

#212: FEBRUARY 2016

THE INDYPENDER

INDY
15
years



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**BY NICHOLAS POWERS, JAMILA REDDY, VERNON ANDREWS,
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READER'S VOICE

#211: DECEMBER 2015

THE INDYPENDENT

INDY 15

THE INDY NEEDS YOUR HELP! SEE P2 & BACK PAGE FOR DETAIL

**TELLING THE IMMIGRANT STORY**

This is the story we can't stop telling and retelling. The headline ("Biting the Hands That Feed: New York's Immigrant Farmworkers Face Appalling Treatment," December 2015) might have been the same for the past 10 years, but the details go beyond what we all could have imagined at the start. Please don't be that guy still talking about "INS," thinking you already know the story.

— GONZALO MARTINEZ DE VEDIA

Great article by Leanne Tory-Murphy about border patrol terrorizing farmworker and immigrant communities within 100 miles of the New York-Canada border. It isn't a small problem. It's affecting thousands of people who won't leave their houses or the farm in fear that they'll be picked up. Children are losing parents. We are dealing with a relatively new form of oppression and control that needs to be combated.

— NATHAN BERGER

I apologize for my fellow unenlightened New Yorkers. We here in Wayne County and the Finger Lakes area appreciate you and all the people who come here and pick our apples, milk our cows and trim our trees.

— ANTJE DIRKSEN-POST

WAR ON TERROR SOLVED

If the Saudis would get rid of Wahhabism and the world would get off oil and coal, problems solved! ("In the War on Terror, Nothing Succeeds Like Failure," December 2015)

— DANIEL ZIERVOGEL

RANK ANTI-COMMUNISM

The Indydependent's review of "The Power of Pictures: Early Soviet Photography, Early Soviet Film" at the Jewish Museum ("Soviet Photo Surprises," December 2015) is marred by rank anti-Communism. Interestingly, the wall text, captions and the gorgeous catalogue for the show do not pick up the reviewer's take that these photos were intended to diminish the individual in order to elevate the state. The exhibition shows that Soviet photography had three major goals: to encourage its citizens' participation in the industrialization of the economy, document their larger social existence

and prepare the nation for the impending war with the Axis powers. The photography projects optimism that life in the Soviet Union was getting better, and would continue to do so. Why are these disreputable/condemnable goals for photography and film in an impoverished socialist society encircled by hostile powers?

These early Soviet photos and films bring the aesthetics of high art and culture to millions of recently illiterate and downtrodden people. In some ways, they are not greatly different from the photos, posters and films produced by Farm Security Administration, the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Arts Project of the New Deal, all of which were influenced by Soviet photography and film. Neither Joseph Stalin's ruthlessness nor Franklin Delano Roosevelt's political dependence on a segregated South and big-city machines obviate the economic, social and cultural benefits their administration brought to the producing classes of the two allies that prevented the catastrophe of fascist triumph.

— GERALD MEYER

EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF WHITENESS

As a longtime reader of Ted Allen and David Roediger and acquaintance of both, I think this ("Exploring the Future of Whiteness," December 2015) is the most nuanced commentary on this whole topic I have seen. I am not surprised that it comes from a person uniquely situated as someone who is seen as white unless she tells people otherwise. We will get some of the same more-nuanced commentary on gender, I believe, from trans folks and others nearer the center of the gender spectrum as time goes on, and I look forward to it too.

— JOE BERRY

SECRET RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

One of the reasons that print newspapers like the Indy survive and prosper ("And the New 'New Media' Is ... Print?," December 2015) is the unrelenting hard work and long hours put in by many people, including volunteers, who make sure each issue is delivered in all five boroughs. All this, not to mention the well-written articles and graphics. A labor of love all us readers are grateful for.

— TARAK KAUFF

WINTER FUND DRIVE ALERT

THANK YOU TO READERS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED DURING OUR ANNUAL WINTER FUND DRIVE. WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE HAVE RAISED MORE THAN \$17,000 SO FAR. HOWEVER, WE ARE STILL SHORT OF OUR GOAL OF \$30,000. IT'S CRUCIAL WE REACH THIS GOAL. IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE SO ALREADY, PLEASE CONSIDER GIVING TODAY. INDYPENDENT.ORG/DONATE. THE FUND DRIVE ENDS ON FEB. 20.

THRU AUG 7

Various times • \$16/\$12 for students and seniors/free under 19
EXHIBITION: AGITPROP!
 A combination of “agitation” and “propaganda,” the “Agitprop!” exhibition traces the long relationship between art and social activism, featuring historical social movements and contemporary efforts by artists engaged across mediums as diverse as photography, film, prints, banners, street actions, songs, digital files and web platforms. Brooklyn Museum of Art 200 Eastern Pkwy 718-638-5000 • brooklynmuseum.org

ONGOING

Various times • Free
SIGN UP FOR A NYC MUNICIPAL ID!
 The NYC Municipal Identification Card — which is open to all New Yorkers who are at least 14 years old, regardless of immigration status — remains free for a second straight year. The ID comes with a slew of benefits, including free one-year memberships in more than two dozen cultural entities such as the Bronx Zoo, the Brooklyn Museum and the New York City Ballet. To make a mandatory in-person appointment to receive a card, see the URL below. nyc.gov/idnyc

TUE FEB 2

6:30pm • Free
DISCUSSION: STAGE FOR DEBATE: RESPECTABILITY AND ACTIVISM.
 This inaugural debate at the Schomburg Center will cover issues of Black sociocultural politics, including both respectability and representation in regards to activism and black liberation movements both domestically and internationally. Panelists include Dr. Randall Kennedy, Dr. Brittney Cooper and Mychal Denzel Smith. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture 515 Malcolm X Blvd 917-275-6975 • nypl.org

SUN FEB 7

2pm • Free
SCREENING: THE BLACK PANTHERS: VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION.
 The weekend of February 5–7 is open house weekend at the Apollo Theater. In conjunction with Independent Lens and THIRTEEN, the Apollo Theater will screen Stanley Nelson’s feature-length documentary exploring the Black Panther Party. The screening will

be followed by a panel discussion. RSVP is required and entry is not guaranteed without an email print-out of confirmation. Apollo Theater 253 W 125th St 212-531-5300 • apollotheater.org

WED FEB 10

7pm • Free
BOOK LAUNCH: MURDER UNDER THE BRIDGE: A PALESTINE MYSTERY.
 Kate Jessica Raphael will read from her new murder mystery novel that follows a female Palestinian police detective, a gay Jewish-American peace activist with a camera and lots of attitude and an annoying Israeli police officer as they uncover secrets that point to war crimes and Israel’s thriving underground sex trade. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

FRI FEB 12–SUN FEB 14

Various times • \$25–\$65
NATIONAL CONFERENCE: YDS 16: GENERATION LEFT.
 Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign has gained strong support from young people who increasingly understand that capitalism offers no future for them and that it’s time to take a stand for democratic socialism. To that end, Young Democratic Socialists from around the country will gather for a weekend of exciting speakers, workshops and socializing with fellow young activists. People of all ages are invited. Come and see what all the excitement is about. Mayday Space 176 St Nicholas Ave ydsusa.org

MON FEB 15

7:30 • \$6-\$10-\$15
DISCUSSION: PRISON AND SOCIAL DEATH.
 In a country that incarcerates more people than any other in the world, what are the long-term cumulative impacts on prisoners and their families of a system of punishment that doesn’t end when an incarcerated person finishes their term? Joshua M. Price, author of *Prison and Social Death* will discuss with Silvia Federici. Brooklyn Commons 388 Atlantic Ave marxisted.org

TUE FEB 16

7pm • Free
DISCUSSION: ADLER READING SEMINAR.

Felix Adler was a social reformer who founded the Ethical Culture Movement, an ideology based on the idea of living meaningful and fulfilling lives to better the world. Adler had a long career as a lecturer and writer, and remained a rector at the Ethical Culture School until his death. This discussion will include the works of Adler and others whose work define Ethical culture and humanist philosophy. New York Society for Ethical Culture 2 West 64th St 212-874-5210 • nysec.org

TUE FEB 16

7pm • Free
READING & DISCUSSION: THIS IS AN UPRISING.
 Authors Mark and Paul Engler will discuss their book, *This Is an Uprising*. The authors examine the modern forms of nonviolent protest and its transformative impact on contemporary issues such as climate change, immigration and more. BookCourt 163 Court St 718-875-3677 • bookcourt.com

WED FEB 17

2pm • Free
READING: THE LIFE, LOVE AND LEGACY OF AUDRE LORDE.
 Audre Lorde, feminist poet, author, and activist, commissioned Dr. Gloria Joseph to write her biography months before her death. The result, *The Wind is the Spirit*, tells the story of Lorde through anthology and biographical contributions from authors and activists. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture 515 Malcolm X Blvd 917-275-6975 nypl.org

THUR FEB 18

6:30pm–12am • Free
FORUM: SHUT DOWN INDIAN POINT.
 The Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant Facility is located 25 miles north of New York City, in Buchanan, New York. The original licenses for the remaining two reactors have expired, but the plant is still in operation. Peace Action of Staten Island and the grassroots organization Shut Down Indian Point Now! will sponsor this forum strategizing how to close the plant once and for all. Peace Action New York State Unitarian Church of Staten Island 312 Fillmore St 646-723-1749 • panys.org

WED FEB 24

7pm • Free
EVENT: DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC RADIO & PODCASTING.
 As part of their ongoing effort to amplify the voices of the Brooklyn, BRIC will host a panel of media professionals to discuss the topic of diversity in public radio and podcasting. BRIC House Stoop 647 Fulton St 718-683-5600 • bricartsmedia.org

THURS FEB 25

7pm Free
BOOK LAUNCH: THE FUTURE OF WHITENESS.
 CUNY philosophy professor Linda Martín Alcoff will discuss her new book on how changing demographics are having a profound impact on the racial identity of white, European Americans in the United States. Change is on the horizon, and the most important battleground is among white people themselves. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

SUN FEB 28

2pm • Sliding scale \$6/\$10/\$15
DISCUSSION: HILLARY CLINTON: BORN-AGAIN PROGRESSIVE OR ARCHITECT OF EMPIRE?
 Doug Henwood, author of *My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency*, will discuss the Democratic presidential candidate’s attempt to recast herself as a born-again progressive and how that compares to her long history of hawkishness and service to money and imperial power. The Brooklyn Commons 388 Atlantic Ave marxedproject.com

SAT MAR 5

8pm • \$18 suggested
PERFORMANCE: THE PEACE POETS AND FILTHY ROTTEN SYSTEM.
 The Peace Poets and Filthy Rotten System will raise your consciousness and energize your spirits with an evening of music. Peoples’ Voice Cafe 40 E 35th St peoplesvoicecafe.org



CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH: Gloria Joseph will discuss her biography of Audre Lorde (pictured above), the self-described black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet February 17 at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

ON TARGET: Author and journalist Doug Henwood looks at Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign Feb. 28 at the Brooklyn Commons.

