sunlight back out into space, forest fires that spew more carbon into the atmosphere and thawing Arctic permafrost that would release vast stores of carbon and methane. The cumulative impact could be to send temperatures soaring by as much as 4 degrees Celsius (7.2 F) or more by the end of this century. This would destabilize the planet's weather systems and wreak havoc on human societies.

To avoid this fate, the nations that pollute the most will have to begin seriously cutting their greenhouse gas emissions and transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources over the next two to three decades. It won't be easy, but it sure beats the alternative.

— INDEPENDENT STAFF



SMOKE 'EM OUT: (Above and right) Thousands of protesters rallied in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, during U.N. climate talks that failed to produce a new global treaty to reduce carbon emissions. No progress has been made since then.



A TREE OF LIFE AMID CLIMATE CHAOS

BY RAE ABILEAH

The coastline of Manhattan,” said one participant, reading the handwritten phrase off a green ribbon.

“We are with you!” said the entire group in unison. They were gathered around a tree on a Utah ranch earlier this summer.

The speaker, Mary Kathryn Nagle, a playwright and citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, tied the ribbon around her wrist. “I am with you,” whispered Nagle to the colleague concerned with the vulnerability of Manhattan’s coastline. Another participant stepped up.

“The future of my children’s children,” he read aloud, and tied that ribbon to his wrist.

“Clean air and water,” read another.

“The park I play soccer in,” said another.

“We are with you!” said everyone.

And so it went.

This ribbon exchange was an attempt to name and witness what each person loved in the world that climate chaos could take away, or is already taking away. By tying each other’s ribbons around their wrists, the participants made a proverbial treaty, vowing to support each other to beat back climate chaos, so that their hopes, not their fears, would be fulfilled. It was the start of what would become the Climate Ribbon project.

THE CLIMATE RIBBON

The Climate Ribbon aspires to be “an AIDS Quilt for the climate justice movement,” says Andrew Boyd, a longtime artist-activist and one of the project’s organizers. He’s on the edge of his seat, a couch at Mayday Space, the People’s Climate March’s artist convergence space in Bushwick.

“It’s a question, why up till now has there been so little public action on climate change?” asks Gan Golan, one of the project’s co-founders and a lead organizer of the arts hub at Mayday. “It turns out, it may not be from a lack of awareness, but in some ways, because of it.”

“Grief. Loss. Fear,” chimes in Boyd. “Massive species die-off. Neighborhoods washed away. Our children’s children’s future at grave risk. Harvests ruined. Livelihoods destroyed. These are some of the things we stand to lose — and in many places are already losing — to climate chaos. It can be overwhelming.”

“When we try to absorb the full consequences of what is now happening — and the enormity of what is yet to come — we can easily become paralyzed. When we experience these feelings alone, the issue feels too big, the costs too difficult to grapple with,” adds Golan. “Instead of being spurred to action, we often turn away.”

“But,” says Boyd, “when we create a safe container to go through these feelings collectively, together with others, something different happens. Instead of holding the feelings in, we let them out. Instead of isolation, we can find solidarity. Instead of powerlessness, we find empowerment. Instead of resignation, we pave a way toward action.”

“In short, it’s about moving us from the me to the we. Sometimes art and ritual can do that in ways that conventional organizing and protest don’t do as powerfully,” says Golan.

From this central insight the Climate Ribbon was born.

RIISING FROM 11TH AVENUE

On September 21, a massive tree will rise up from the middle of Manhattan’s industrial 11th Avenue, its branches entwined with hand-dyed fabric stretching out above the streets. Imagine thousands of people gathering around the tree’s colossal roots as they come to the end of the People’s Climate March. They each unwrap a handwritten ribbon they’ve carried with them across Manhattan and tie it to radial lines emanating from the sculpture, forming long multicolored roots that stretch out in every direction.

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JIM SECULA



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WHY WE MARCH

Come September 21, there'll be thousands of people from New York City and across the nation and globe marching for the climate. Each individual has their reasons — here are just a few.



CANDICE SERING

When Candice Sering stepped out of her apartment in Red Hook, Brooklyn, to assess the damage Superstorm Sandy had left behind, she was overcome with a deep sense of loss. Though her fourth-floor apartment and the restaurant where she bartended were spared the storm's fury, the rest of her neighborhood was destroyed. "It was a graveyard site of everyone's homes," she said. "It was really bad."

Sering, 37, a Queens native of Filipino parents, has slowly become acquainted with natural disasters. She spent last December in the Philippines on a recovery mission spearheaded by GABRIELA — a Filipino women's organization that she now chairs — after Typhoon Haiyan razed part of the country with 195-mph winds. Sering was astounded by how "unprepared for climate trauma" the nation's infrastructure was and by the unprecedented death toll left in the typhoon's wake.

Sering believes that Red Hook's recovery, though at times frustrating and slow, stands in stark contrast to the way Filipino communities are recuperating. Bureaucracy, politicking and corruption hinder growth in the Philippines — a poor country rich in resources that transnational corporations have depleted for profits Filipinos will never get to enjoy, Sering said. This is one of the reasons that she and a contingent of over 100 Filipinos will take to the streets on September 21.

They intend to put pressure on policy makers and on the "major players in the devastation of the global climate," she said. "And demand stronger development of infrastructure that will protect people in the most vulnerable places."

— REBECA IBARRA



MELINA LABOUCAN-MASSIMO

Melina Laboucan-Massimo recalls that while she was growing up in northern Alberta, Canada, the land was pristine. But that's no longer the case. Tar sands extraction, which eats up a huge amount of land, water and energy to remove oil-filled bitumen from the ground, is destroying the boreal forests and wetlands of Alberta.

"Even just within my lifetime, the impacts have been immense," said Laboucan-Massimo, 33, a member of the Lubicon Cree First Nation. The deforestation and air and water pollution that accompanied tar sands mining have also brought sickness to the indigenous peoples who live in the area, in the form of high rates of cancer and autoimmune and lung diseases. Laboucan-Massimo saw her both her mother and uncle diagnosed with cancer.

Laboucan-Massimo has worked for Greenpeace Canada as a tar sands and climate campaigner, and is now doing research into how First Nations peoples can adopt renewables to achieve energy sovereignty. She says that one of the biggest challenges indigenous peoples face in confronting the tar sands industry is its sheer scale: Seven major mines as big as cities and 100 smaller underground mines exist in northern Alberta, and they comprise only 2 or 3 percent of what the industry is planning.

"Many communities are being overwhelmed," Laboucan-Massimo said.

She'll be marching to raise awareness about their struggle. "It's important that people see that the tar sands is the ground zero of where a lot of people's oil will come from now and into the future if it's not stopped," she said. "We need to look into alternatives, so we don't have sacrificed communities."

— ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA



ROXANNE REID

Roxanne Reid was 12 years old when she picked up a mop and began to clean the floors of the South Bronx tenement she lived in. It had been condemned and the super was left to care for the crumbling building on his own, so Reid asked how she could be of service. "That motivated me to care about where I live," she said.

Forty-six years later, Reid continues to look after her home and community, now in Castle Hill, Bronx, where she has lived in a housing development for more than three decades. The former president of the Castle Hill Tenant Association, Reid has lobbied the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) for everything from elevator repairs to better street lighting.

She has worked with the community's youth, partnering with NYCHA to get young men and women jobs renovating the housing projects and organizing a patrol of young residents to look after tenants' safety. The result has been a somewhat safer neighborhood with the highest youth employment rate among all the housing developments, Reid said.

However, there is still much to be done, which is why she will be marching alongside Community Voices Heard (CVH) — an organization that advocates for the welfare of low-income people of color — on September 21. In New York, CVH constituents are on the frontlines of climate change. While Castle Hill Houses wasn't affected by Sandy, public housing in several New York neighborhoods was badly hit and many residents suffered from NYCHA's flawed handling of the aftermath. At the march, Reid will represent her chief concern, that clean, affordable and perhaps most importantly, safe housing be provided to New York's low-income communities.

— REBECA IBARRA



RAUL AYALA

Since he immigrated to New York from his native Ecuador two and a half years ago, Raul Ayala has worked as a busboy, an art handler and a freelance muralist. In the latter job, he has produced murals for the lobbies of new luxury apartment buildings in Bushwick, a predominantly working-class Latino immigrant neighborhood that is rapidly gentrifying.

"I put the cherry on top," Ayala said while lamenting that his work is helping to transform the neighborhood he also calls home. "Gentrification," he added, "is all about erasing and forgetting."

In the People's Climate March, Ayala has found an outlet for his creative passions. He and several other immigrant artists/construction workers have formed the *Ropavejeros*, a working group that is helping other immigrants tell their stories of how climate change and corporate-backed free trade deals have affected their lives and, in many cases, forced them to migrate.

The *Ropavejeros* (a colloquial expression that alludes to street vendors who resell used clothes) use recycled construction materials in all their creations. The centerpiece of their work for the march is an interactive art piece featuring a tree and a nest mounted on an 8' by 8' platform pulled by a pair of bicycles. Papier-mâché birds with stories of flight and migration written on their wings will be set in flight during the march.

Ayala, 34, grew up on a farm in Ecuador. For him the climate crisis reflects our loss of connection to the natural world.

"We're not running the show. Plants are running the show," he explained. "They have roots. They make their own food. They teach us lessons." He then added, "I'm worried that the ways of the earth are going to be lost."

— JOHN TARLETON



SUSAN KARLSON

The fight against racism, inequality and environmental destruction have shaped Reverend Susan Karlson's life and ministry. As a Unitarian Universalist minister, social justice and theology have always gone hand in hand for her. "The basis of my faith also informs how I'm called to live in the world," she said.

She had spent most of her ministry as a champion for social causes like immigration reform until, in the early 2000s, she "got a wake up call" and realized that environmental issues are also closely related to social justice. "What we're doing to the planet [is] disproportionately impacting people of color and people in marginalized communities," she said.

The Unitarian Church of Staten Island served as one of the many Occupy Sandy hubs after the storm. Karlson coordinated Sandy disaster response efforts and, despite the injustice and despair people of color communities faced during that time, she said that witnessing people of all faiths and backgrounds put aside differences and join efforts relieving suffering filled her with "a feeling of hopefulness." More and more, Karlson said, the teachings of biblically based faith organizations are shifting toward using the book of Genesis to promote stewardship of the earth instead of domination.

The fact that thousands will come together for the People's Climate March to demand that public officials acknowledge the science behind climate change and hear the voices of those most vulnerable to its effects, Karlson said, is heartening. "It's not enough," she said. "But it's a start."

— REBECA IBARRA

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'WE WANT TO SHOW WHAT'S AT STAKE'

ROCKAWAYS RESIDENTS REBUILD, DEMAND CLIMATE ACTION TWO YEARS AFTER SUPERSTORM SANDY

BY ALEX ELLEFSON

When protestors fill the streets of Manhattan on September 21 to demand that world leaders address global warming, a contingent of Rockaways residents will be there too. These inhabitants of the narrow 11-mile-long spit of land on the edge of Queens, which was one of the areas most devastated by Superstorm Sandy, plan to wear colorful papier-mâché life preservers that read: "Preserve our Communities."

Many experts agree that global warming exacerbated the damage caused by Sandy. And while the storm water surged through low-lying areas of the city, causing devastation regardless of race or class, the relief effort immediately after the storm showcased how residents in poor, marginalized communities are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. In the Rockaways, residents of the peninsula's poorer eastern end lived without heat or electricity for months amid their ruined homes while much of the rest of the city sprang back to life within weeks. City and federal relief agencies were conspicuously missing in action.

'REAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE PEOPLE LIVE'

On a mild summer evening in mid-August, a little over a month before the climate march, Rockaway residents gathered in a local church to decide how they would share their story with the world. Rockaway Wildfire, one of the groups born out of the grassroots volunteer efforts that stepped in to rebuild after Sandy, organized the meeting.

"The idea is that we want to represent our community," said Kalin Callaghan, a third-generation resident of the Rockaways and Rockaway Wildfire's lead organizer. She pulled out three brightly painted papier-mâché art pieces to show how the objects carried in the demonstration would be constructed. "We want to create images of our homes and the places here that matter to us. We want to show this is what's actually at stake when it comes to climate change. It's not just numbers on paper. It's real neighborhoods where people live."

Attendees split into groups and were asked to write about their homes, their community and what they were most afraid to lose.

Local resident Zakhia Grant said she loved strolling along the boardwalk and watching the passing ships out on the Atlantic Ocean. She told the other people in her group that she was afraid of losing her ability to interact with nature.

"I know the risks that are associated with living in coastal communities," said Grant, who is an adjunct professor at Berkeley College and teaches classes in environmental sustainability and natural disasters. "We need to protect what we have here. And what other people are coming from miles away to appreciate. Unfortunately, it took a disaster for people to appreciate nature more."

"It's like an island that nobody wants," John Cosirramos said of his community in Far Rockaway. He spent more than eight months waiting for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide funds to rebuild his home, sometimes living in his car. "My house was flooded. There was mildew growing. There was sewage water in the house. I lost everything."

OCCUPY IN THE ROCKAWAYS

To fill the void left by agencies like FEMA and the Red Cross, small faith-based organizations, community groups and civilian volunteers stepped up to lend a hand. One of these groups was Occupy Sandy, which harnessed the interpersonal networks created during the Occupy Wall Street

movement to deliver urgently needed supplies to those in need. They handed out food, sent volunteer groups to help homeowners rebuild their damaged houses and brought in doctors to provide medical care — a much needed service in an area where the lone hospital was already overwhelmed.

While other relief groups eventually left, Occupy Sandy stayed in the poorer eastern end of the Rockaways. Some of the volunteers, who had been working alongside community leaders and local residents, began focusing on long-term organizing efforts to strengthen the community and address the underlying issues, such as poverty and job scarcity, that predated the storm. Together, this mix of locals and Occupy Sandy volunteers teamed up with the Wildfire Project, an organization that trains and supports grassroots groups across the United States, and formed Rockaway Wildfire, a community-based organization dedicated to broader recovery strategies in the area. On this remote peninsula far from the centers of power in New York, strengthening grassroots democracy and civic participation would become a key part of climate resiliency.

"There were a lot of needs in the Rockaways before Sandy," said Tamara Shapiro, a former Occupy Sandy volunteer and Rockaway Wildfire organizer. "The needs right after the storm were for immediate relief. People needed food. They needed medical attention. But residents of the Rockaways also recognized that this is going to be a long-term recovery and we have to look at long-term organizing in addition to the immediate relief needs."

Not all of Rockaway's residents have equal needs. On a peninsula stratified by class and race, the western tip of the Rockaways is mostly white and solidly middle- to upper-middle-class. But go further east, to places like Edgemere and Far Rockaway, and you enter some of New York's poorest neighborhoods, where more than half of the public housing in Queens is located. The condition of the Rockaways' east end is no accident. It's the result of the city's urban renewal projects during the middle of the last century that uprooted poor New Yorkers from all over the city and dumped them in public housing projects at the edge of Queens.

"At one time, the city wanted to push poor people out to the perimeters of the city, as far away from Manhattan as they could," said Callaghan. "But there's hardly any job opportunities here. There's also very inadequate health care, transportation is very difficult and for a long time the schools were sort of sub-standard and overcrowded."

LUXURY HOUSING BY THE SEA

The era when New York City funneled its poor people into housing projects in coastal communities like Far Rockaway, Coney Island, Red Hook and the Lower East Side is long over. Nowadays, real estate developers covet shoreline properties as sites for building luxury housing, climate change or not.

One such piece of land is Arverne East, an 80-acre beachfront property that stretches over 20 blocks and has been vacant for decades. The land is owned by the city, which in 2006 designated a group led by L+M Development Partners, the Bluestone Organization and Triangle Equities to develop the site. The group's plan to build a 1,199-unit housing development quickly stalled at the onset of the 2008 economic crash, but has been revived again since Superstorm Sandy.

To address longstanding issues in the community, Rocka-



LINGERING DAMAGE: A boarded-up home in the Arverne neighborhood in the eastern Rockaways.

way Wildfire has directed its first large-scale campaign toward winning a fair and comprehensive Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) from the developer before the project goes up for final approval from the city.

"There's a lot of people here who have been struggling for a very long time," said Callaghan. "So if we're going to give up public land for a developer to get rich, we want to ensure that the existing community benefits from that."

To prepare for the struggle over the future of Arverne East, Rockaway Wildfire members met with community organizers from the Northwest Bronx who fought a lengthy battle with the Bloomberg administration over the future of the long-abandoned Kingsbridge Armory.

With support they marshaled from local politicians, religious leaders and celebrities, a community-labor coalition in the Bronx thwarted Bloomberg's attempt to turn the armory into a low-wage shopping mall. They subsequently negotiated a CBA with developers who plan to build the world's largest indoor ice-skating center. In the final deal, the site's developers agreed to contribute \$8 million toward a 52,000-square-foot community space and promised to pay the ice-skating center's 260 workers at least \$10 an hour. The developer also promised to set aside \$1 million annually for 99 years in order to pay for free ice time for local youth.

COMMUNITY DEMANDS

Inspired by the outcome in the Bronx, Rockaway Wildfire canvassed the community, knocking on doors and holding information sessions to learn what residents would like to get out of a potential community benefits agreement. It also partnered with other local organizations, elected officials and outside advocacy groups, eventually forming a coalition, United Peninsula Working to Attain Responsible Development (UPWARD), to negotiate for an agreement with



TAKING A BREAK: Members of Rockaway Wildfire enjoy a light-hearted moment during an end-of-summer party the group threw on Sept. 5.



ALEXELLEFSON



ALEXELLEFSON

SPEAKING UP: A Rockaways Wildfire member makes a point during the group's August meeting.

the developers that includes a job training center, recreational space, storefronts for locally-owned businesses and a disaster relief hub.

Rockaway Wildfire members attended a meeting with organizers of an international design competition sponsored by the city's Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), the American Institute of Architects and Arverne East Developers, which offered a \$30,000 cash prize to the architecture firm that submitted the best proposal for the new development. Representatives from the UPWARD coalition told the architecture teams participating in the competition what they would like to see included in the design for Arverne East.

In June, the Arverne East developers unveiled their proposal at a meeting attended by more than 200 people from the commu-



DEVIKA BILIMORIA

KALIN CALLAGHAN: Rockaway Wildfire's lead organizer.

nity. The new plan includes many elements from the design that won the design competition while also incorporating many of UPWARD's requests, such as a vocational school, nature preserve and business-owned (rather than leased) commercial storefronts.

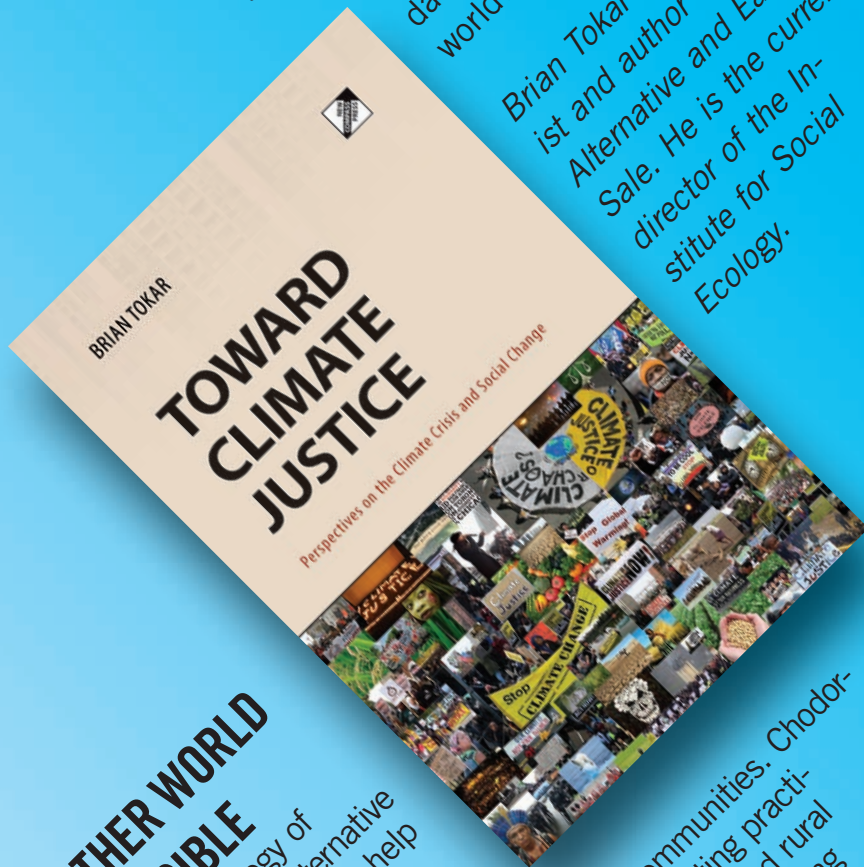
Although HPD, which still owns the land, requires that 43 percent of the residential units in Arverne East be reserved for affordable housing, the developers did not address

Continued on page 14

CLIMATE CHANGE OR SOCIAL CHANGE?

Toward Climate Justice explains the case for climate justice, challenges the myths underlying carbon markets and other false solutions, and looks behind the events that have obstructed the advance of climate policies at the UN and in the U.S. Congress. This fully revised edition includes numerous updates on science, politics and activism worldwide.

Brian Tokar is a long-time activist and author of *The Green Alternative and Earth for Sale*. He is the current director of the Institute for Social Ecology.



ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

The Anthropology of Utopia surveys alternative ways of life that can help us create an ecological society. The solutions to our crises, Chodorkoff argues, lie within our grasp and in our own communities. Chodorkoff offers a wealth of stimulating practical examples from both urban and rural communities, drawn from his life-long commitment to community politics.

Dan Chodorkoff is a writer, co-founder of The Institute for Social Ecology, and a cultural anthropologist whose work focused on the Lower East Side.



new-compass.net

WHY THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT MUST STAND WITH FERGUSON

BY DEIRDRE SMITH

It was not hard for me to make the connection between the tragedy in Ferguson, Missouri, and the catalyst for my work to stop the climate crisis.

It was all over the news in August: images of police pointing military-grade weapons at unarmed black people with their hands in the air. These scenes made my heart race in an all-too-familiar way. I was devastated for Michael Brown, his family and the people of Ferguson. Almost immediately, I closed my eyes and felt the fear I have for my own family.

In the wake of the climate disaster that was Hurricane Katrina almost 10 years ago, I saw the same images of police, pointing military weapons at unarmed black people with their hands in the air. In the name of “restoring order,” my family and their community were demonized as “looters” and “dangerous.” When crisis hits, the underlying racism in our society comes to the surface in very clear ways.

I was outraged by Mike Brown’s murder, and at the same time wondered why people were so surprised; this is sadly a common experience of black life in America. In 2012, an unarmed black man was killed by authorities at the rate of every 28 hours, and it has increased since then.

Climate change is bringing nothing if not clarity to the persistent and overlapping crises of our time. The connection between it, militarized state violence and racism is

OUR FIGHT IS NOT SIMPLY WITH THE CARBON IN THE SKY, BUT WITH THE POWERS ON THE GROUND.

commonsense and intuitive. I grew up black in America, specifically in New Mexico, a place ravaged by climate impacts. New Mexico is, as Oscar Olivera noted, showing the early signs of what sparked the Cochabamba Water Wars in Bolivia, which were yet another example of how oppression and extreme weather combine to “incite” militarized violence.

The problems of Cochabamba and Katrina are not just about the hurricane or the drought — they’re about what happened after. It is the institutional neglect of vulnerable communities in crisis, the criminalization of our people met with state violence, the ongoing displacement of New Orleans’ black residents through the demolition of affordable housing to make room for high-rise condos. It all adds up to corporations exploiting our tragedy using the tools of racism, division and dehumanization — what Naomi Klein calls the shock doctrine. And the problems are also about what happened before: how black and brown communities had fossil fuel extraction imposed on them in the first place, in the form of gas wells and coal and tar sands refineries in their backyards.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, black and brown people were seen as “disposable,” and the powers-that-be painted the victims and heroes as villains. After Mike Brown’s killing, we saw much of the same. The hashtag #if-



“HANDS UP, DON’T SHOOT!”: Police repeatedly attacked residents of Ferguson, Missouri, during August protests over the police shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown. People of color in New Orleans also faced militarized security forces in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

theygunnedmedown trended on Twitter in reaction to the media’s prejudiced portrayal of Mike Brown and countless other victims like him. Black folks asked: if I were killed by police, how would I be portrayed? It illustrated how central a racist and victim-blaming cultural narrative is to media response in such situations.

If extreme weather is about droughts, floods, hurricanes and wildfires, the way people get treated in the wake of disaster is about power. A discourse that dehumanizes and blames the victims makes black and brown communities even more vulnerable than they already are in the wake of climate disasters. If we hope to build anything together, we must deny that anyone is an “other.” Dismantling this pervasive cultural norm isn’t easy, but it’s a crucial challenge we must overcome.

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Communities of color and poor communities are hit hardest by fossil fuel extraction, as well as neglected by the state in the wake of crisis. People of color also disproportionately live in climate-vulnerable areas. Similarly, state violence should concern us all, but the experience of young black men in particular in this country is unique. Those of us who are not young black men must step up to the challenge of understanding that we will likely never experience that level of demonization. That kind of solidarity is what it takes to build real people power — the kind of power that stands up unflinchingly to injustice, and helps us all win our battles by standing together.

This is difficult work. Some of it requires listening and working with racial justice organizations, and some of it requires introspection, questioning what we have been taught and healing from internal oppression. Part of that work involves climate organizers acknowledging and understanding that our fight is not simply with the carbon in the sky, but with the powers on the ground.

Many people have pointed out that the climate movement needs to understand our internal disparity of power too: between mainstream and grassroots organizations, between people of color and white folks, between the global north and the global south. We need to account for these

things if we truly want to build the diverse movement leadership that we will need to win.

The events in Ferguson offer an important lesson if you’re a climate organizer, looking around the room, wondering where the “people of color” are. It’s a time to dig deep and ask yourself if you really care about why they aren’t there — and if you are committed to the deep work, solidarity and learning that it will take to bring more “diversity” to our movement. Personally, I think the climate movement is up to this necessary challenge.

BEYOND SINGLE ISSUES

I can’t stress enough how important it is for me, as a black climate justice advocate, as well as for my people, to see the climate movement show solidarity with the people of Ferguson and with black communities around the country striving for justice. Other movements have stepped up to the plate: labor, LGBTQ and immigrant rights groups have all taken the firm stand that they have the backs of the black community. Solidarity and allyship is important in and of itself. The fossil fuel industry would love to see us siloed into believing that we can each win by ourselves on “single issues.” Now it’s time for the climate movement to show up — and show that we will not stand for the “othering” of the black community in America, or anyone else.

If we knew everything we needed to know about navigating the climate and ecological crises, we would have done it already. But as crisis escalates, as climate change gets worse, we had better get ready to see a whole lot more state violence and repression, unless we organize to change it. Now is the time to stand with and listen to the wisdom of our allies in other movements.

I could tell you all day about the brilliant and strategic analysis and leaders that exist in historically oppressed communities. I could tell you. But your path to understanding why solidarity is important is your own. Don’t miss this opportunity to dig in and show up. If we mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis, it will be because we understood our enemies and leveraged our collective power to take them down and let our vision spring up. Take a moment today to read the demands of the Dream Defenders, Freedomside and Organizing Black Struggle. Read about solidarity and white allyship, and identify anti-blackness showing up in your spaces. Take a moment today to really think about how we should confront the climate crisis and ask yourself if you’re willing to dive in for the long haul.

The more complex — and less comfortable — we allow ourselves to be, the more simple things actually become: We are in this together and our fights are connected. We don’t know everything by ourselves, but together we know enough.

Deirdre Smith is strategic partnership coordinator at 350.org, which published an earlier version of this piece.

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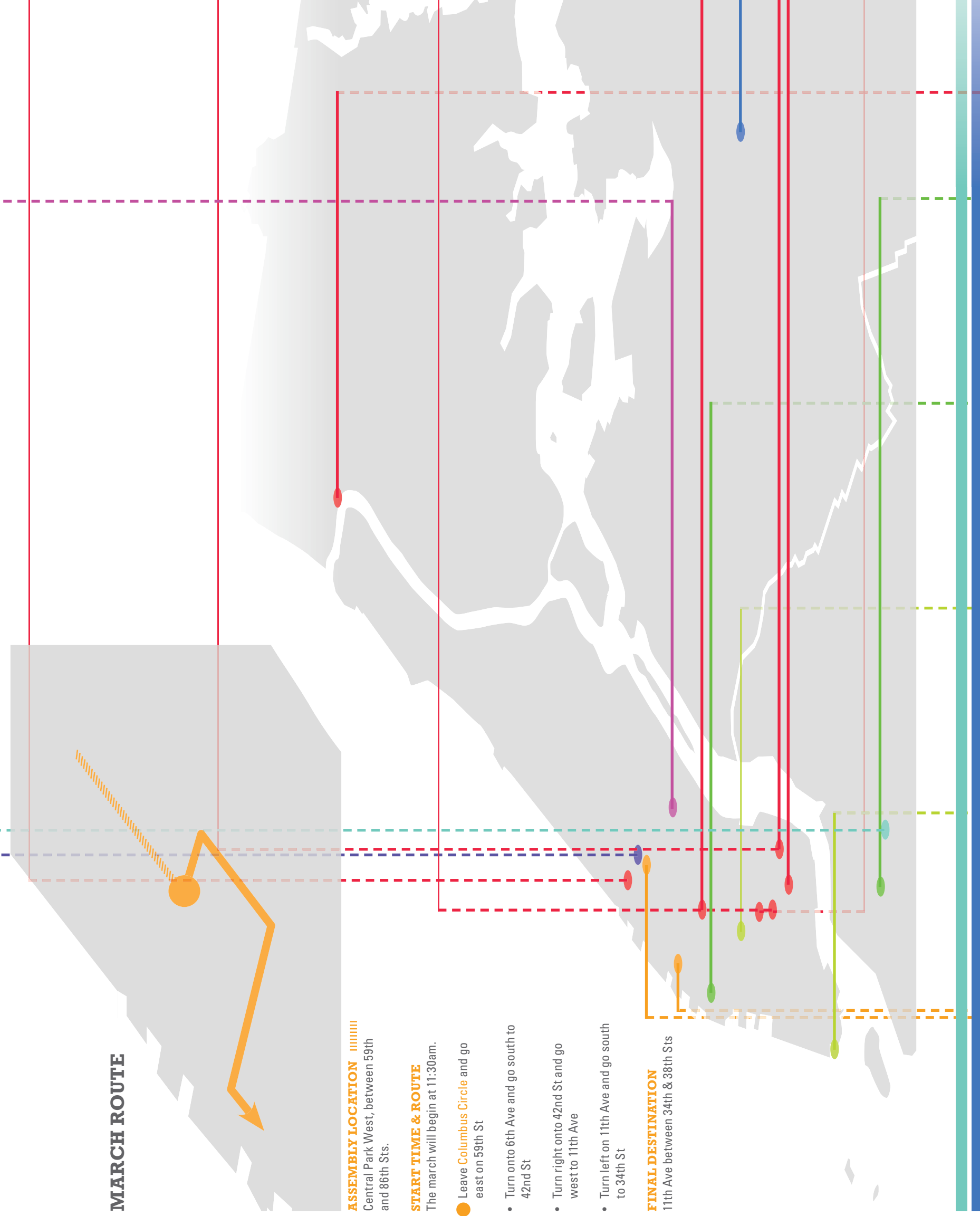
INTO THE STREETS

CLIMATE MARCH EVENTS GUIDE

Designed by Mikael Tarkela

Panel discussions, workshops, teach-ins, movie screenings, direct actions and more. It's all happening here in New York in the days leading up to and following the People's Climate March. The roster of events continues to grow as we go to press. To keep up on the latest, follow us on Twitter at @TheIndydependent.

MARCH ROUTE



ASSEMBLY LOCATION ■■■■■
Central Park West, between 59th and 86th Sts.

START TIME & ROUTE

The march will begin at 11:30am.

- Leave **Columbus Circle** and go east on 59th St
- Turn onto 6th Ave and go south to 42nd St
- Turn right onto 42nd St and go west to 11th Ave
- Turn left on 11th Ave and go south to 34th St

FINAL DESTINATION

11th Ave between 34th & 38th Sts

SUN SEPT 1

11:30am

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH.

Join the call for immediate action on climate change. Gather between 59th and 86th Sts on Central Park West; the march will leave from Columbus Circle and wind its way to peoplesclimate.org

AT CONCLUSION OF THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH

PUBLIC ART: THE CLIMATE RIBBON. This massive art installation and ritual on Manhattan's West Side will zero in on what we are in danger of losing to climate change. People are invited to write on 2-ft ribbons what they love and don't want to lose to climate chaos — your city? your harvest? your children's future? — and to bring the ribbons to the march or mail them in.
11th Ave btw 34th & 38th Sts
theclimateribbon.com

MON SEP 22

10AM

#FLOODWALLS STREET: STOP CAPITALISM. END THE CLIMATE CRISIS.

A direct action to flood, blockade, sit-in and shut down the NYC institutions that are profiting from the climate crisis, with coordinated sister actions planned in other cities. Converge at Battery Park at 10am, sit-in on Wall Street at 12pm. Wear blue. floodwallstreet.net

THROUGH TUE SEP 23

10AM–5PM • FREE

CONFERENCE: PEOPLES' CLIMATE JUSTICE SUMMIT. A meeting of frontline community members organizing against the causes of climate change and culminating solutions to address them, organized by the Climate Justice Alliance. Core summit will be held at the UN's Church Center and livestreamed at the New School, where panels, workshops and other activities are also scheduled. Pre-registration required.
The New School
72 5th Ave, 3rd Fl
ourpowercampaign.org

WED SEP 24

7:30PM • \$5/\$10/\$15 SUGGESTED

BOOK TALK: AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

Today's climate change crisis has its roots in centuries of conquest of indigenous peoples. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's new book radically reframes the founding myth of the U.S. and the story of indigenous resistance.
The Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave, Bklyn
thecommonsbrooklyn.org

THROUGH THU SEP 25

8PM • \$15

THEATER: GAÍÁ GLOBAL CIRCUS. A theatrical experiment inspired by a paradox: Although we are confronted with global warming and the prospect of mankind's end, we feel almost nothing. The performance explores the significance of such stakes and the limited repertoire of concepts and feelings that we have to deal with them.
The Kitchen
512 W 19th St
thekitchin.org • 212-255-5793

NOW

THROUGH SUN NOV 9
VARIOUS TIMES • \$8

EXHIBITION: A/WAKE IN THE WATER.