THE Aronson Awards

Social Justice Journalism and Cartooning with Conscience

Call for Submissions

Since 1990, the Aronson Awards have honored original, written reporting that exposes widespread injustices, underlying causes, and possible reforms. This includes exposing discrimination based on race, class, gender, religion or sexual orientation; economic exploitation; violations of human rights, civil liberties or free expression; environmental degradation; and brutality to civilians in war.

The award recognizes print journalism in profit and non-profit newspapers, magazines, newsletters and online publications. An award is also given for “Cartooning With a Conscience” to honor social justice graphics demonstrating clear, consistent ethical vision.

Individual reporters, cartoonists and publications are encouraged to submit work.

- Submission deadline:
February 15, 2016

Entry Forms:
brie.hunter.cuny.edu/aronson

Awards Ceremony April 19, 2016
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tamigold@mindspring.com

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CITY LIFE

FEDS CARRY OUT STEALTHY RAIDS AGAINST NYC IMMIGRANTS

USE LITTLE-KNOWN TACTICS TO SKIRT LOCAL LAWS

BY ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

At about 6:30 a.m. on the morning of March 2, Ram Sahadeo* received a phone call from a friend. She sounded shaken. “There are officers here in my house,” she said to him. “They’re searching my place. They have a photograph of someone they want — I swear, it looks just like you.”

“It must be a mistake,” he thought. He spoke with the officer and gave her his address in Ozone Park, Queens. Minutes later, three cars pulled up outside, and immigration agents entered the house and took Sahadeo into custody, in front of his 3- and 5-year-old nephews, his wife Jan and her father. As Jan recalls, they didn’t show an arrest warrant.

“We didn’t know what was going on,” Jan remembers. “It felt like I was in a movie. They almost looked like bounty hunters.”

Seven months later, across the city in Flatbush, Brooklyn, Thomas Emmanuel was getting ready for work on a September morning when he got a phone call. The person on the line said they were an officer and wanted Emmanuel to come downstairs. He returned to the apartment a few minutes later with immigration agents in tow — they were wearing T-shirts marked “police,” his wife Rachelle recalls, and told her that they needed Emmanuel to fill out some paperwork and that he’d be back that afternoon.

Emmanuel kissed their two daughters, then 1 and 3 years old, goodbye before he was arrested. “Later that afternoon, he called and said, ‘They want to deport me,’” Rachelle says.

Sahadeo has been in the United States since he was 12, Emmanuel since he was 8. They are both now in immigration detention, fighting not to be deported to countries they haven’t seen since they were children.

HUNKERING DOWN

After Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detained 121 Central American families in raids carried out in the first days of 2016, immigrant communities across the country hunkered down. People stopped going to work, picking their children up from school and seeking medical services, as concerns about ICE being in their communities — substantiated and not — spread.

New York City officials, meanwhile,

joined in the national outcry against the Obama administration’s targeting of refugee families in raids. “New York City cannot and will not turn its back on our immigrant communities,” City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito said at a January 7 press conference in Corona, Queens. “Please know that we will continue to stand up for all of you.”

But city officials aren’t talking about the other raids ICE has been carrying out in New York City. In the last year, immigration lawyers and advocates have been increasingly hearing about ICE detaining people at their homes, in their neighborhoods and at or near courthouses, homeless shelters and supportive housing.

“The majority of the calls and the cases that we’re seeing are coming from home raids,” said Abraham Paulos, executive director of Families for Freedom, a Manhattan-based organization that fights deportations. Before 2015, Paulos said, between 80 and 90 percent of the organization’s hotline calls were about people being detained through contact with the criminal justice system. “It’s now more home raids than it’s been anything else. I would characterize it as an increase at an alarming rate.”

In early 2015, the city’s third round of detainer laws went into effect, forcing the shuttering of ICE’s office at Rikers and forbidding the New York City Police Department and Department of Corrections from detaining people at ICE’s request and notifying the agency about people’s release dates. The city’s Department of Probation also instituted a policy of noncooperation with ICE.

In a process that’s been under way since the first detainer laws were passed under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, ICE saw more limits placed on its access to potential deportees and continued to adapt. Immigration advocates and lawyers describe a pattern of ICE arriving at homes between 5 and 8 a.m. and using ruses to gain entry. ICE agents may first identify themselves as “police” or indicate that they need help with an investigation, which often gets them in the door. When they make their arrest, in some cases without showing an arrest warrant, they might tell the family that the person they’ve detained will be released the same day.

Advocates are quick to note that these are not the raids of Bush-era immigration enforcement — ICE does not appear to be doing sweeps of New York City buildings or workplaces or making collateral arrests.

But their tactics reveal the limitations of the city’s detainer laws and other “sanctu-

*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of the immigrants in this story and their families.

A Daily Independent
Global News Hour
with Amy Goodman
and Juan González

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ANGELA Y. DAVIS

FREEDOM IS
A CONSTANT
STRUGGLE

FERGUSON, PALESTINE,
AND THE FOUNDATIONS
OF A MOVEMENT

“In this latest text of her magisterial corpus, Angela Davis puts forward her brilliant analyses and resilient witness here and abroad. In a clear and concise manner, she embodies and enacts “intersectionality”—a structural intellectual and political response to the dynamics of violence, white supremacy, patriarchy, state power, capitalist markets, and imperial policies.”

—FROM THE FOREWORD BY CORNEL WEST

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ary city” policies. While the detainer laws disrupted the jail-to-detention-center pipeline, they did little to curb the data sharing and surveillance mechanisms that allow ICE to flag and find potential targets. ICE still receives fingerprint information when an arrest happens, has access to the DMV database and court hearing schedules, talks to people’s neighbors, school personnel and postal workers, and more.

“It’s very disruptive and scary,” said Nyasa Hickey, an immigration attorney at Brooklyn Defender Services. “Unfortunately stopping ICE transfers and some information sharing is just not sufficient to really protect our communities and keep the families of New York City safe.”

AN ANGUISHED FAMILY

Sahadeo, 36, is now in immigration detention in upstate New York. He is from Guyana, and at the time of his arrest, he was in the process of renewing his green card.

“I feel helpless,” Jan said. It had been ten months since her husband had been home, and she was in tears. “I miss him. We’re a family, he’d do anything in the world for me.”

Sahadeo is a sewer line mechanic and has worked, ironically, on the sewers at 26 Federal Plaza, where ICE has its New York field office. More than that, as Jan recounts, he provides financial support and picks up medications for his elderly parents, shovels snow for his neighbors and is a loving uncle to his nieces and nephews.

Since his arrest, Jan, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Trinidad, has had to give up the lease on the couple’s small business storefront. It had long been her dream to open up a designer print shop, but she’s not able to make the rent by herself.

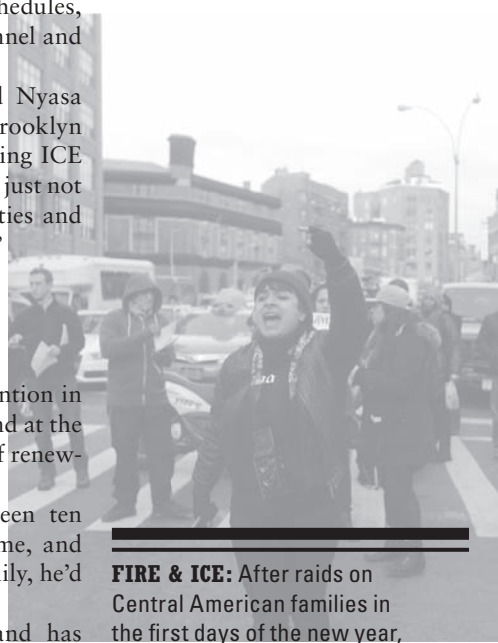
Emmanuel, meanwhile, is in detention in New Jersey. He is a green card holder from Haiti and makes his living as a driver. He and Rachelle are also the parents of two young daughters.

“The number one focus in his life is his children,” Rachelle said. “My daughter comes to me and asks, ‘When will daddy be home?’ It’s torturous for my kids to not have their father here.”

In the five months that Emmanuel has been in custody, Rachelle became a de facto single mother. She was forced to pull her eldest daughter, now 4, out of school because she could no longer afford it. Losing her husband’s income while picking up the costs of legal, commissary and prison telephone fees, she also fell behind on rent for their Brooklyn apartment.

In the eyes of the immigration system, few of these details matter. What is important is that both men have criminal convictions that qualify them as enforcement priorities for the Depart-

Continued on page 13



FIRE & ICE: After raids on Central American families in the first days of the new year, activists rallied outside the Varick St. immigration court in Lower Manhattan to protest the actions of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the federal agency responsible for the raids. Seven activists linked themselves together with cement-filled sleeves and blocked traffic by lying down on Varick Street before cops eventually cut them out and arrested them.

HAD ENOUGH: A critic of the government raids makes her feelings known at the same demonstration.

ALL PHOTOS ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

CHALK UP A VICTORY (SORT OF)

UNDER PRESSURE, CUOMO OPTS OUT OF HIS OWN STANDARDIZED TESTING PLAN

BY PETER RUGH

Education, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo told lawmakers last year in his annual State of the State address, “is the area, my friends, where I think we need to do the most reform ... This is the year to roll up our sleeves and take on the dramatic challenge that has eluded us for so many years.”

In March the governor introduced and the legislature passed the Education Transformation Act. Under the new law 50 percent of a teacher’s job performance rating was intended to be tied to statewide standardized tests. The tests are based on federal Common Core standards for third through 12th graders implemented by New York in 2013 that link grant money to scores. However, when it came time for the exams last spring, 240,000 students in grades three through eight, or 20 percent of test-eligible New York public school pupils, opted out. By the end of the year Cuomo was singing a different tune.

“Simply put, the education system fails without parental trust,” Cuomo said in this year’s State of the State on January 13, acknowledging the growth of the opt-out movement.

Following the recommendation of a task force the governor charged with reviewing implementation of the Common Core curriculum, Cuomo had already announced in December a four-year moratorium on putting the statewide tests toward teacher evaluations.