"a/wake in the water" explores Meditations on Disaster" explores the repercussions and systematic neglect Black communities — and Black bodies — experience as the result of environmental hazards and natural disasters.

MoCADA

80 Hanson Pl, Bklyn
mocada.org • 718-230-0492

SAT SEPT 13

THROUGH SAT OCT 4
VARIOUS • \$8

LAUNCH: NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AT THE QUEENS MUSEUM.

Emphasizing the social and political forces that shape nature, the launch of this new project will include a series of superb panels, workshops and performances with artists, activists and thinkers that include Christian Parenti, Astra Taylor, Liberata Telle, Jodi Dean, Eddie Bautista, Elizabeth Yeampierre and more.
Queens Museum
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
queensmuseum.org • 718-592-9700

FRI SEPT 19 & SAT SEPT 20

7PM • FREE

SPEAKERS: OPENING AND CLOSING PLENARIES OF THE NYC CLIMATE CONVERGENCE.

Featuring movement leaders and thinkers such as Oscar Olivera, Immortal Technique, Naomi Klein, Desmond D'Sa and more.
St. Peter's Church
619 Lexington Ave
convergeforclimate.org

SAT SEPT 20

9AM–6:30PM • FREE

MOVEMENT BUILDING: NYC CLIMATE CONVERGENCE WORKSHOPS.

Dozens of climate justice workshops, panels, teach-ins and more are on the roster, and the day will round out with a People's Climate Assembly in the Lower East Side. See convergeforclimate.org for more.
Assembly: El Jardín de Paraíso
6th St btw Ave C & D
Workshops: Various locations in downtown Manhattan.

9:30AM–5:30PM • FREE

MEETING: YOUTH CLIMATE CONVERGENCE.

Let's build the future of climate resistance. A youth-led convergence with workshops, trainings and more. Workshop proposals welcomed, registration required.
Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Campus
122 Amsterdam Ave
youth@peoplesclimate.org

10:30AM–3PM • FREE

EDUCATION: DECOLONIZE CLIMATE JUSTICE.

Free University-NYC will host teach-ins, workshops, indigenous performances, direct action trainings and more as part of the NYC Climate Convergence. All are invited to attend or participate by hosting a discussion, sharing skills or performing.
El Jardín de Paraíso
6th St btw Ave C & D
freeuniversitynyc.org

12PM–2PM • \$10

FILM: ABOVE ALL ELSE.

This doc about front-line activism against climate change in the U.S. tells the story of David Daniel, an East Texas man who fought to stop the tar sands of the Keystone XL oil pipeline from crossing his land, and the civil disobedience he inspired.
Anthology Film Archives
32 2nd Ave
anthologyfilmarchives.org • 212-505-5181

12–8PM • FREE

FORUM: FROM RELIEF TO RESISTANCE AND REBUILD FOR ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

An education forum on climate disruption in the Philippines, its causes and its impacts and the search for grassroots solutions taking place after last year's Typhoon Haiyan.
Church of St. Francis of Assisi
127 W 31st St
natcomusa.org

3PM • \$15

TALK: GENESIS.

Photographer Sebastião Salgado will discuss his eight-year journey across the planet to document its last pristine areas. The resulting project, *Genesis*, draws together more than 200 black-and-white photographs of wildlife, landscapes, seascapes and indigenous peoples. On display at the International Center of Photography, which is also hosting a series of events about confronting climate change throughout the fall.
The Great Hall, Cooper Union
7 E 7th St
icp.org • 212-857-0000

3PM • \$8

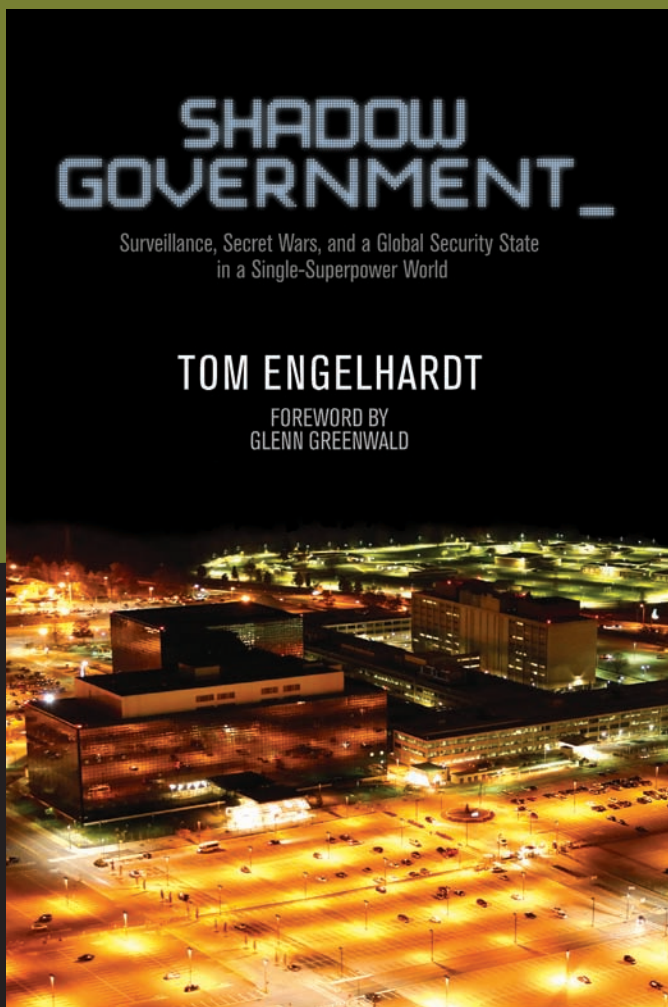
MUSIC: PUNK FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE.

Check out NYC's oldest DIY, collectively-run, all-ages punk/hard-core show space for a music matinee featuring M.A.D., Sunrot, Through Thorn & Brier and Skuz.
ABC-No-Rio
156 Livingston St
abnorio.org • 212-254-3697

7PM • \$10 SUGGESTED

CONCERT & PARTY: RAGE AGAINST THE DYING OF THE LIGHT. Musicians, artists, activists, reformers and aspiring revolutionaries will converge in the Bronx for a bumping concert and political party before the march. Co-hosted by Ecosocialist Horizons and hosted by the Villalobos Brothers, the musical roster will include everything from jazz to hip-hop.
52 Marble Hill Ave, Bronx
ecosocialisthorizons.com • prefiguration@gmail.com

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ROCKAWAYS

Continued from page 9

the issue at the meeting.

City Councilman Donovan Richards, who represents the area, insisted after the June meeting that affordable housing must be addressed but said the developers did “an amazing job” and complemented them for listening to input from the community.

“We’re pretty happy with the plan,” said Callaghan, who also attended. “But we understand that things change. So until we sit down and have a signed legal contract between the developers and the community, we’re not satisfied.”

WORKER COOPERATIVES

If the proposal moves forward, Callaghan said she would like to see some of the commercial spaces go to the worker-owned cooperatives that Rockaway Wildfire’s partner organization has been developing. Worker Owned Rockaway Cooperatives (WORCs) has been helping local residents, most of whom are Spanish-speaking immigrants, form their own co-op businesses over the last year and a half. Already, WORCs has successfully launched a construction company and a bakery and is nurturing three more: a taxi service, a juice bar and a landscaping company.

“It’s a great opportunity,” said Luis Casco, a Far Rockaway resident who is one of four people working to launch the taxi service. “All the profits you make go back into the company and the workers.”

Casco, who works as a security guard in Lower Manhattan, previously drove a cab in the Rockaways before his boss’s gambling habit wrecked the business. He expects the taxi service to launch by the beginning of 2015 and would like to see it grow to a fleet of ten cars.

“Working for someone isn’t good,” he said. “With a co-op, you would have more of a family than a regular business. The people you work with will have your back.”

By encouraging worker-owned co-ops, Rockaway Wildfire hopes to build businesses that benefit local residents and keep wealth within the community. Before Sandy hit, the

small number of businesses in Rockaway were able to meet only 30 percent of local demand for goods and services, according to a study by the American Planning Association, forcing residents to spend their money in stores outside their neighborhood.

WORCs also seeks to promote environmentally sustainable business practices, an important issue in an area that recently experienced a climate disaster.

“Cooperatives are a way of building something where the people have ownership over the way they’re producing,” said Shapiro, who helps facilitate WORCs activities. “And that relates to climate because the way business is happening right now, the big corporate way of doing things, is one of the major reasons that climate change is getting so much worse.”

‘WE GOT A STORY TO TELL’

At the August storytelling workshop, many of the residents shared their experiences from Superstorm Sandy, but they also agreed that the storm carried an unexpected blessing because it brought neighbors together and strengthened the community.

Now, they said, it was time to share their story with the world. Rockaway Wildfire will join more than 1,000 other organizations at the People’s Climate March, representing a broad range of interests, including unions, environmental activists and religious groups. One Rockaway resident, Darren Carter, who works as a clinician at a drug rehab facility, told the other attendees gathered at the church that he hoped the momentum leading up to the march would bring people together to address climate change.

Carter later told *The Independent*: “We are just one of many groups of survivors of climate disaster. People in Rockaway, people in Staten Island, Coney Island, whoever was affected in New York City, should be galvanized together. All I know is that if your story is that for weeks there was no lights on the street, for weeks and months you had no water. If your story was like that, we need to come together because we got a story to tell.”

For more, see rockawaywildfire.org.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: Darren Carter of Rockaway Wildfire checks out a section of the boardwalk on Rockaway Beach.

DEVIKA BILIMORIA

GREENING THE UNION LABEL

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

From teachers to transit workers, civil servants to electricians, the People's Climate March will have more organized-labor participation than any environmentalist effort in U.S. history.

More than 50 unions, including some of the city's biggest, are among the organizations sponsoring the march. The Service Employees International Union, the nation's second largest, has endorsed it, and its two main New York locals, the health care workers of Local 1199 and the building service workers of Local 32BJ, are heavily involved. Also on board are District Council 37, the city's largest public employee union; Transport Workers Union Local 100; Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; the Communications Workers of America, who represent city employees as well as telephone and cable-TV workers; and the city, state and Connecticut affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers.

The sponsors also include labor-based groups such as the Left Labor Project and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and "worker centers" that seek to organize low-wage and undocumented workers. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy is bringing union leaders from more than 10 countries, including the United Kingdom, Brazil, India, Korea, Canada and South Africa.

"Labor is marching because climate change affects all of us," says Local 32BJ President Hector Figueroa. "We live in the communities that get destroyed by storms like Sandy. We work in the buildings that get flooded. We get hit by health epidemics like asthma that are rampant in our communities, and we care about the world that we will leave for our children and grandchildren."

"Labor has come to the conclusion that it is a workers' issue, some of us faster than others," says Estelle Vazquez, a Local 1199 vice president.

SANDY'S IMPACT

Superstorm Sandy galvanized sentiment about climate change among many union members here. "We saw the impact on our places of work," says Vazquez. Members were working at NYU Langone Medical Center when it had to be evacuated and at nursing homes in the Rockaways. As health workers, they also worry that global warming will abet the spread of diseases like malaria.

The storm flooded DC 37's Lower Manhattan headquarters, destroying the building's electrical system. Members stayed on the job at a water treatment plant in Staten Island when flooding cut it off from land, says Jon Forster, a city scientist and union vice president. "There is a sense that this is urgent."

Whether that sense translates into turnout, however, depends on unions reaching their members, says Sean Sweeney, co-coordinator of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy. He's been particularly impressed by the efforts of 32BJ, 1199, the New York State Nurses Association, Electricians Local 3 and the Amalgamated Transit Union, which has two small locals representing bus drivers in Staten Island and Queens.

DC 37 has published two articles about the march in its newspaper, which goes out to 170,000 readers, and handed out thousands of flyers to members and the general public, says communications director Zita Allen. Local 1199 is reaching out to members through social media and has translated materials into Spanish, Russian and Chinese. Local 32BJ has been phone-banking its members and holding meetings and handing out Spanish-language flyers in Washington Heights. Its 2,000 "green supers" — who have completed a course in making buildings more energy-efficient — "really lead the way in talking to other members about the environment," says Lenore Friedlaender, who is in charge of member engagement.

"It's not just a PR thing. There really is a lot of momentum inside labor for this march," she adds.

POLITICAL SHIFT

Such a labor-environmentalist alliance has been a long time coming. The "teamsters and turtles" coalition from the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization protests dissipated quickly. The BlueGreen Alliance, founded in 2006, brought together the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club, but did not influence the Obama administration to



push for a "Green New Deal." Environmentalists are often stereotyped as an upper-middle-class white movement that cares more about wilderness than jobs.

"We are a one-trick pony. We only care about one thing, and that's jobs," a building trades union's political director told *LaborPress* last fall. "We don't care about your guns, if dudes can marry dudes, medical marijuana. It's not our issue."

In that, there are genuine conflicts. To environmentalists, the Keystone XL tar-sands oil pipeline means "game over" for the climate. To the Laborers International Union of North America, it means 42,000 jobs. For building trades workers, the criticism that these would only be short-term is meaningless. Almost all construction jobs are short-term. Laborers President Terry O'Sullivan has harshly criticized AFL-CIO leader Rich Trumka's initiatives to unite with environmental groups.

"Green jobs" — alternative energy, retrofitting buildings and public transportation — could be the key to cracking that conundrum. Pete Sikora, a Communications Workers official running for the state Assembly in Brooklyn, believes New York could reduce both income inequality and carbon-dioxide emissions simply by requiring mandatory energy-efficiency upgrades for buildings.

This, he says, would create "tens of thousands of good, sustainable, mostly union jobs" and pay for itself in energy savings within five years.

Creating a greener New York would include constructing bulkheads, a better drainage system and transportation hubs, says DC 37's Forster. We should build solar and wind energy facilities instead of a terminal in Long Island Sound for exporting fracking-extracted natural gas, he adds. "One is a green job, the other isn't."

"What is the sense in creating short-term jobs when the impact on the planet is negative for all of us?" Local 1199's Vazquez asks. "We cannot continue mindless consumption."

But if cars and coal are bad for the environment, how can we change that without condemning miners and autoworkers to Walmart or unemployment? "Labor needs to be weighing in on policy," says Forster. "If decisions are made, jobs have to be taken into account."

"I value the work opportunity construction of renewable energy projects will offer building trade workers, and the resulting reduction of the city's carbon footprint," Electricians Local 3 head Chris Erikson said at a July press conference for the march. But, he added, "we must weigh the effect on jobs for U.S. citizens and be prudent in the implementation of regulations."

The environmental movement has also realized that climate change and pollution often hit people of color and the world's poor hardest, says Vazquez. This rally, she adds, "gives all progressive forces an opportunity to build a new coalition."

Climate change will never be stopped as long as the market dominates political decisions, Sweeney says, so Trade Unions for Energy Democracy advocates public ownership of energy production. World energy production could be "completely decarbonized" by 2030, he contends, but it would take an effort on the scale of World War II, such as installing 60,000 3-megawatt wind turbines every year.

"What's technically possible is different from what's politically possible," he says. "We need a really militant climate movement, and labor has to be at the center of it."

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IN GERMANY, THE ANSWER IS BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

BY TADZIO MUELLER

BERLIN — Occasionally, during certain peak times — say, at noon on a windy, sunny day — close to 100 percent of all electricity consumed in Germany comes from renewable energy (RE) sources. As most of the world's governments refuse to act while the threat of climate change intensifies, this might seem like a desert mirage. But the German embrace of renewables — known as the *Energiewende*, or energy transition — is the achievement of a broad social movement that dates back more than three decades.

At the most abstract, technical level, the *Energiewende* is the movement-driven and concurrently government-supported transition of the German electricity system from one based on large-scale fossil fuel and nuclear power plants to a system based on smaller-scale RE sources, in particular wind and solar power. By 2050, Germany aims to generate at least 80 percent of its electricity through renewable sources and to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, relative to 1990 levels, by 80 to 95 percent.

From a political perspective, it is much more than that. It is a process that began some 35 years ago, when ordinary people started fighting not just against dirty energy — be it nuclear or fossil fuels — but also against the centralized power structures that dominate the energy sector. Through this process, in turn, they began to reclaim control of their (energetic) future and indeed their present. It is inspiring to witness the social and cultural revival and collective empowerment that communities experience when they commit to the project of becoming a so-called “BioEnergy Village” or “100 percent-region” and start collectively investing in and building up RE infrastructures.

Some numbers might better illustrate the poetry: Aside from the 100 percent figure mentioned above, in the first half of 2014, an average of 30 percent of all electricity consumed in Germany came from renewables. There are some 25,000 wind turbines and 1.4 million solar

panels in operation. More than 50 percent of this capacity is owned by individuals, farmers and other smallholders, not the “big four” companies that control most of the energy market. Around 400,000 jobs have been created in the RE sector over the past decade. And according to research by the respected think tank FOES, the transition in fact generates net positive economic effects, once you factor in the societal benefits of jobs and incomes and the avoided costs of ecological damage and fossil fuel and nuclear subsidies.

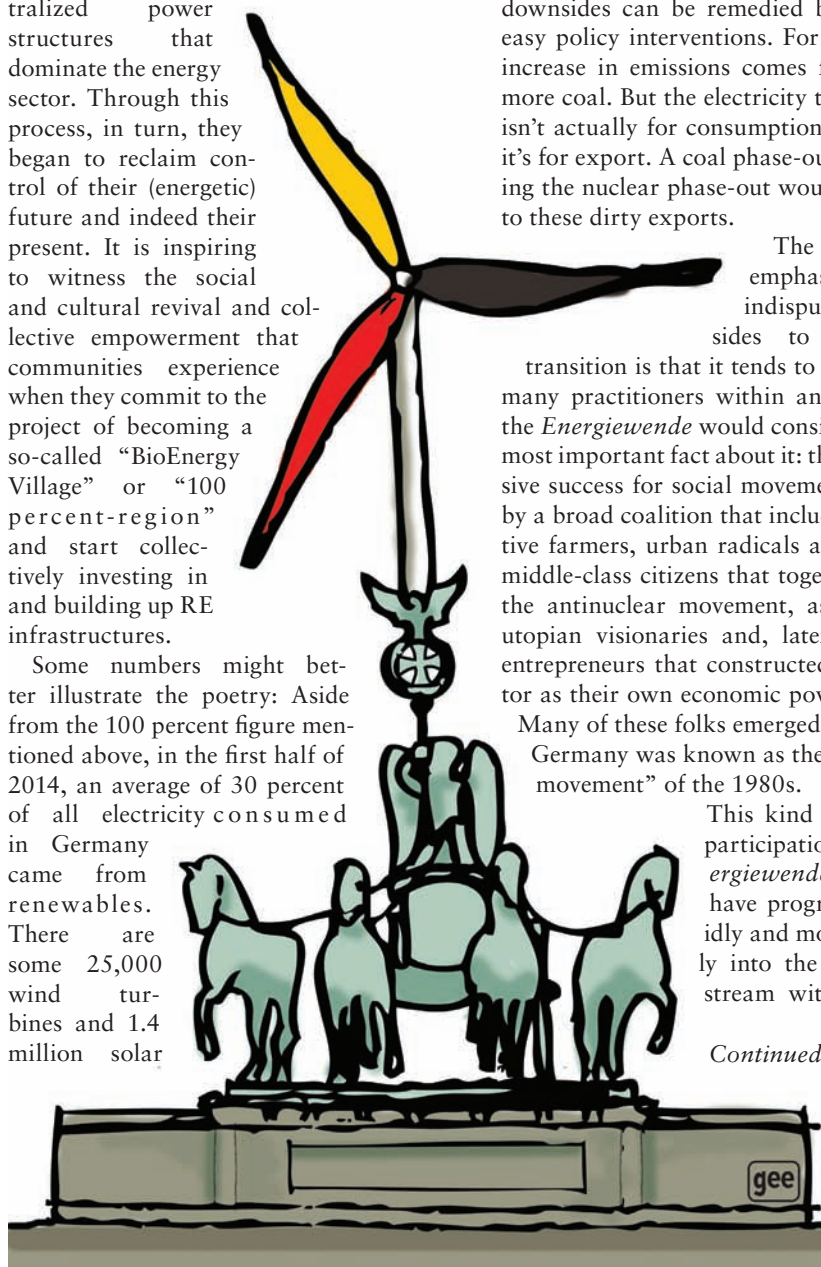
The *Energiewende* is by no means an unqualified success story. The gap between the overly grand claims made by some of its supporters and reality has no doubt opened up space for its detractors, and the critics have some important points to make. The *Energiewende* is not, for example, a just transition. Jobs in the RE sector are often not unionized and are badly paid and precarious. Like many other ecological policies, the ones supporting the expansion of RE tend to benefit the wealthy more than the poor. Last but not least, in a darkly ironic twist, German greenhouse gas emissions have actually gone up, rather than down, since its much-publicized phase-out of nuclear power began after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

These criticisms have some merit. But the downsides can be remedied by reasonably easy policy interventions. For example, the increase in emissions comes from burning more coal. But the electricity thus produced isn't actually for consumption in Germany, it's for export. A coal phase-out law mirroring the nuclear phase-out would put an end to these dirty exports.

The problem with emphasizing the indisputable downsides to the energy transition is that it tends to obscure what many practitioners within and analysts of the *Energiewende* would consider the single most important fact about it: that it is a massive success for social movements, achieved by a broad coalition that included conservative farmers, urban radicals and concerned middle-class citizens that together made up the antinuclear movement, as well as the utopian visionaries and, later, small-scale entrepreneurs that constructed the RE sector as their own economic power structure. Many of these folks emerged from what in Germany was known as the “alternatives movement” of the 1980s.