“People are fed up,” said Jia Lee, a parent and special education teacher in Manhattan who opted her child out of the test and refused to administer it to her students. “We’ve been able to build a grassroots movement, and it is growing because parents and teachers, and even some administrators, are getting frustrated and angry.”

Teachers and parents have widely complained that emphasizing the tests forces educators to teach to the tests and that the exams are not grade-level appropriate and are biased against students with special education needs and English language learners. One analogy testing opponents frequently use to explain the futility of the high-stakes exams is that of a hospital patient. Instead of treating what’s ailing New York’s public school system — a lack of funding and resources — students are perpetually subjected to tests.

“We already know which schools are struggling,” said Jeanette Deutermann, a leader of the opt-out movement in Long Island. “It’s the same schools year after year; New York City schools, Buffalo schools, inner-city schools that are desperate for money and resources. Why spend all that money on identifying them again and again? Instead let’s take that money and put it into schools that are struggling.”

On top of these criticisms, the tests are simply ineffective measures of student and teacher performance. The six-day exams only cover reading and math, yet the results have been used to evaluate teachers across the academic spectrum.

“I am curious to hear how teachers can improve the scores of kids we don’t teach,” remarked Jake Jacobs, a New York City art teacher whose rating went

from “effective” to “developing” last year based on his students’ math scores.

The test results are measured using complex statistical algorithms, a method known as Value Added Modeling (VAM), that predict how well a student is expected to perform and then penalize teachers whose students fail to meet formulaic projections. A judge with the State Supreme Court in Albany is set to rule over whether to throw out the tests used to evaluate a fourth-grade teacher in Great Neck, New York, who was rated effective in 2013-2014 and ineffective the following year, despite her students’ test scores being virtually the same.

BIG DATA IN THE CLASSROOM

Last March, lawmakers approved Cuomo’s Education Transformation Act. Under the law, student performance measures, i.e. standardized test results, account for 50 percent of teacher evaluations, up from 40 percent. Teachers rated ineffective at least three years in a row could be terminated.

“The theory behind testing is that if you have more data, you’ll be able to figure out what works,” said Leonie Haimson, executive director of Class Size Matters, a parent-based group that advocates smaller classes and student privacy.

Under pressure from Class Size Matters, New York withdrew from inBloom in 2014. Founded with \$100 million in seed money from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, the nonprofit start-up sought to collect not just test scores but a range of private student information — Social Security numbers, health and social service records, economic status, disciplinary records — and to store the data on cloud-based servers. The stated intention was to track students from kindergarten until graduation, but Haimson sees more nefarious motives.

The aim of all this data collection, she said, “is to push education into private hands and generate a thriving market in education software. The Department of Education and groups like the Gates Foundation seem to feel that technology is going to solve our education problems even though there is no evidence to support that.”

Jia Lee admits that assessing student growth “is a key part of teaching” but says the results shouldn’t be used to penalize educators. “We’re constantly assessing our students to see how they’re making progress. But they’re using those tests to go after teachers and to close schools.”

Lee is running for president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) as part of the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) caucus. Her supporters accuse the current union leadership of complicity in devising New York’s high-stakes testing regime. Despite public statements decrying high-stakes testing, the UFT’s current president Michael Mulgrew opened the door to the exam blitz in an agreement reached with Cuomo and Education Commissioner John King in 2012. It stipulated that test scores would account for 40 percent of teacher evaluations.

“We need a different level of engagement from our union,” said Lee. “It’s going to take real organizing power.”

A taste of that organizing power came during last spring’s opt-out actions, which included approximately 80,000 third through eighth graders opting out on Long Island, where Deutermann organizes, and some teachers, including Lee, refusing to administer the tests. However, Cuomo’s apparent retreat has turned out to be more ambiguous than it first appeared.

“Initially my reaction was positive,” Lee said. “In my mind I was thinking, is this really happening? But there’s still a state law in place that says we have to be evaluated by some kind of statistical metric. What that is, we don’t know.”

Students will still take the Common Core tests and the Transformation Act remains in place, meaning that teacher evaluations will continue to be based on student performance data, making it likely that tests implemented by local school districts will take the place of the Common Core exams to assess educators.

STILL OPTING OUT

Deutermann plans on refusing to let her children take the tests again this year. “Opting out isn’t just done to change political policies or to get legislators to take notice,” she said. “It’s also about protecting kids from six days of testing that is completely inappropriate.”

As New York stepped back from high-stakes testing, so did the federal government. Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, which allows states to devise their own education standards rather than follow Common Core and no longer mandates that states tie teacher evaluations to test scores in order to receive grant money.

Both developments are signs that grassroots efforts led by teachers and parents are making an impact. But a new trend in the education industry has some advocates shuddering. It’s been called “stealth assessment” or “competency-based” learning. Education companies like Dreambox, Scholastic and the Khan Academy have developed software that registers every answer students give as they learn reading and math. “The companies that develop this software argue that it presents the opportunity to eliminate the time, cost and anxiety of ‘stop and test’ in favor of passively collecting data on students’ knowledge over a semester, year or entire school career,” noted NPR education correspondent and author of *The Test*, Anya Kamenetz.

In other words, in the future big standardized tests could be a thing of the past. Students, and by extension their teachers, would simply be tested all the time.



CIVICS LESSON:

Robert Bender, Principal of PS11 in Chelsea, left, and City Councilmember Corey Johnson, right, lead

parents and students of the school in a chant to protest the use of high-stakes standardized tests in public schools. The groundswell of opposition from parents, students and teachers across New York state has forced Gov. Andrew Cuomo to backtrack on his support for standardized testing.

STEPHEN YANG

HOUSING

TENANTS MAY CATCH A BREAK

50,000 APARTMENTS EYED FOR ILLEGALLY HIGH RENTS

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Governor Andrew Cuomo has pledged a “major initiative to return up to 50,000 illegally deregulated apartments to rent regulation,” but tenant advocates say there is less to it than meets the eye.

The governor’s plan, announced January 6, involves sending letters to the owners of more than 4,000 buildings that received J-51 tax breaks intended for rent-stabilized buildings and contain apartments that are not registered with the state housing agency. Close to half of those buildings are in Manhattan, with more than 800 in Brooklyn, 700 in Queens, 500 in the Bronx and 15-20 in Staten Island, according to the agency, New York State Homes and Community Renewal. It has instructed those owners to register all apartments in them as rent-stabilized or face having to pay treble damages if the rent is illegally high. The letters also told them to offer tenants rent-stabilized leases.

The J-51 program, created in 1955 to help landlords install hot-water systems, gives owners of rent-regulated buildings property-tax reductions that cover as much as 90 percent of the costs of major renovations, such as a new boiler. A 2012 report by the Community Service Society called it “one of the city’s most expensive housing programs.” In 2011, it cost the city about \$257 million.

In 2009, in a case involving Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village, the state’s highest court ruled that it was illegal for landlords who were receiving J-51 tax breaks to take apartments out of rent regulation. About 4,300 apartments in the 11,000-unit complex had been deregulated, primarily through vacancy decontrol.

“There will be zero tolerance for those who disregard the law and reap these benefits while denying tenants affordable housing they are obligated to provide,” Governor Cuomo said in a statement January 6. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), which administers rent stabilization, “reserves the right to seek and impose appropriate penalties as warranted,” according to an agency spokesperson.

The problem, advocates say, is that state law offers nearly 100 percent tolerance for landlords who don’t register

rent-stabilized apartments. Until 1993, unregistered apartments’ rents could have been frozen at the last legal regulated level, Legal Aid staff attorney Ellen Davidson explains. But that year, the law was changed so that owners could register apartments at any time and keep any legal rent increases. And the 1997 vacancy-decontrol law, which deregulated vacant apartments if their rent was high enough (\$2,000 a month then, now \$2,700), also prohibited tenants and courts from looking back more than four years to determine whether an apartment’s rent was legal.

The 1993 law “essentially made registration voluntary,” says Michael McKee of Tenants PAC. He calls the state’s initiative “very feeble.”

“It’s good that they’re doing this, but it’s ridiculous that they didn’t do anything before,” he says. It would be more effective to write to tenants in the affected buildings and tell them “you are likely being overcharged” — or to take legal action against landlords who charge too much.

DHCR says it will continue to audit data to find apartments that should still be regulated, and tenants should contact its Office of Rent Administration if they believe they’ve been overcharged. In those cases, the courts will determine how much the rent should be, based on the individual apartment’s history.

Almost 200,000 apartments that are supposed to be rent-stabilized are not registered with the state, investigative reporters at *ProPublica* wrote in December. The city Department of Housing Preservation and Development estimates that there were about 1,030,000 rent-stabilized apartments in the city in 2014, but only 840,000 were registered with DHCR, according to agency figures *ProPublica* obtained. Many of those also have illegally high rents, says Davidson.

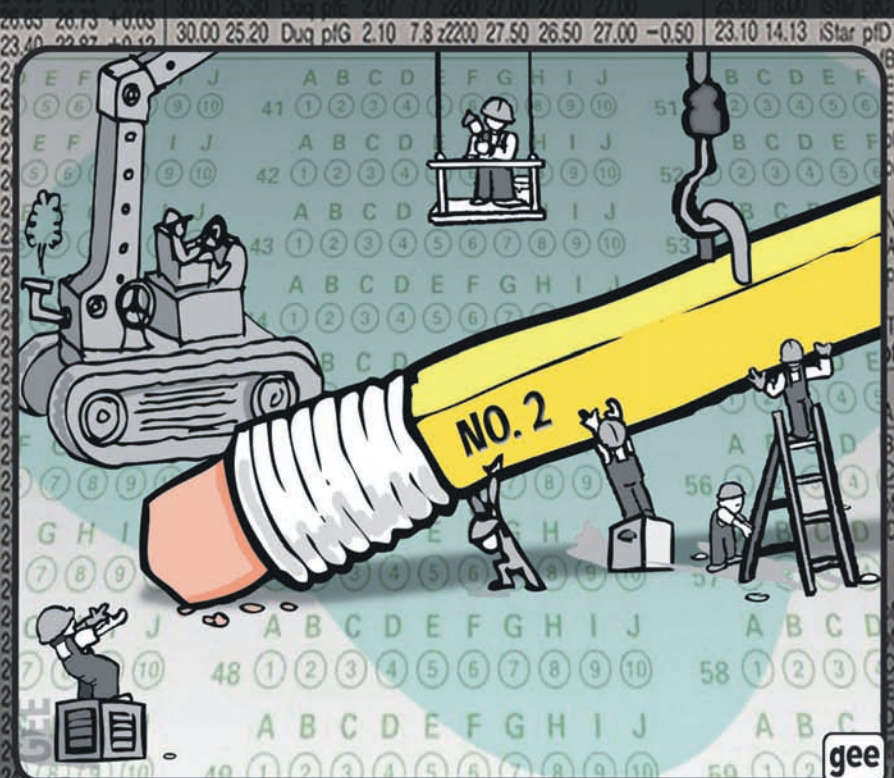
If a tenant can prove that they were illegally overcharged and that it was “willful,” the standard penalty is triple the excessive rent. McKee says that landlords who received J-51 benefits will have a hard time proving that any overcharges weren’t willful, as they know the law, and the Stuyvesant Town decision was major news in the real-estate industry. The catch, says Davidson, is that unregistered apart-



PHILIP WISEHUNT

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FUNDING THE 'POLITICAL REVOLUTION' \$27 AT A TIME

BY MATT SHUHAM

For a campaign that has so successfully zeroed in on Americans' discomfort with the way we pay for our elections, Bernie Sanders' bid for the Democratic presidential nomination has largely been a public record of his fundraising successes. With every landmark moment in his campaign, from parrying Clinton-aligned super PAC attacks to suing his own party to performing well at the first debate, the Sanders camp eagerly announced the money they raised as a result (for the record: \$1.2 million, "more than \$1 million" and \$1.4 million, respectively).