This kind of grassroots participation in the *Energiewende* could never have progressed as rapidly and moved as quickly into the social mainstream without support

Continued on next page



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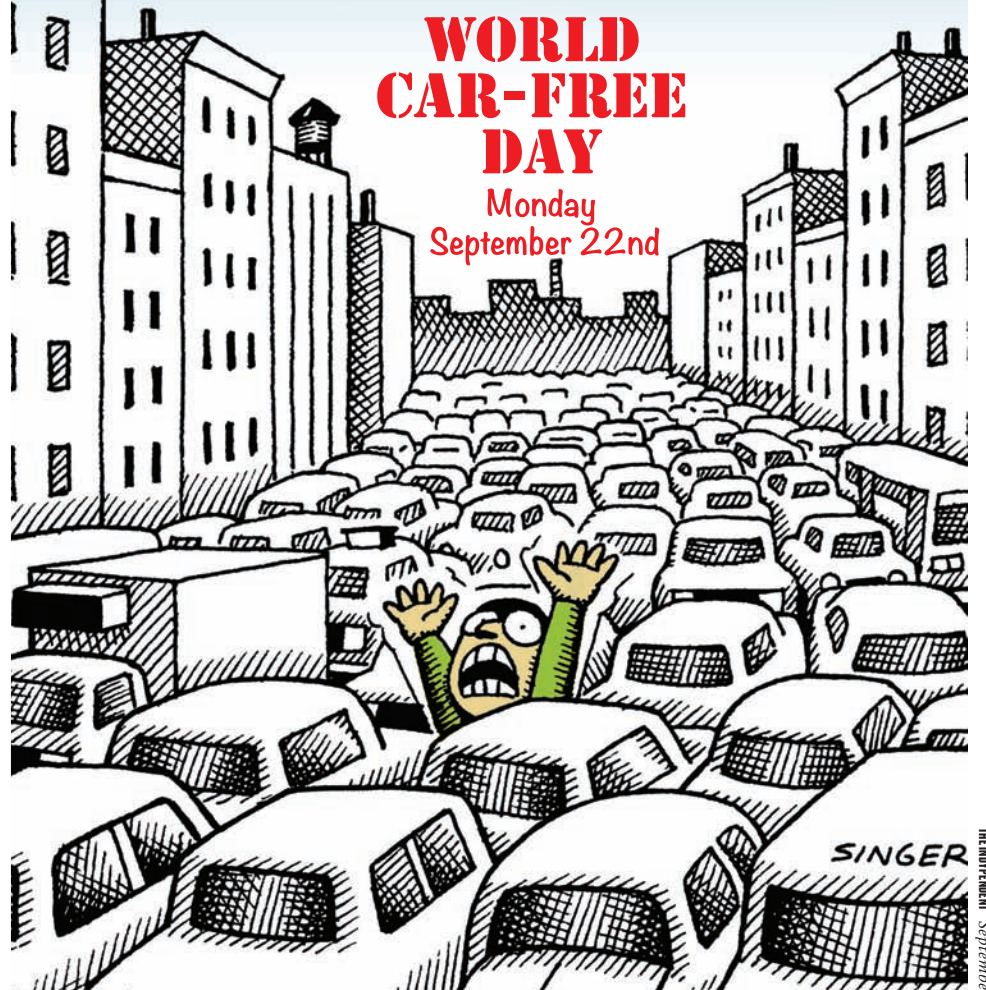
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OCCUPY & THE CLIMATE MARCH

BY PATRICK ROBBINS

Climate change protests have traditionally been top-down affairs organized around a single demand such as stopping the Keystone XL pipeline or negotiating a better treaty at the United Nations. Big NGOs and unions have played an important role in preparations for the People's Climate March as well. However, this time organizers for the climate march are relying much more on a decentralized "network" approach to mobilizing people that draws on the experience of the Occupy movement.

The centerpiece of this effort is the climate march's roughly 100 autonomous working groups (or "hubs," as they are called) that are self-organizing around visions of climate justice that reflect the priorities of their members.

The various hubs encompass a wide array of constituencies. Some hubs, like "Communications" and "Videographers," will serve a particular function at the march. Others focus on environmental issues such as fracking and nuclear power, and still others on possible solutions — "Clean and Green Business," for example. The largest number of hubs are based on local, regional or state geography (including one hub for each of the five boroughs) or identity: women, elders, immigrants, vegans, youth, scientists and LGBTQ and indigenous people, among

others.

Some of the hubs, such as the labor and faith blocs, have been part of the organizing from very early on, while others received a boost after a large organizing meeting at the New School on July 1. Many of these hubs are currently focusing their efforts on how to build a meaningful and memorable presence at the march itself — the fracking hub, for instance, has been meeting, hosting conference calls and holding art builds with the intention of conveying fracking's threat to the climate during the march itself. In doing so, however, alliances are being built and networks are being established for organizing together around longer-term goals.

BIG TENT ORGANIZING

Like Occupy Wall Street, the People's Climate March has refused to issue a unified set of demands. It has, instead, favored "big tent" organizing. And like OWS, which took on the 1 percent's power over the political process, this march is tackling an issue that many know is a serious problem but that still remains outside mainstream discourse.

Given this, it makes sense that similar tactics would be adopted in both messaging and structure. Like OWS, the march's greatest success may ultimately be both its

impact on the larger conversation and the continuing activities of its constituent parts — just as many Occupy-inspired groups did important work after the Zuccotti Park encampment was destroyed by the NYPD (see related article on page 8).

However, the OWS analogy goes only so far. Unlike Occupy, this march was initiated by large NGOs such as Avaaz and 350.org. There are great disparities in money, influence and media access among the various groups working on the climate march. For this event to be a foundation for a new kind of movement, larger organizations will need to continue providing support to the grassroots groups that are giving so much of their time and energy to ensuring the march's success.

This means supporting the work of environmental justice groups like The Point in the Bronx and UPROSE in Brooklyn and taking local infrastructure campaigns — such as the fight against Port Ambrose, the proposed liquefied natural gas terminal that could be built off the shore of Long Island — seriously. It also requires understanding

that the climate movement must support larger struggles for social justice and understanding that the climate crisis is a crisis of capitalism.

One of Occupy's greatest lessons was that organizers should not fear a radical critique. Radicalism facilitates a systemic analysis, and this larger analysis actually widens the constituency you are building as more and more people see their concerns voiced. It appears the climate justice movement is learning this lesson. But as significant as the march is, it's what we do after it's over that matters the most.

Patrick Robbins is a member of the People's Climate March host committee and an activist with Sane Energy Project (saneenergyproject.org).

To learn more about the hubs organizing for the People's Climate March, see peoplesclimate.org/organizing.



BETH WHITNEY

TREE OF LIFE

Continued from page 5

As the theme of the march tells us: It takes roots to weather the storm.

One by one, marchers tie their ribbons to the tree, then search through the thousands of others, each inscribed with a message, and the ritual of loss and recommitment begins.

This massive "tree of life" is being built by Brooklyn-based artist Swoon and her cadre of artist-engineers. It's the same tree — just re-worked for the outdoors and public ritual — that stood at the center of Swoon's celebrated show at the Brooklyn Museum, "Submerged Motherlands," which flooded the museum with beautiful wreckage, lifelike forms and painted characters inspired by the artist's own experience of Hurricane Sandy and beyond.

The tied-on ribbons will become the tree's roots and leaves, an apt symbol of how we are bound up with the Earth; how we are both the root cause of climate chaos and together have the power to change it; how we are the ancestors and the future generations; and how, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said so eloquently, "We are all tied together in a single garment of destiny." Together, these collective commitments will weave a giant tapestry among all of us for a healthy and sustainable planet.

According to Betsy Richards, an advisor to the project since its birth-moment and a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the ribbons will "compose a kind of 'people's treaty,' inspired in part by Northeastern Native American quahog and whelk shell wampum belts that signify the mutual exchange of trust that takes place when commitments are made between peoples."

This treaty-making doesn't end on 11th Avenue. Golan and Boyd hope to inspire activists in Lima and Paris, the

sites of the next major U.N. summits on climate change, to organize Climate Ribbon and Tree of Life projects in their cities. They're also assembling an instruction kit so the ritual could easily become a neighborhood activity around a living tree or an exercise taken up by religious congregations, union halls, classrooms and beyond. One of the early enthusiasts, the Reverend Juan Carlos Ruiz, a "community catalyst" at St. Jacobi Church in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, believes that rituals like the Climate Ribbon "have a power, beyond words, to connect us through our grieving into new ways of being and relating to one another and the world."

Rae Abileah is a social change strategist and a co-organizer of the Climate Ribbon project. Find out how to submit your own climate ribbon and join the ritual at theclimateribbon.com.

GERMANY

Continued from previous page

from within political institutions and newly emergent entrepreneurs. The Renewable Energies Act (EEG) of 2000, passed by a cross-party coalition of members of parliament, promised everybody who put up RE installations that the electricity they pro-

duced would be taken off their hands at a price that was guaranteed for a period of 20 years. This system of "feed-in tariffs" at once suspended the market and made it profitable for anyone to invest in renewables, whatever their commitment to the ecological cause.

At this point, due to the increasingly determined opposition of the big energy companies and their allies in government,

the *Energiewende* stands at a crossroads, and the ambitious 2050 targets may not be reached. But the unusually broad-based transformative coalition that has fought for and achieved the major victories described above still holds. Without the protests of the anti-nuclear movement, there would never have been the nuclear phase-out; and without the work of those who wrote the EEG in parliament, we would never have

produced enough renewables for the transition. Transformative politics, then, requires broad coalitions, broader than the many critics of "electoralism" on the one hand, and "wild-eyed movement radicalism" on the other, sometimes care to acknowledge.

Tadzio Mueller is a political scientist and research fellow in the Berlin office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

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NAOMI KLEIN BREAKS A TABOO

INTERVIEW BY JOHN TARLETON

The fact that global warming is man-made and poses a grave threat to our future is widely accepted by progressives. Yet, the most commonly proposed solutions emphasize either personal responsibility for a global emergency (buy energy-efficient light bulbs, purchase a Prius), or rely on market-based schemes like cap-and-trade. These responses are not only inadequate, says best-selling author Naomi Klein, but represent a lost opportunity to confront climate change's root cause: capitalism.

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, Klein's much-anticipated new book, is both surprisingly hopeful and deeply personal as she deftly weaves in her story of struggling to conceive her first child while researching the potential collapse of the natural world. In the book, Klein challenges everyone who cares about climate change to strive for a seemingly impossible redistribution of political and economic power. This, she argues, is both necessary and offers the prospect of living in a more just and humane society than the one we know today.

JOHN TARLETON: When it comes to the climate crisis, capitalism is often the elephant in the room that goes unacknowledged. Yet you zero in on it, starting with the title of your book. Why?

NAOMI KLEIN: I put the connection between capitalism and climate change up front because the fact that the life support systems of the planet are being destabilized is telling us that there is something fundamentally wrong with our economic system. What our economy needs to function in a capitalist system is continuous growth and continuous depletion of resources, including finite resources. What our planet needs in order to avoid catastrophic warming and other dangerous tipping points is for humans to contract our use of material resources.

The science of climate change has made this fundamental conflict blindingly obvious. By putting that conflict up front, it breaks a taboo. And sometimes when you break a taboo, there's sort of a relief in just saying it. And that's what I've found so far: This is something that people know. And it's giving permission to just name it. It's a good starting point, so now we can have a real discussion.

Why has that taboo of talking about capitalism and climate change in the same breath become so entrenched here in the United States?

I think it's primarily because capitalism is a religion in the United States. But also because the Left in the United States is extremely Keynesian, though Keynes himself questioned economic growth. But the translation of Keynesian thought we are seeing in this historical moment is a debate about the distribution of the spoils of economic growth. It's not about some of the core facts about blanket economic growth.

In the book I talk about selective de-growth. There are schools of thought on the Left that dismiss all forms of growth. What I'm talking about is managing the economy. There are parts of our economy that we want to expand that have a minimal environmental impact, such as the caregiving professions, education, the arts. Expanding those sectors creates jobs, well-being and more equal societies. At the same time we have to shrink the growth-for-growth's-sake parts of our economy, including the financial sector, which plays a large role in feeding consumption.

You say that the Left needs its own project for addressing climate change in a systematic and transformative manner that breaks with free-market orthodoxy. What would that look like?