The braggadocio points to a confidence the Sanders operation has about their system. Two years after *McCutcheon v. FEC* ended all aggregate limits on donations to parties and candidates, and six years after *Citizens United v. FEC* deregulated campaign spending by corporations, the fact that Sanders' support comes mostly from small donations — and without the help of any candidate-aligned super PACs — is remarkable.

Usually, candidates who publicly decide to refuse support from super PACs and focus on small donors are considered martyrs for their cause by voters and the establishments of either party, doomed to fall on the sword of financial independence. Sanders' popularity puts him in a different stratosphere if only because mainstream television news knows now that he will be able to pay for plenty of advertising.

By the end of December, Sanders' call for a "political revolution" had raised \$73 million from 2.3 million donations given by 1 million individuals. That's an average of \$27 per donation. Compared to most candidates for president, for whom it is common to hold fundraising dinners where tickets cost as much as an individual can give to a single campaign (\$2,700 per election cycle), Sanders raises most of his money, 74 percent, from donations smaller than \$200, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Hillary Clinton has raised just 17 percent of her campaign's funds through small donations.

THE SMALL DONOR ADVANTAGE

Sanders will be outspent by his Democratic and potential Republican rivals. But small donations provide an advantage large donations don't: the contact information and vested interest of hundreds of thousands of people. As seen in Texas: While every other serious candidate for president opted to pay the \$2,500 required to buy ballot access, Sanders' team rented space in a labor hall (yes, there is such a thing in Texas) and organized an effort to gather the 10,000 signatures necessary to avoid payment. Sanders could have afforded the \$2,500, but it's

more valuable for his campaign to establish a network of volunteers.

This sort of reliance on a broad base of small donors, as financial support and as campaign boots on the ground, has the potential to redefine our expectations for presidential campaigns. Sanders built campaign infrastructure in Iowa and New Hampshire that rivaled Clinton's, and as *The Independent* goes to press just days before the Iowa caucus, it's a real possibility that he could win both states. Even though he doesn't necessarily need to: Despite the common wisdom that losing either Iowa or New Hampshire would interrupt the momentum of his campaign, "momentum" is so often used as a euphemism for the faith and support of wealthy fundraisers and members of the party establishment that its relevance in Sanders' case is dubious. Even without one or both of the first-voting states, if Sanders' base wants him to keep running, why shouldn't he?

It's pointless to predict an election. After all, most reporting on poll numbers ignores the fact that primary voters usually make up their minds in the weeks immediately before their state's vote, and most eventual voters only start paying attention to election season after the Iowa caucus. But it's certainly possible that Sanders wins the nomination.

He's on the ballot in all 50 states and has the support of a growing number of progressive politicians and public figures. The young people fueling his campaign have interacted with it much like they did the early Black Lives Matter movement, or Occupy Wall Street: while online engagement and proselytizing are important, nothing is viewed as more important than in-person, on-the-ground activism, volunteering and, in this case, voting — an attitude that will certainly become more pronounced as more states vote.

CONFRONTING THE PARTY ESTABLISHMENT

But if mapping how an entire electorate will vote is tough, it's even more difficult to guess how Sanders, who joined the Democratic Party just a few months ago, would be received by the party establishment if he became their leader. His views on health care, education, taxes, financial regulation and the criminal justice system, to name a few, place him squarely at odds with influential figures throughout the party, including prominent and reliable fundraisers for downticket races.

We can only look to the historical example of similarly disruptive candidates. George McGovern, the first senator to publicly oppose the Vietnam War and leader of a truly grassroots, small-dollar campaign, won a bruising primary contest in 1972. He is remembered for self-inflicted wounds that included a disastrous vice-presidential

selection he later had to renounce and a chaotic nominating convention that bumped his nationally televised acceptance speech to 3 o'clock in the morning. His fate was sealed, however, when more conservative elements in the party, including hawkish labor leaders at the AFL-CIO, abandoned him over his antiwar stance and joined in caricaturing him as supporting "amnesty, abortion and acid."

In present-day Great Britain, last year's upset victory the election of 66-year-old democratic socialist Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labor Party has produced deep rifts in the party. Corbyn remains popular with the party's rank and file, but is strongly opposed by most other parliamentary members of his own party, some of whom are threatening a break from Labor altogether.

In fact, of all the attacks levied against him from the Clinton network, one in particular — a September email comparing Sanders to Jeremy Corbyn, after which the Sanders camp raised that aforementioned \$1.2 million — seems the closest to what he might face in the future, if his shot at the nomination were to become a real possibility. The email highlighted the most unconventional aspects of Corbyn's views, from his calling the trial-less killing of Osama bin Laden "a tragedy" to his criticizing NATO's stance toward Russia, and mentioned that the two populist leftwing insurgent politicians had both stated an interest in and support of the other's success.

Much like Corbyn, Sanders hasn't shied away from the narrative of a progressive outsider facing off against the establishment. After the premiere of his first television advertisement, which describes "two Democratic visions for regulating Wall Street," Sanders' spokesperson Michael Briggs clarified to MSNBC's Alex Seitz-Wald that the ad hadn't mentioned Hillary Clinton by name because it wasn't exclusively about her. "It's about people in the Democratic establishment who believe you can take Wall Street's money and then somehow turn around and rein in the greed, recklessness and illegal behavior," he said.

In a post-*Citizens United* era in which political advertisements are cheap and widespread, the opinions of the voting public are assumed to be easily pliable and the mainstream news media seems largely uninterested with issues of corruption and conflict of interest, the Sanders camp is placing a bet that rarely pays off in American politics: that absent mega-donors, PACs or the support of a party establishment, the machinery of public opinion can run on conviction alone.



FROM THE BOTTOM UP: Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders greets supporters after giving a speech.

WZ7NEWSPAPER.COM

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BERNIE SANDERS MOVEMENT IF HE LOSES?

BY GEORGE LAKEY

You may have heard the story of the woman who was walking her dog one night and found a man on his hands and knees, searching the sidewalk under the streetlight. “Can I help you find something?” She asked.

“I dropped my house key over there,” he replied, gesturing behind him, “and I need to find it.”

“But if you dropped it over there, why are you looking here?” She asked.

“The light is much better here,” he answered.

I remember the story when I think about the many Americans who know that huge changes are needed in economic and climate policy and turn to the electoral arena to find their power. They won't find their power there because the system is so corrupted, but they nevertheless look for their power “under the streetlight,” where middle school civics textbooks tell them to look.

The corrupted system, however, does not lead me to dismiss Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic nomination for president. He and the many people working with him have already contributed mightily to the task of preparing Americans for a living revolution. How so?

First, he articulates clearly truths about our system that many Americans have figured out, but have wondered — for good reason — if they are alone. In a recent ABC/Washington Post poll, 68 percent agreed that we live in a country whose economic system favors the rich rather than the rest of us. (About half of Republicans thought this, too). In another poll, 74 percent said they believe that corporations exert too much influence on American politics and life. As early as 2012, a poll found a staggering 75 percent of Republicans agreed there would be less corruption if there were limits on donations to super PACs.

Sanders is giving these views a voice. When Bernie asserts on national television that it is Wall Street that regulates Congress instead of the other way around, he strikes a chord that potentially enables people to resonate together — Republicans and Democrats alike.

Second, Sanders defies the political class by projecting a vision of how our country could move toward justice. U.S. politicians are notoriously vision-averse, except for neoconservatives and libertarians. (Social justice activists are also remarkably vision-averse, even though the aversion undermines our effectiveness). By contrast, Sanders repeatedly points to Denmark and other Nordic countries, thereby bringing vision into the conversation. While I have radical Nordic friends who are critical of their countries' achievements, in the U.S. context Bernie is performing a remarkable service. He even makes sure to connect the dots by offering a public course on democratic

socialism.

Here again, the U.S. public is way ahead of the political class (and even ahead of many social justice activists). For over 30 years Gallup pollsters have found a steady majority who agree that the United States should redistribute wealth by imposing heavy taxes on the rich. Gallup found in 2014 that even Republicans polled at 45 percent in favor of increasing taxes on the rich. The Pew Research Center found that more Republicans favored increased spending on Medicare, education and infrastructure than favored cutting those programs. *The Economist* worries that “Anti-capitalism is once more a force to be reckoned with.” Among Democrats, in October 2015, a YouGov poll found 49 percent of Democrats viewed socialism favorably, while their approval of capitalism had fallen to 37 percent.

So Bernie's campaign scores high in articulating both analysis and vision. He challenges other activists to stop holding back as we relate to the majority of Americans. Clearly, it is time to be bold and meet people where many of them already are.

A ‘POLITICAL REVOLUTION’?

Sanders' candidacy is, to be sure, self-limiting. The political revolution he calls for cannot be achieved through the ballot box. Most Americans would agree with me if asked, based on their perception of the corruption of the system. I'd recommend to the remaining true believers in “U.S. democracy” a Princeton study released in 2014.

Two U.S. political scientists conducted a broad empirical study that reveals who actually has the say in public policy. Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin I. Page of Northwestern examined the 1,779 specific policy issues that came to a head for national decision in the two decades between 1981 and 2002. Note: That period was before the Supreme Court made the *Citizens United* decision, before the billions released in the current money rush.

For each issue Gilens and Page determined from opinion polls and other evidence what the majority of the public wanted and what the economic elite wanted. When those two views differed, the scholars wanted to know whose view prevailed. They took into account the fact that ordinary citizens often combine to form mass-based

interest groups like the American Association of Retired Persons.

What they found was that when there was a difference, the economic elite almost always prevailed over the majority. Even the mass-based interest groups had little or no independent influence. In the scholars' words, “In the United States, our findings indicate, the majority does not rule — at least in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes.”

Bottom line, there's no reason to think that the election of Bernie Sanders as president, even with a congressional majority of Democrats, could possibly deliver the changes we want. Both major parties are clearly owned by the economic elite, and what they want, they get — as long as movements for change stay within the framework of electoral politics.

The good news is that we have the option of moving outside that corrupted framework. What if the Sanders campaigners maintained their commitment to a progressive analysis and vision and simply acknowledged what so many Americans already know: The system is too rigged to be changed from within.

TRUTH TELLER:

Bernie Sanders has built a political movement by speaking honestly about America's rigged economic and political system.

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yds

GENERATION LEFT

MILLENNIALS BUILDING THE NEXT SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

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A LOVE SUPREME

IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD, THE BLACK SOUL EMBRACES AND LIFTS UP ITS PEOPLE

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

This is for the cool in you. The low swag of you. The righteous fury and star-following urge in you. This is for my people, Black and praiseworthy. For all of us. My family, Nuyoricans, blown across the map by anger. My friends, practicing themselves in the mirror, trying on new moves, new colors, new tongues.

This is for the descendants of the African Diaspora, the fathers who leave and the ones who stay, the mothers who hold it down with blistered hands, the child growing up in the rubble, trying to glue the pieces together. This is for the hustlers in suits and dresses, smiling to strangers in the maze of capital. For the churchgoers, praising the pain away, stepping on each other to get close to God. For the activists, fists in the air, yelling at the walls, carrying our dream into daylight. And yes, this is for my niggas, scarred and hurting, who share me their drink, laughing as I pee between cars. This is for all of us. This is our praise song.

RESOLUTION

You saved me. You, the spirit behind our masks: the Black Soul. There is this flesh, these bodies we live in. And then there's us, the social body rising from our singular lives, a world-historical Black Soul, a being made out of our striving. It is a real thing. And within it is our freedom.

You dark giant, hundreds of years old, holding our millions of faces inside you. Woven by slave chains that became our nervous system, relaying messages across space and time. You remind us to mark the difference between how we're seen and who we are. We're not victims, but survivors. Not objects of pity, but subjects of history, a people as deep as night, each life a star

in the infinite.

Black Soul, sometimes we half see ourselves. Before it was Baldwin, now it's Coates; we are taught to write our history in the language of scar tissue. Even as we transform pain into power. Even as we scoop up our darkness and hold it like fertile, precious earth.

Black Soul, we are born, live and die within you. We feel you in everything we do. You glow when we reach a mountaintop. Like Jack Johnson's lightning fists in the ring. Or Bessie Smith making it rich by singing blue. Or Obama in the White House. You are the music we play when we turn our bodies into instruments. You are the alarm in our heads when danger breathes close. And you are kerosene sadness, sparked into rage when one of us dies wrong — a roasted neighbor hung from a tree, a boy shot by police.

Black Soul, you are a real thing. I first felt you when my uncle put claves in my hands. We were in the basement with his band as they tuned their instruments. "Feel the beat," he said, "tap, tap, tap ... tap, tap." Guiding my hands, he knocked the wood pieces together, a high hollow sound ringing out. "It's a West African rhythm," he said, then reversed it. I followed the count back and forth. "It's why Latin bands play in Africa," he said. "We all share the same beat." The band members lifted their guitars and drumsticks, leaned over keyboards. I tapped away the original rhythm like a heart pulsing at the center of the song. Tap, tap, tap ... tap, tap.

I first saw you as a kid going through my mom's photo album. She and my uncle had blown-out afros, as big as halos. Mom smiled and said, "Back then, all the Puerto Ricans went to ballrooms to dance salsa, the girls had straightened hair, wore dresses and heels. The boys wore suits. But I hung out in the West Village with the hippies. So I showed up in jeans and sporting an afro. The music stopped. Everyone gawked at me. Wouldn't you know, the next week, everyone else had afros and jeans too." She laughed at the memory and absentmindedly touched her hair, now straightened.

Black Soul, I was too shy to dance with you. My body knew salsa but not

the swing of R&B, so in middle school, I leaned on the wall at parties. At one, a girl who'd been eyeing me signaled to her friend and they sandwiched me as everyone whooped. Our hips locked and they wound me up like a clock. We were grinding on beat when something clicked. We got into a low down groove, making it serious. A deep heat flared from our bodies and then they broke off and ran away, laughing. I swayed like a drunk as my crew of friends slapped me on the shoulders.

Lesson learned. Whenever joy, rage, love or grief welled up, I found that space in the beat and set myself free. Sometimes, it meant being locked in a rhythm with another. Other times, it meant wild abandon. Like when I danced and flung my dreads like a supermodel. And they hit a man in the eye. He stumbled backward and cupped his face as I said, "Sorry. Sorry." But he laughed and said he once had dreads too.

Black Soul, you are a way of praise that flings pain out of the body, a real thing. You are the alarm in our brains, warning us before we get hurt again. You shine a UV light that highlights everyday whiteness, its traps, its greed, its hypocrisy, its violent, hypocritical patriotism, its insatiable appetite for our death.

I learned from you to map the danger zones: where in the city I'd be beaten, killed or arrested. We all had the Racial Radar. We learned to see the lie behind the smile, hear the betrayal in the promise. When we graduated from childhood, you, Black Soul, were our inheritance. Some of us tried to escape you, to flee the burden of color. We drugged out. We lied and wore a white mask. We tucked our truth into our pockets and spoke proper. Some of us wanted the power of fear. We wore black upon black. "Nigga" we yelled, "what you want?" We hurt ourselves and each other. We thought no one could see it because it was all night, all night forever.

I searched for you in my mother's stories of the movement, in late-night college reading of Afrocentric myths and revolutionary manifestos. I confused skin color with soul and worried about my place. I prayed East to find

you, unrolling the prayer mat, I knelt and said there was no God but Allah and Muhammad was his Messenger. Touching my head to the floor, I wept that I was lost. And I was.

Black Soul, you found me again. In college, a brilliant sister took away my political books, my Koran and gave me poetry. She pressed her palm to my chest and said, "This is your true home." She sat me down between her knees and untangled my hair and my thoughts, braiding body and soul together. When she left for Africa and I left for New York, we embraced. Her memory rings in my chest like a church bell.

What would I do with my freedom? Face whiteness. See the shadow it cast on our skin. Lift it. The laws that pipelined us to prison. Lift it. The doubt that crippled the mind. Lift it. The rage that left us blind. Lift it. Year after year, I moved weight. Until, sloshing in a flooded New Orleans as bodies floated by, I could not lift anymore. In earthquake-shattered Port-au-Prince, I stood in the streets filled with the dead, each one of them, a someone who was loved by someone.

When I flew home to New York, my mind was a broken mirror. I was blind. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't hope. I drank and smoked and coked up until blood spilled from my nose. This was it. This was the weight of whiteness, the centuries of our lives being thrown away, and now it was going to kill me too. I was thinking of suicide in the way a drowning man thinks of air.

And you saved me, Black Soul, a way of flinging pain from the body, a real thing, you were Toussaint L'Ouverture who came to me in a dream and said, "Remember." You were the friends who hugged me. You were my mother saying she was proud of me. You were the dancing that sweated out my tears. You were the long nights spent listening to old recordings of Civil Rights activists chanting, "Freedom now! Freedom now!"

Stumbling out of numbness into life, I saw what I couldn't see before.

Continued on next page

WHY I LOVE BEING BLACK

LAUGHTER IS PROTEST

By Jamila Reddy

When we were little, my sister and I would get into fits of laughter — what my mother lovingly called "a case of the giggles." "Looks like someone's got a case of the giggles," she'd say with a small laugh in her voice, as if it were some strange and easily curable disease.

Something would inevitably set one of us off and we'd spend the next hour trying not to look at each other, knowing that the slightest glance of a smile on the other's face would send us back into an uncontrollable giggling frenzy. My mother would peek over the rim of her glasses, simultaneously skeptical of and delighted by our bouts of unexplainable laughter. "What are you girls laughing at?" She'd ask, not expecting an answer. More often than not, we couldn't have given her one if we tried. We had gone so far down the rabbit hole of our delight that we could no longer identify its origin.

To be Black is to know this kind of incomprehensible joy — to be able to conjure, from somewhere, the strength to feel good, when the capacity to do so, in the face of everything, feels like an unexplainable miracle. These moments with my sister are some of my fondest memories. They feel like something to hold on to, to return to, or, at least, to try. What it does mean, now, to claim a joy so deep and full-bodied that — for a moment — you cannot think of anything else?

In the past few years, being Black has meant choosing survival,



AMANDA MCKENLEY

THE BLACK CHAMELEON

By Vernon Andrews

I wasn't "Black" or a "social problem" until leaving Oakland. Upon arrival in a nearly all-white, rural northern California university setting in 1976, I became a changeling, a shape-shifter, a chameleon — a man set on blending in and not offending whites.

Like a magician, I could diffuse racism — from professors, cops and townfolk — by simply changing "colors" via my diction and perfectly performed and coded white behavior. I was the ostrich sticking its head in the sand in order to escape notice.

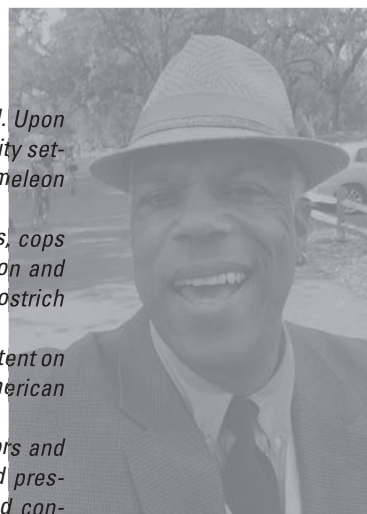
I was hyper-vigilant in performing the happy Black man, intent on showing whites that a 6-foot-2-inch, 200-pound African American could be "exceptional" and "likeable."