The industrialized nations have to start cutting their emissions by about 8 to 10 percent per year, which is incom-

patible with capitalism. You cannot reconcile that level of emission reduction with an economic system that needs continual growth. The only time we have seen emissions reductions on that level was during the Great Depression of the 1930s. How we transition from our current status quo sets the parameters for how we want to organize society. A healthy transition would entail huge investments in the public sphere, public transit, housing, all kinds of infrastructure and services in order to prepare for the extreme weather that's already locked in and also to lower our emissions.

Progressives should seize the reins of this project because it's an opportunity to make this transition equitable and to have a better economy on the other side. You could also allow your economy to crash and burn, which is a terrible idea and would hurt enormous numbers of people.

The latter option would make a good starting point for a Hollywood movie.

It's striking to me that when we envision the future it's just a more brutally cleaved world between haves and have-nots than the one we have now. This is so much a part of our culture that we think all we're capable of doing is becoming like the societies portrayed in *Snowpiercer*, *Elysium* or *The Hunger Games*. It's actually not controversial to say this is where we are headed. The question is, can we imagine another way of responding to crisis other than one of deepening inequality, brutal disaster capitalism and mangled techno-fixes, because that seems to be where people agree we're headed.

The alternative project you have in mind envisions a large role for the state. Yet, many on the Left have deep qualms about holding power of any kind, much less "seizing the reins," as you say, to affect systemic changes.

There has been a backlash in our generation of leftists against the centralized state socialism of previous generations. This is for obvious and understandable reasons. Since the 2008 economic crash, I see more appetite among the younger generation to engage with policy and to try to change power. You see it with the *Indignados* movement in Spain forming its own party and running in elections, in Iceland post-crisis, with outsiders going inside on their own terms. You see it at the municipal level with the minimum wage in Seattle.

Where the pendulum swung really hard against any sort of engagement with formal politics, I see it swinging back where it's like, "No, we're not going to replicate those centralized structures but things are too urgent and too dire to ignore institutions of various kinds, including lawmaking. But we're going to try to change it and build our belief in decentralization into the way we engage."

Has this approach made a significant impact anywhere on energy and climate-related policies?

A really great example is the energy transformation that has been going on in Germany. Thirty percent of the electricity produced there is now coming from renewable resources, mostly wind and solar and mostly through decentralized, community-controlled ventures of various kinds, including hundreds of energy co-ops. You also have large cities like Munich voting to reverse their electricity privatizations and become part of this energy revolution (see related article on page 17).

What's interesting about Germany is it really shows how you need strong policy to make a transition like that happen. It's not about, "Hey, let's start an energy co-op." No. That kind of fetish for very small-scale initiatives won't get us where we need to go. What Germany has is a bold national policy. That's how you get to 30 percent renewable electricity in such a short time, and they may very well get to 50 to 60 percent by 2030. It also shows you can design smart policy to systematically decentralize.

What got you started on this book? Was there a specific moment when you realized you wanted to write a book on climate change?

I decided that I was going to immerse myself in this subject in 2009 when I was covering a U.N. antiracism conference in Geneva. An earlier conference held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001 saw a growing debate about whether the United States and Europe should pay reparations to African nations for the harm done by the slave trade and colonialism. The issue vanished from public discussion after 9/11 and it was clear by 2009 how much ground had been lost.

At that 2009 conference I met Angélica Navarro, a trade negotiator from Bolivia who was doing some really interesting work about climate and reparations and how to really push the concept of climate debt within the U.N. climate negotiations. And I had a moment in which I realized that the science is so clear on the historical responsibility for climate change that it could be used as a tool for realizing justice goals for which social movements had been fighting for a very long time.

Your book strikes a hopeful note on what can be a grim topic.

I find it really hard to write when I feel hopeless. It took me five years to write this book in part because initially I didn't feel so hopeful. Then, there really started to be an explosion of resistance to extractive projects such as fracking and oil pipelines and coal export terminals. It's being done in a truly global and networked manner that reminds me of the early days of the so-called anti-globalization movement.

That shift made me really excited that there is a growing movement and that the book can be part of that movement. I feel like we're on the verge of a coming together of economic justice movements and a new sort of kick-ass grassroots anti-extractivism movement. When people are fighting fracking or they're fighting a big pipeline, generally they're not driven by concerns about climate, they're driven by a love of place. Often the protection of water is the primary motivation, as well as concerns about the health of their kids. But climate change definitely adds another layer of urgency to keeping carbon in the ground and not putting it into the atmosphere.

You became a parent for the first time a couple of years ago. How did that experience affect the way you see climate change? Did the prospect of dire climate change taking effect in this century cause you to be hesitant about becoming a parent?

I was 38 when I decided I wanted to have kids and to start trying. That's pretty late. I would have this conversation with my husband where I'd say that the more I read about climate change, the more I felt that having a child was condemning this kid to a Mad Maxian future of fighting with their friends for food and water. This was the sort of dystopic future that I was imagining. And I was having trouble imagining anything else.

I think that seeing some of these signs of hope were part of the process of me deciding to become a parent: being able to imagine other futures than the one playing on repeat at the moment. But I'm really wary of this sort of, "I care more about the future because I have a baby" thing. As somebody who didn't have kids for a long time and had trouble getting pregnant, I really hated when people did that, because it felt really exclusionary to me. I understand, as a parent, why people say that, because when you hear that we'll be at x degrees warmer by 2050, you can't help but do these mental calculations of, "Okay, how old will he be then?" But I cared



LYNNE FOSTER

about the future before my son Toma was born just as some of the most caring people that I know don't have kids. So I want to be careful about that.

There's a tremendous organizing effort taking place here in New York for the People's Climate March. Why do you think this particular protest matters, and what are the chances it will have an enduring impact?

Climate change has gone from being an issue that will affect our grandchildren to a right-now issue. The difference over the past few years is that the climate movement has jettisoned its astronaut's "eye in the sky" view of a shimmering blue-and-white dot set against the darkness of space in which no people are visible, and it has come down to earth.

It's connecting with people who are driven by basic justice demands such as clean air for their kids and water they can drink. The People's Climate March will be much more diverse and it's going to be angrier than previous climate protests. That anger is a really important and powerful tool. So I think we're going to see a different kind of climate movement. It's already there. I think Seattle 1999 was a coming-out party for the global justice movement, and I think this will be a coming-out party of sorts for a new climate movement.

There have been other moments over the

past two decades, from the Rio Earth Summit to Al Gore's movie to Hurricane Sandy, that have seen climate change briefly capture the public imagination only to fade out again.

In the past the climate movement was incredibly elitist. There really was a belief that you did not need a grassroots movement if you had all the celebrities and the billionaires and a former vice president like Al Gore on your side. I think that is what has made the issue so ephemeral. If your strategy is just to get a bunch of celebrities and billionaires on your side, guess what? They change their minds, and they move on to other things. *Vanity Fair* launches their annual green issue and it lasts for two years. Fashions change.

This is the first time climate change has had a grassroots movement behind it in North America. And that's what is going to give it staying power. The whole point is that it has roots now. The problem with the top-down strategy is that it has no roots. And when you don't have roots, you can blow away.

For more, see thischangeseverything.org.

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GREENING OUR DESIRES

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“As we got further away, the Earth diminished in size,” said astronaut James Irwin. “Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine...Seeing this has to change a man.” Standing on the moon, Apollo mission astronauts sometimes wept, seeing our planet as a small blue dot easily blotted out by a thumb. After landing, they spoke of planet Earth as a tiny pearl of life engulfed by the vastness of space.

Often they repeated that the national borders we killed over could not be seen from that distance. The gods we worshipped, the flags we saluted, the property lines we drew all blurred into meaninglessness. And yet few, if any, of the astronauts tried to replace those totems with a new one. Instead all that false authority was eclipsed by the feeling of aloneness, a sense of the smallness of our lives against the cosmic darkness and the impression that we have nothing but each other in this universe.

It’s been decades since astronauts stood on the moon, and now we are being forced to see from the ground what they saw in space. Climate change is shrinking our measure of the planet as the carbon spew of a few nations causes the tides to rise for dozens of others. We are interconnected against our will. Faced with a question of survival, we have only one answer: a new global humanism.

Paradoxically, one obstacle to that consciousness is the environmental movement itself. Looking to the horizon, it sees disasters. It extrapolates from today’s fossil fuel burning civilization the end times, which is why apocalyptic imagery has become its language. But what if the movement escaped its orbit of panic and saw, from a great distance, a sustainable human society? What vision of tomorrow could it offer, beyond solar panels and windmills? We need revolutionaries to present a new idea of Earth, a tiny pearl of life that we wear in solidarity.

APOCALYPSE NOW

Standing on a Long Island Railroad platform, I stared at a billboard that showed a dripping faucet over a plea in large font to conserve water. “You know, at some point,” a woman standing near me said, “they won’t be asking us,

THE NEW WORLD WE WANT IS ONE THAT FREES THE SPIRIT. AND THAT’S WHY WE HAVE TO SWITCH FROM FORECASTING APOCALYPSE TO IMAGINING UTOPIA.

they’ll be ordering us.”

Use less water, ride a bike, turn off the lights, carpool, recycle, eat less meat — we are told every day that climate change heralds a world of scarcity. The images we have of the future are ones of farmland cracking under the blazing sun, crowded cities teeming with the poor and whole towns buried by endless rain or giant floods or dust storms. The future is an apocalyptic world held together by a totalitarian state that rations life to the masses.

This vision emanates from every level of society. In the ruling class, peer-reviewed scientific pronouncements of doom circulate. The alarming Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports and the U.S. National Climate Assessment are just two of the innumerable studies pointing to a dead world. When talking of the wildfires that incinerated 400 square miles in Washington, President Obama said, “A lot of it has to do with drought...and a

lot of that has to do with climate change.”

In mid-brow culture, we’ve been watching cinematic nightmares of the future for decades. In *Soylent Green* (1973), trucks scooped starving people into pens and the food they ate turned out to be recycled corpses. In *Waterworld* (1995), Keven Kostner played an anti-hero who sold dirt on an earth where almost all land had been submerged by rising oceans. And *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) showed with sadistic glee New York’s skyscrapers frozen into giant icicles as climate change wrecked North America. Apocalyptic imagery has saturated our culture and become an ideological background to our politics.

We in the environmental movement are locked within end times imagery, reading the violent weather as warning signs. On the news, we see drought strike California, Hurricane Sandy lash New York City and the planet’s ice shelf break like glass. We see climate refugees emerge from the nightmare future into the present like a film where characters stumble out of the screen into real life.

Burdened with this vision, scientists and activists scream at the masses, who only incrementally accept climate change. A 2014 Gallup poll showed that 39 percent of Americans are “concerned believers” who believe global warming is real and caused by industry. The ranks of “skeptics” who believe it is neither real nor caused by society is 25 percent. In the world, awareness is highest in South America, Europe and Asia but the understanding that it’s man-made and a true threat plummets dramatically in Russia, the Middle East and Africa.

And this is the tragic scene. We see a disaster coming that many don’t believe in or don’t care about. And we are blind to the consequences of our discourse of catastrophe, which falls on the deaf ears of listeners who either don’t “feel” climate change or do but not as a threat. Indeed, the rhetoric has the opposite effect of what is intended: Faced with a future of scarcity, one’s instinct is to cling to

what is known. Often that means the very political and economic system creating the disaster.

We aren’t saying a terrifying truth. Our civilization is dying and nothing can stop it, but if it lingers, the earth will die too and with it, the very possibility of life. Our historical role is to kill off capitalism and create a nearly weightless civilization that lies gently on the land. But the new world we want is one that frees the spirit. And that’s why we have to switch from forecasting apocalypse to imagining utopia.