This was hard work — wearing the mask, changing colors and painting on that disarming smile. This takes a toll on blood pressure. This takes a toll on identity. "Am I doing it right?" I'd constantly question. No. I was doing it all wrong. I was still distrusted and dissed.

I grabbed my PhD in 1996 and fled the United States for the mental sanctuary of New Zealand. I lived there as an "American" for 14 years.

My stress levels lowered. I relaxed. Exhaled. My smile became genuine. My freedom as a human being took hold. I started loving life and loving the act of living freely in my own skin.

I was the "Black professor" who taught about American sports



VERNON ANDREWS

THE FABULOUS TURN

By Brittany Williams

My moment of gloriously unapologetic blackness came, surprisingly enough, when I was living in China. Relaxing my hair every six weeks had been the standard from the time I was 8 years old — when I was told a relaxer would make my hair easier to comb — until January 2008.

I stood in my bathroom, latex-gloved hands frantically trying to apply the creamy crack to my roots before it started to feel like someone was scraping my scalp with a hot poker. I finished (never quickly enough, though), washed my hair with the neutralizing shampoo, regular shampoo and hit with a good conditioner. Then it hit me. I still had to blowdry, flatiron and curl my hair. And the style would only last until halfway through my first show the next day because my costume headress was a total sweatbox.

What an abysmal return on investment. So I chucked the relaxer and kept my hair braided. Six months later, I finally committed.

I had a friend and co-worker of mine chop my relaxed hair off. I was left with 3.5 inches of thick, curly hair that I hadn't seen since I was 8 years old.

"Do you like it?" He asked proudly.

I looked at my comparatively bald head and awkwardly both nodded and shook my head before squeaking out a "yeah." The first two weeks or so after I went natural were uncomfortable. I'd look in the mirror and see a near stranger with a face bereft of the



JESSICA OSBER

THE PREACHER'S KID

By Gabriel Lawrence

Growing up I was always the new kid on the block. My dad was a minister and we moved often. My parents divorced and we moved several more times. By the time I was in the third grade I had lived in seven homes, three cities and two different states.

Not all preachers' kids are straight and narrow, but I was. In elementary school I was focused. I took church lessons to heart and tried to make the world a better place by spreading the gospel. I wanted to do right and show respect to others in the process. Unfortunately that wasn't the priority of the other project kids I rode the school bus with.

His name was JaCory, and he picked on me because he wanted to. He was popular, rough around the edges and had street credit. I was known as the PK who wore tight pants, Cosby sweaters and spoke proper. Girls even picked on me. One day as we fought, JaCory connected a solid punch to my face and I saw my own blood for the first time. This was when I truly found God.

A strange thing happened. The crowd went crazy, but everything quieted in my head. Something inside gave me permission to not care. I walked up to JaCory and unleashed 13 years of not being good enough, the resentment built from being told I acted white, the pain of my father not being around and the shame I had of growing up poor. In turn, he had a busted lip and black eye. The next day had a lot of respect and a new attitude.



PETER KONERKO

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A LOVE SUPREME

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Whiteness was crumbling like the ice of the North Pole. Chunks of it, falling. We were chanting it down. Our lives were beginning to matter. When police used us for target practice, we flooded the cities. Holding up the faces of those killed like mirrors, we forced America to see itself. We yelled “I can’t breathe,” so loudly that it filled the sky.

Black Soul, I found you in laughter. On my Bed-Stuy stoop with a dear friend, a tall brother with those Tupac-Ashanti features that made me question my life. We talked about what Black is, Black ain’t. How Black Soul was not just our inheritance but also our creation. And how we had to remold it. But what was it now? New faces were on the scene. Hipster Black. Tech Black. Afropunk Black. Atheist Black. And faces that weren’t new but had been hidden by our ignorance — Queer Black, Transgender Black.

We clowned about the endless contests between Bougie Black and Hood, High Yellow and Blue Black, Rasta Black and Yankee Black, Church Black and Dealer Black, Tyrone versus the Sistahs, Queen Black and Basic Black. We laughed at the fault lines that ran through our people, our families and our minds.

Finally, he turned to me, “So aside from light-skinned, what kind of Black are you?” Tilting my head, I said, “Disco Black. Protest Black.” I pretended to whip myself. “Kinky Black, you know, a little S/M to honor the ancestors.”

“I’m Denzel Black,” he chortled and stroked his nose. Looking into the distance, he said, “I’m Trying to Figure This Shit Out Black.” He half smiled. “I’ll own up to it. I go full nigga. Way. Too. Much.” Eyeing me carefully, he said, “But you don’t. You play it smooth.”

“Oh, I have to be really in love or really angry,” I said. “Like when they say ‘Hulk Smash’ in the movie, that’s me, except it’s the ghost of W.E.B. Du Bois saying, nigga smash.” I thumped my chest. “I smash racism.”

“Being nigga is a superpower,” he laughed, shaking his head. “Is this what we’ve come to?” But I was busy hitting myself and accidentally bumped him. “What are you doing?” He side-looked me. “Punching white supremacy,” I replied. “It’s deep inside.”

“Oh hell,” he giggled. “Let me help.” He play-punched my ribs as I play-punched his chin. And there we were, two friends, two Black men, half-boxing on the steps of my building, yelling at each other, “Nigga smash!”

PURSUANCE

Black Soul, where do we go from here? We live going under, around, over and through walls. But we have integrated a burning house. We inhaled the smoke of ignited money. The rich sell dreams to the hungry. We see them make bread out of ash. And they blame us when their night becomes blindness.

The American Dream is dying. And this is our New Exodus. We gotta leave. It’s time to go. The clock on Flava Flav’s chest has stopped. The gold in our mouths has flaked away. The math of Wall Street is Zeno’s Paradox. The nation is hiding its poor in jail. Workers are borrowing from tomorrow to pay their bills today. The food we eat is plastic inside plastic inside plastic. The land is being wrenched open for gas. Our water catches fire. The sky is becoming a hot blanket. The war is endless. Our names are on bombs that blast families into pools of blood.

The American Dream is dying. It is a hall of cracked televisions and outside it is a desert. This is a New Exodus. We gotta go. It’s time. Even if we have to eat sand. Or break the tombs of our ancestors for water. Beyond this place is a post-American world. Beyond this place is a land where Blackness is the ink with which we will re-write our names.

The covenant we make now is to the body. This ransacked vessel of the five senses, its eyes blistered from violence. Its knees worn by work. Its heart broken by loss. Its sex numbed

from selling. Its hands scarred by chains. And its mind blurred by lies. We, whose bodies were sold and bought and sold again, we make a new covenant with the world.

Today and forever, the center is the body and all its knowledge. Touch connects us to each other. And through our fingertips pass the voices flowing from the Middle Passage to the New Millennium. The deep currents that brought us to the New World must now renew the world.

PSALM

Black Soul, rising from the Diaspora, bringing up everyone who drowned, everyone who died a slave, everyone who fought or escaped, who loved and gave birth to us. A figure made of millions and millions of faces. You, world-historical being, a dark giant whose skin is a starry night. Our faces lit by new suns.

Black Soul sees the ancient Parthenon in the horizon and its stately pillars, the stage upon which the powerful talk. Standing between the white columns, it touches them. They were made from our bones. And we know it’s time, we who are born, live and die within the Black Soul, to say the name of everyone we loved and lost and failed to rescue. Singing to them, we push the pillars apart.

In that final crash, the Black Soul, with its profane halo, ceases to be and so will the weight that created it. And then a new human can enter time. A real human being. A love supreme. Amen.

Nicholas Powers is a professor of African-American literature at SUNY Old Westbury. He is the author of *Ground Below Zero: 9/11 to Burning Man, New Orleans to Darfur, Haiti to Occupy Wall Street*.

LAUGHTER IS PROTEST

Continued from page 10

again and again. It has meant, to borrow a phrase from Hafiz, staying close to anything that makes you glad you’re alive.

The strength of being Black in this lifetime is knowing how to stay as close to your joy as you do your grief — claiming your right to pleasure with the same fervor you claim your right to rage. When I talk to a sister-friend on the phone — one member of my chosen family, my tribe — we laugh loud and hard, indulge in this ritual of release until our breath has to run stumbling alongside us to catch up. This is gift of survival in this body: laughter becomes protest, feeling good becomes a gentle riot; joy: an ancient rebellion — another way to say, “I am so glad you’re alive.”

Jamila Reddy is a queer black woman from the South. Each of these identities informs the other and she likes to think, talk and write about how.

THE BLACK CHAMELEON

Continued from page 10

and Black and hip-hop culture. I even marketed my own barbeque sauce; there was a premium put on “being Black” and “being authentic.” I was a chameleon no more. I was Black and brash and New Zealand loved it. It took leaving the United States to find my internal home.

I left New Zealand for good in 2009, returning to attend Obama’s inauguration in D.C. in January 2009. I wanted to be here for the growth in race relations over the next eight years. I wanted to be a part of the “change” in the United States. But it hasn’t quite worked out that way, has it? We are still Black.

Happily, so am I. My Black pride means being comfortable in my own monotone skin. I had to go abroad to realize that it’s ok to just be me, the Black kid from Oakland: Black, proud and half crazy. Imagine that.

Vernon Andrews teaches history of sport and physical education in the Kinesiology Department at San Jose State University. His recent Kindle eBook is *The Control of Black Expression in American Sport and Society*.

THE FABULOUS TURN

Continued from previous page

curtain of hair to hide behind. I finally came out of mourning for my lost length when I realized how amazing my real hair was. No more fear of sudden rainstorms. Post-show I could dry my sweaty hair and just re-fluff it. I taught myself to make hair oils and how to do two-strand twists, comb coils, faux-hawks. I tricked out my ‘fro with cute hair accessories.

My moment of triumphant, magical black girl glory came in the middle of a performance of a musical. I took the stage, beautifully tanned from the Hong Kong summer sun, my unruly twist-out adorned with a sequined headband made just for me by the costume department. I looked out over a sea of transfixed faces, not one looking anything like me. My heart swelled and I felt it.

Damn it was fabulous being black.

Brittany Williams is an actress, writer and social media consultant. She was the principal vocalist at Hong Kong Disneyland for one year and aspires to someday win an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar and a Tony.

THE PREACHER’S KID

Continued from previous page

Identity has always been something I struggled with, but around this time I first decided people would know me by the terms I chose. I braided my hair, listened to rap and jazz, kept my good grades, joined the debate team, played football, lifted weights, graduated with honors, spoke in tongues at Wednesday night bible studies, dialogued about my experience with people who looked like me and with those who were different.

To me black is determined, powerful, unforgettable and carries a heavy punch. I am not of ashamed of it. In fact, I unabashedly embrace it.

Gabriel Lawrence is a New York-based actor and filmmaker.

IMMIGRATION RAIDS

Continued from page 5

ment of Homeland Security. Emmanuel, now in his late thirties, served three months for a drug charge when he was 21 years old. Sahadeo has two DUIs and a count of non-violent attempted burglary on his record; he's been out since 2008.

"They just see a person with a criminal record," Rachelle says. "They don't take anything else into account in terms of, is this person part of a family unit, and what's going to happen to the kids, what's going to happen to their partner. They don't think about that impact."

'FELONS, NOT FAMILIES'

In November 2014, the same month that New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed the detainer laws, President Obama announced that the focus of immigration enforcement would henceforth be on "felons, not families." His administration instructed enforcement agencies to focus resources on the removal of immigrants with specific criminal convictions, those who arrived after January 1, 2014, and those with prior deportation orders. The directives, known as the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), replaced Secure Communities.

These new rules also figure in the apparent uptick in home raids and community arrests in New York City. "It's hard to say

how much of the difference in ICE activity in the community is related to the detainer law versus related to the PEP priorities," said Mizue Aizeki, deputy director of the Immigrant Defense Project.

Comprehensive information about the how and how much of ICE raids is scant. The agency is famously tight-lipped about its operations, and official data on these raids are not available — the Immigrant Defense Project, with the Center for Constitutional Rights, has been fighting the agency for information on home arrests since 2013.

It is telling, however, that almost 1.5 million people in New York City are non-citizens, while one in nine adults have been convicted of a crime in the last 10 years. This demographic makeup, according to Paulos, makes the city a prime target for ICE.

"A raid is a raid no matter what," Paulos said, referring to city officials' silence about the targeting of immigrants with criminal records. "Most of these folks are long-term New York City residents. And they're also parents, they're also children, they also deserve to be able to wake up with their families."

TENANTS

Continued from page 7

ments have no paper trail documenting what the legal rent actually is.

The law effectively requires tenants to enforce it themselves, she says, and landlords have been evading it for years. "When it's in their business interests to ignore the law, they do," she says, "and there are no consequences."

If you believe your apartment was illegally deregulated, DHCR has placed a notice on its website, nyscr.org, with instructions for how to find out

more. It contains links to city sites where you can obtain your building's block and lot number and use that to find out its J-51 tax benefit status. You can then ask for a rent history of the apartment by e-mailing rentinfo@nyshcr.org or calling 718-739-6400.

If you don't get any notification from the landlord within the next couple months, Ellen Davidson recommends that you think about filing an overcharge complaint.

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Following the horrific attacks by Isis terrorists in Paris and

Beirut, we have rapidly seen blatant pandering to xenophobia on a disturbing scale and scope. Leaders throughout the US and Europe have demanded that authorities stifle the flow of migrants seeking asylum, and to increase the size and depths of intelligence and law enforcement powers in the US and Europe...

I don't have all the answers - but I do know that blaming minority groups, refugees and immigrants, investing in gigantic surveillance platforms and calling for expansive legal authority and the creation of a neo-Gestapo and panopticon-style police state aren't one of them.

-Chelsea E. Manning (Guardian Op-Ed, 25 November 2015)

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EATING DISORDERS TAKE CENTER STAGE

INTERVIEW BY ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

So, how do you feel about your body? This is one of the questions posed by *Embodi(ED)*, an upcoming documentary theater and dance piece about body image and eating disorders. The play is written and performed by *Girl Be Heard*, a collaborative theater ensemble that aims to empower young women to tell their own stories, and the young women behind it intend to break the silence around eating disorders and the system that drives them. Ashley Marinaccio, director of *Embodi(ED)* and cofounder of *Girl Be Heard*, recently shared her thoughts with *The Independent*.

ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA: *What is Embodi(ED) about?*

ASHLEY MARINACCIO: There's a lot of shame and stigma attached to eating disorders and negative body image, and we want to break the silence. We also really want to show audiences that they're not broken, rather, they're part of a system that is working to keep them feeling broken.

Capitalism, body image and the diet industry are deeply interrelated. The capitalistic drive to make money perpetuates the multibillion diet industry — there's a lot of money in making people feel inferior, making people feel less than, making people keep buying makeup, diet pills, workout regimens.

Girl Be Heard is a collaborative theater-writing project. What is your process like?

The girls, who are all in their teens and early twenties, will come in and bring a piece that they've written related to the topic. And we listen to all the pieces in conversation with each other and see what comes up. Then we bring all the girls together and start the process of building a show. We ask them at the beginning, what questions do you want this show to raise or answer, what do you want to say with this work? Then it goes from there.

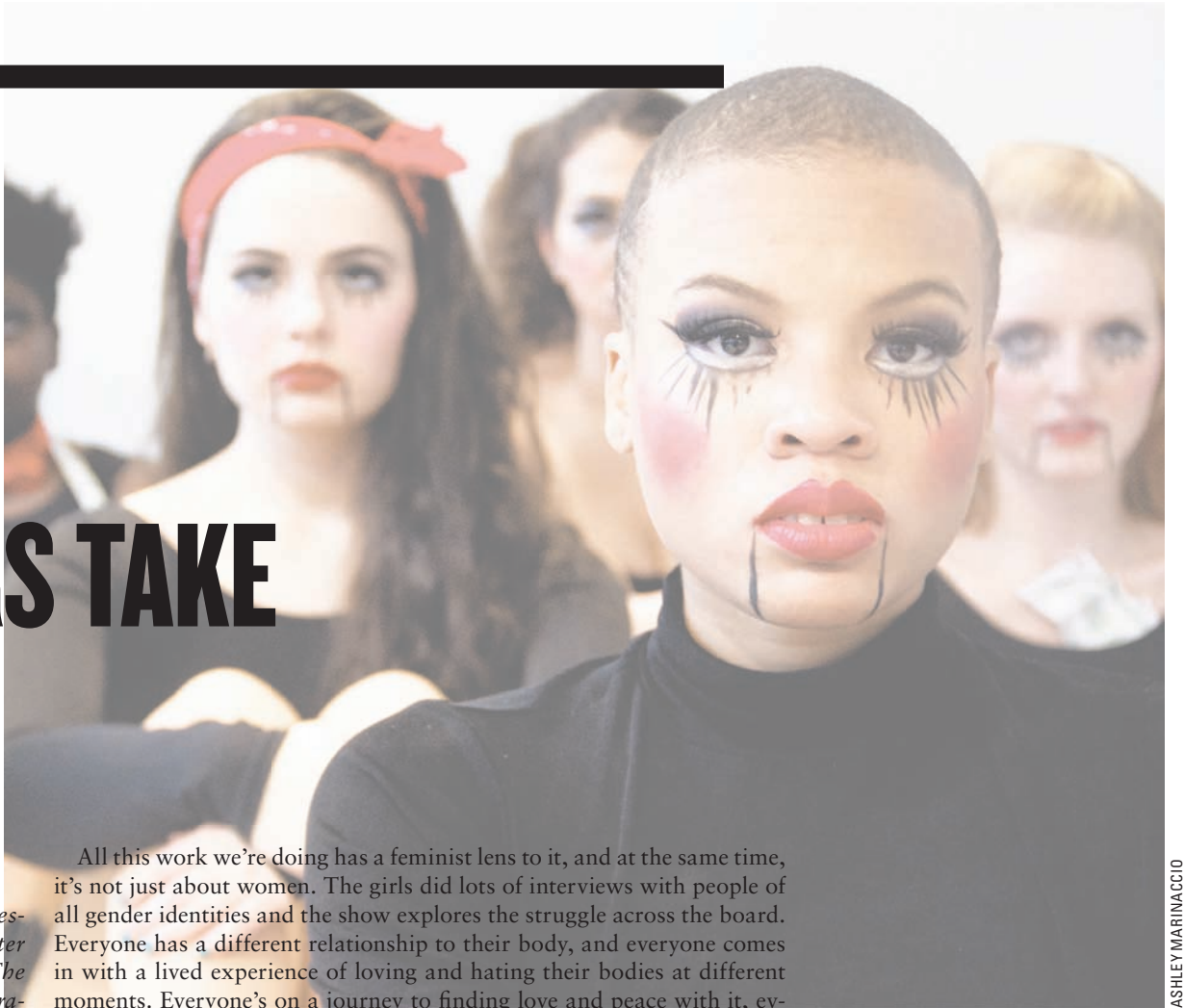
What are some of the most poignant stories that the girls have written about in their plays?

There's a piece about a young woman who at 8 years old was told not to eat doughnuts because they'll make her fat. We have another piece about a young girl whose parents would only buy her jeans up to a certain size — with the thinking being that if she goes over that size she'll be "big." They don't want to buy her "fat girl" jeans. Then we have a piece about a woman whose father has been taking her to see doctors about her weight from a young age. When she was 12, he found a doctor who would do a tummy tuck on her. The piece is about how she worked really hard all her life to try and make her father love her and be proud of her by being skinny.

I imagine there are common threads in the young women's experiences of how their bodies are policed by society. How have these come up?

The girls' perception of the female ideal is that it's tall, thin and white, with large breasts. It's what's been shoved down peoples' throats.

We talk a lot about race and whitewashing. Race is connected to everything that we do because race is a part of everyone's story, everyone's affected by the way that our country has been built on racism. Racism is inherent to the diet and beauty industries and their standards are made through whiteness. They're driving people to try to be as white as possible, in their body shape, skin, hair.



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

All this work we're doing has a feminist lens to it, and at the same time, it's not just about women. The girls did lots of interviews with people of all gender identities and the show explores the struggle across the board. Everyone has a different relationship to their body, and everyone comes in with a lived experience of loving and hating their bodies at different moments. Everyone's on a journey to finding love and peace with it, everyone's still in process.

You've struggled with body image and eating disorders yourself. What has that been like for you?

Where do I begin? I used to dance, and I struggled for years because I was a dancer and I had breasts and big hips. I was pressured to lose weight and there was a stigma around my body because, you know, I just wasn't thin. I think I internalized that and started equating body and eating with worthiness. So when something hard would happen, I would starve myself, or binge and purge.

These days, it's still a struggle. It's still something that I really have to be mindful of. Plus, here I am, the cofounder and artistic director of this feminist political organization. But yet I am entirely consumed and crushed at moments by an eating disorder. My experience has been that a lot of people look to me and are like, how did you get through it? And I think they're disappointed when I say, you know, I don't know if I ever did.