THE GIVING TREE

Faced with a ruined earth, how can we think of utopia? If we are told the future is one of scarcity, how do we create abundance? The global population is at 7.2 billion now and projected by the U.N. to rise to nearly 10 billion by 2050. And with this swelling of people, we long ago

surpassed the earth’s biocapacity, its ability to reproduce arable land, fresh water, fish and animal stocks. We consume an earth and a half’s worth of resources and are gobbling up more because nothing tastes better than extinction.

The first piece of the utopian vision to put in place is the material base. The technology has and does exist for a weightless human civilization. A 2008 Worldwatch Institute report showed that the sun-baked Southwest United States, if filled with solar arrays, could churn out seven times more electricity than all other sources combined. Solar heaters can boil half the world’s hot water while spinning wind turbines can generate 20 percent of the globe’s electricity, and geothermal heat and ocean tides could generate even more voltage.

The Scrooge McDuck-like pools of wealth of the 1 percent can pay for it many times over. We can pave roads between villages and cities, install solar panels and illuminate the homes of the poor. And that means they’ll be connected via the Internet to the great storehouses of knowledge as well as popular culture. We can erect wind turbines on blustery hills and create energy for the electric cars in the streets. And eat less meat, lowering the amount of fuel used to produce all those goddamn burgers and make a healthy, high-calorie diet available to everyone. We can build hospitals in every corner of the world and provide health care, specifically free contraception, so that women can choose how many children to have.

If we revolt against the 1 percent, with nonviolent protest as well as strategic property destruction, we can create a world of abundance. But wasn’t this always possible? The earth’s biocapacity and, accordingly, global population growth have finite limits, but they are elastic depending on the political economy. Since the Agricultural Revolution, when the first city gave rise to the first ruling class, humanity has recreated a vertical society with a vicious hierarchy, where the wealthy few lord over masses living in artificial scarcity.

Political economy has at least two sides. One is the production, distribution and consumption of material commodities, the physical stuff on store shelves; the other is the immaterial commodity of status. Civilization is an eternal pyramid in which the top spots are rare and expensive, visible and honored. At the base, innumerable people live and die hard, anonymous lives. They suffer from status scarcity.

It’s why even with the massive productive powers of a





JULIA WOLFF/FICKR

post-industrial society we still see the poor dying from hunger, dying from dirty water, dying from neglect. This has been the arc of civilization since the ancient Mesopotamian city of Uruk. Economist Thomas Picketty, in his book *Capital in the 21st Century*, mapped how income equality is built into capitalism and grows into a class chasm during peacetime. A century and a half before him, Karl Marx showed human alienation to be the pivot on which the economy turns.

Today the giant wheel of capital is grinding not just our souls but the earth itself. The only way to avoid “brown economy” end times, in which the ruling elites buy zones safe from nature’s collapse as the rest of us die, is to mobilize a popular movement that speaks to more than people’s fear. If a Green Revolution is to happen, we have to switch from apocalyptic imagery to utopian prophecy, to create a cultural “wilding” that opens horizontal spaces into which people can enter and join the carnival.

THE WILDING

During the height of the Occupy movement, I was on the subway when two teens of color came in giggling. They were frisky, slapping each other’s butts. She said, “What are you going to occupy tonight?” He smiled, “I’m going to occupy that ass.” I hid my laugh and felt happy, knowing the movement was being taken up by working-class New Yorkers as the language of their desires.

A Green Revolution must do the same; it must be about more than saving the planet, more than preserving the conditions of life on earth. It must be an ideological container for the conditions of human freedom. Saving nature has to become a metaphor for saving the natural parts of ourselves.

“Greening” the body must continue the work of older liberation movements. Black

Power freed kinky hair into afros and Black desire for self-determination, Surrealism freed the unconscious into art, the Waves of Feminism freed women’s bodies and subjectivities, the Gay Liberation Movement freed gays and lesbians from the closet into Pride Parades. Like these forbears, the Green Revolution must envision a renewable energy infrastructure that lowers the cost of daily life in order to create free time for people to explore their natural creativity.

A weightless civilization means not just reducing the physical weight of resource extraction but the psychological weight of hierarchy. A cultural “wilding” entails a Green global infrastructure that is the base for people’s freedom to explore, love and create, to question and begin again. It spells out a post-capitalist world where the necessities of life are provided for and earning money is replaced with open time. In the New Commons, we can heal ourselves from the nightmare of history by howling together, dancing together and weeping together for the many who died from the artificial scarcity of the vertical world.

The end of the elitist phase of the environmental movement begins with the end of its appeal to billionaires and celebrities and political elites with the imagery of apocalypse. Implicit in that appeal is that we need those in power to save us. The start of the populist phase is invoking the wilding, the utopian tomorrow where the masses are freed and the natural parts of our selves can paint time the color of our passions.

Nicholas Powers is the author of The Ground Below Zero: 9/11 to Burning Man, New Orleans to Darfur, Haiti to Occupy Wall Street (UpSet Press, 2013).



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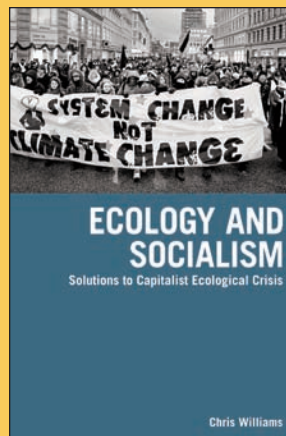
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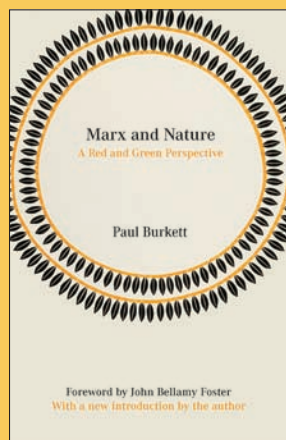


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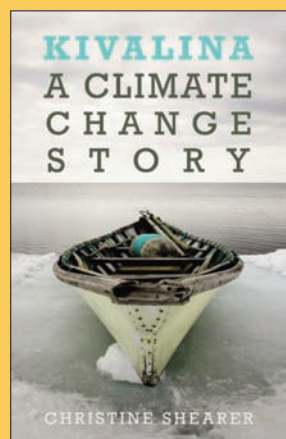


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A Red and Green Perspective
Paul Burkett, Foreword by John Bellamy Foster, \$20

While recognizing that production is structured by historically developed relations, Marx insists that production as a material process is shaped by natural conditions. Paul Burkett shows that Marx’s

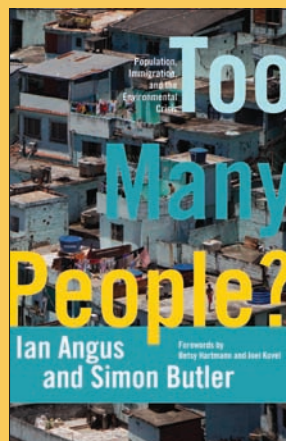
overriding concern with human emancipation leads him to approach nature from the standpoint of materialist history, sociology, and critical political economy.



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A Climate Change Story
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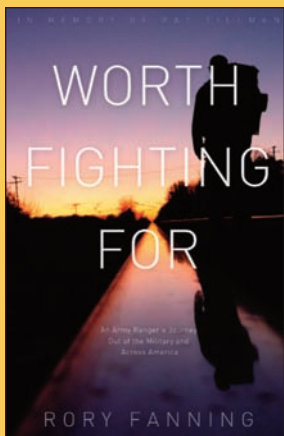
“This story is a tragedy, and not just because of what’s happening to the people of Kivalina. It’s a tragedy because it’s unnecessary, the product, as the author shows, of calculation, deception, manipulation, and greed in some of the biggest and richest companies on earth.”
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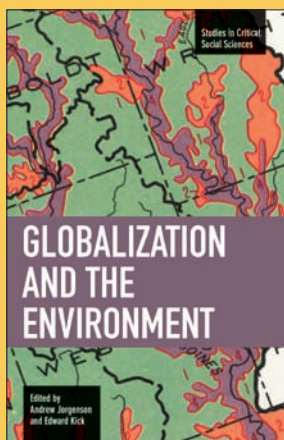


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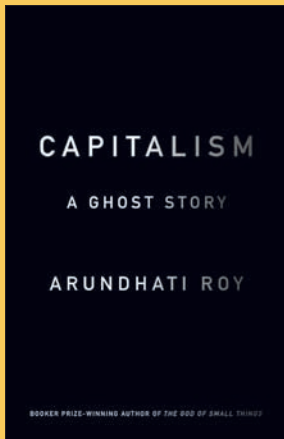


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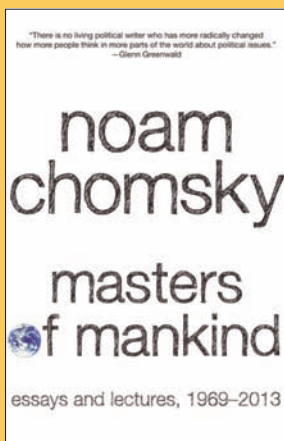


Capitalism

A Ghost Story
Arundhati Roy, \$14.95

From the poisoned rivers, barren wells, and clear-cut forests, to the hundreds of thousands of farmers who have committed suicide to escape punishing debt, to the hundreds of millions of people who live on less than two dollars a day, there are ghosts nearly everywhere you look in

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Masters of Mankind

Essays and Lectures, 1969-2013
Noam Chomsky, 12.95

In this collection of essays, many in book form for the first time, Noam Chomsky exposes the real nature of state power. With unrelenting logic, he holds the arguments of empire up to critical examination and shatters the myths of those who

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COMING SOON:

Ecosocialism

A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe
Michael Löwy, \$15



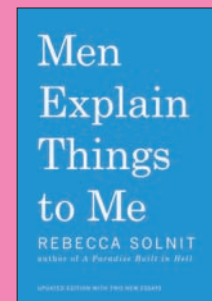
Ecosocialists believe that the prevention of an unprecedented ecological catastrophe and the preservation of a natural environment favorable to human life are incompatible with the expansive and destructive logic of the capitalist system. The present collection of articles explores some of the main ecosocialist proposals and some concrete experiences of struggle, particularly in Latin America.
May 2015

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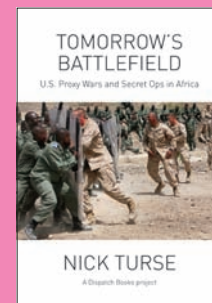
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November 2014

Tomorrow's Battlefield

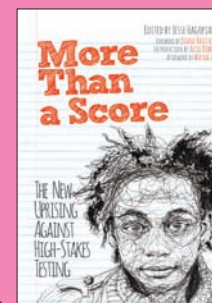
U.S. Proxy Wars and Secret Ops in Africa
Nick Turse, \$12.95



You won’t see segments about it on the nightly news, but the Pentagon is fighting a new shadow war in Africa, helping to destabilize whole countries and preparing the ground for future blowback. Behind closed doors, US officers now claim that “Africa is the battlefield of tomorrow, today.” In *Tomorrow’s Battlefield*, award-winning journalist and bestselling author Nick Turse exposes the shocking true story of the U.S. military’s spreading secret wars in Africa.
May 2015

More Than a Score

The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing
Edited by Jesse Hagopian, \$16



More Than a Score is a collection of essays, poems, speeches, and interviews—accounts of personal courage and trenchant insights—from frontline fighters who are defying the corporate education reformers, often at great personal and professional risk, and fueling a national movement to reclaim and transform public education.
December 2014