How do you reconcile that tension between body image and feminist and progressive politics?

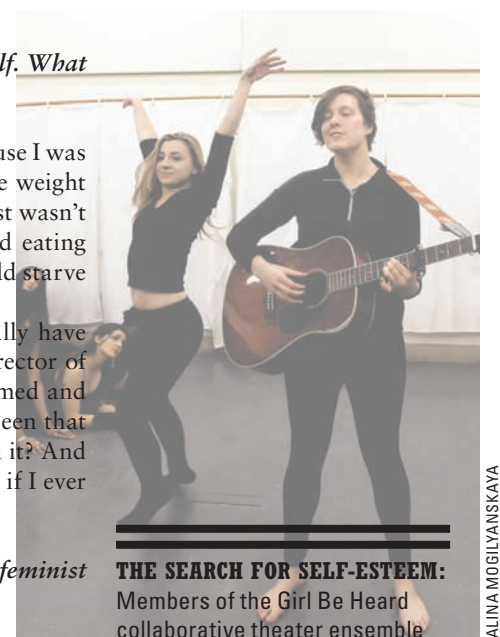
I grapple with it. There's an ideal, I think, on the left about what it means to be an activist. For me at least, that ideal includes being proud of and loving who you are, and I find that to be antithetical to people's real struggles with body image. How do you even start the conversation about that tension among progressives, where are the spaces to have it?

As you mentioned, Girl Be Heard and this play, Embodi(ED), both have strong feminist underpinnings. Can you talk about how your engagement with feminist ideas happens in Girl Be Heard space?

We are questioning our participation in a very specific system. There's a certain amount of the game that you have to play in order to be successful or even to just function in our society. And oftentimes it conflicts with what your politics may be, and I think the body image work really brings that to light and then raises the question of what can we do about it.

We talk a lot about what the process is of creating a space to discuss this. Just that space in and of itself. I think for the performers, what they're getting out of this is that they've been able to think critically about these questions of body image, and read, process, write and do their own work around their relationship with their body, and then connect that back with how society views the body.

Embodi(ED) will run February 11-21 at HERE. For more information and tickets, see girlbeheard.org.



ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

THE SEARCH FOR SELF-ESTEEM:

Members of the *Girl Be Heard* collaborative theater ensemble rehearse for their upcoming show. Their documentary theater and dance piece features young women sharing their personal stories about body image and eating disorders.

AGITPROP FOR EVERY ERA

Agitprop!
BROOKLYN MUSEUM
THROUGH AUGUST 7

By Mike Newton

Let's start with some basics: the term "agitprop" means "agitation and propaganda," and generally refers to art and media promoting leftist ideas. The concept of "agitprop" is most strongly associated with the robust, colorful graphics produced in the USSR, but it can refer to pretty much any artwork with a strongly politicized stance.

The title of the exhibition "Agitprop!" now on view at the Brooklyn Museum, is intentionally open-ended and imprecise. "Sure," one might ask, "but what kind of agitprop?" The answer is all of it, sort of. "Agitprop!" is a show that feels at once both small and sprawling, with World War I-era Suffragist magazines, revolutionary Soviet cinema, 1980s AIDS awareness posters, John Lennon and Yoko Ono's anti-Vietnam War "Bed-In for Peace," mid-1970s anti-Pinochet protest clothing, the Yes Men's 2008 homemade "special" edition of the *New York Times* ("IRAQ WAR ENDS" is the front-page headline), recent performance art and more. And this is just the first third: the show will include two other "waves" of work, to go on view February 17 and April 6, respectively.

To its credit, the show has found some refreshing takes on well-worn cultural touchstones. Early Soviet propaganda posters, for example, relate specifically to the role of women in Communist society. The show also includes an excerpt of *Misery and Fortune of Woman*, a 1929 public health film by legendary Soviet filmmakers Eduard Tisse and Sergei Eisenstein, made as an appeal for European countries to adopt Russia's model of safe, legal abortion.

Around the same time, the United States was struggling with an epidemic of racist murders. Two artworks on view — E. Simm's Campbell's drawing *I Passed Along This Way* (1935) and Julius Bloch's painting *The Lynching* (1932) — both boldly portray lynched Black men



MARK VON HOLDEN PHOTOGRAPHY. © DREAD SCOTT

as Christ-like figures, bearing crosses and suffering for the sins of the world. These works were included in "An Art Commentary on Lynching," a 1935 New York art exhibition put on by the NAACP to help promote anti-lynching legislation. A 1936 photo, published in the NAACP journal *The Crisis*, shows a flag that hung, when necessary, from the NAACP's 5th Avenue headquarters: in heavy, angular type, it reads, "A MAN WAS LYNCHED YESTERDAY." Naturally, looking at this photo now, it's easy to see parallels with the street-level tactics of the #BlackLives-Matter movement.

Similarly, a photograph of a 2014 piece by Black American performance artist Dread Scott shows the artist plaintively raising his hands while caught in the jet of a powerful water cannon. The water cannon recalls the aggressive U.S. police suppression of Black protest, and Scott's outstretched gesture evokes Christ and the actions of #BlackLivesMatter protesters raising their hands and chanting "Hands up, don't shoot." This was, of course, a response to the 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri: an unarmed Black man, shot by a white police officer after Brown had already put his hands in the air. Not one to pull any punches, Scott's piece is called *On the Impossibility of Freedom in a Country Founded on Slavery and Genocide*.

Other noteworthy elements in this show include Tina Modotti's somber 1920s photos of Mexican revolutionary artifacts, and a simultaneously lively and mournful piece by the Futurefarmers collective — *Soil Procession* (2015) — in which Norwegian farmers carried buckets of their own soil through the streets of Oslo. The avant-garde performance collective Chto Delat?'s *Angry Sandwich People or In Praise of Dialectics* (2006) includes protestors in sandwich boards printed with Brechtian poetry, bringing classic Marxist intellectualism to the former site of St. Petersburg's Winter Palace. There's also one of my all-time favorite artworks, American conceptual artist Jenny Holzer's *Inflammatory Essays* (1979-82).

To some, "Agitprop!" may feel frustrat-

ingly superficial, with its brief, scattered glances at major social movements and a curatorial aesthetic ping-ponging from time to time and place to place. But then, a more in-depth show probably wouldn't be as exciting in the moment. When I went on a recent weekend, the crowd's energy felt youthful and animated, with teenagers avidly taking notes and snapping pictures of their friends among the art.

The semi-hidden mission of "Agitprop!" it seems, is to introduce a younger generation to the heady, fiery realm of progressive, politicized artworks. Rather than giving older, more experienced types a full-field view of any particular movement, "Agitprop!" gives to novice viewers a bright, exhilarating burst of handpicked favorites; the show is skinny-dipping rather than scuba diving.

So, to go back to our initial definition, what is agitprop? As a sort of guide to the concept, "Agitprop!" the exhibition gives an historically disjointed but thematically consonant overview. Across these works, there's an impulse toward justice and freedom, a concern for the individual lives unfairly pitted against oppressive systems. The point here is that such concerns reappear from age to age, constituting an amorphous but powerful social force that readily welcomes newcomers. People have been making agitprop for at least 100 years and we'll continue to make it well into the future; we are, right now, in the thick of it.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

On the Impossibility of Freedom in a Country Founded on Slavery and Genocide, performance still, 2014. © Dread Scott.

Shadow of the Plowman, 1935. WPA Federal Theatre Project, Music Division, Library of Congress.

There are plenty of good gags about the depredations of the rich. Jack London called the masters of finance and industry “cavemen in evening dress.” Dorothy Parker quipped, “If you want to know what God thinks of money, just look at the people he gave it to.”

Danny Katch’s latest book is alternately magisterial and droll and goes well beyond slugging the robber barons of today. A humorist with a keen eye for the absurdities of life under capitalism, Katch is less interested in pounding on individual bad actors and more in taking the measure of a social system that requires leadership from amoral thugs to function properly.

Like Karl Marx for a 21st-century reader with a pinch of George Carlin or a dollop of Lenny Bruce, Katch walks us through why a corporate honcho who is a nice guy and a progressive at heart is toast when his company’s bottom line fails to meet quarterly profit targets and the expectations of institutional investors. The mammoth of market rationality is God. The common good becomes a sucker’s game. The rewards: “A world in which every man, woman and child is born with the equal right to buy as many smartphones and factory-ripped pairs of jeans as they want.”

Capitalism didn’t invent inequality. Worse systems preceded it. It does thrive on it, though. What Marx saw as different about capitalism, and what Katch sketches so cleverly and so accessibly for a new generation of readers, is its contradictory nature: capable of revolutionizing social relations and ending scarcity through mutual aid in the mass production of things and services but incapable of tamping down increasing poverty for the many. Katch writes, “Even the U.S. government, powerful and destructive as it is, is a servant of the black ooze of capital, which has no master plan, other than making more of itself.”

So how do we put in charge people who can think past a spreadsheet’s bottom line? This is where the book is both uplifting and just the beginning of wisdom. Katch makes the inspiring assertion that “the essence of socialism” isn’t just a changing of the palace guard but a society remade so that “workers can use their collective organization that they learned under capitalism not just to create cooperative workplaces but a cooperative society geared to meet humanity’s needs instead of a competitive one geared to maximize profit.”

Katch emphasizes the use of popular assemblies in which everyone takes responsibility for running society. While this horizontal organizing approach has had success in a number of places, including roughly 200 worker-run factories in Argentina and the ad-hoc soup kitchens and health clinics that have popped up in austerity-ravaged Greece, it’s hard to envision how such an approach could be successfully scaled up to meet all the needs of a modern society. As for the endless meetings that Katch envisions people participating in, good luck with that.

Katch sees social movements against capital as both inevitable and necessary, though success is not ordained. Yet if there’s a sour note here, it’s his scant attention to the rise of a far right in the United States and worldwide as counterpoint, offering its own populist-sounding variant on the crisis of capitalism, proffering ethnic and religious fundamentalism or, in its most extreme form, leeching into terrorism. Reactionary movements are a handy tool for any establishment to exploit and can be as evocative as any left revival. They are players, too.

There’s also an annoyingly glib dismissal of actually existing politics, including the Bernie Sanders effort, as when he cracks, “The Democrats are that loud guy in the bar pretending to be held back by his friends to keep him from going after someone he has absolutely no intention of fighting.” True as that may be, movements that have no political analogue are doomed, and leftwing organizations that leave it at “Democrats bad; you’ve been warned!” are in their own way narcissistic if not defeatist.

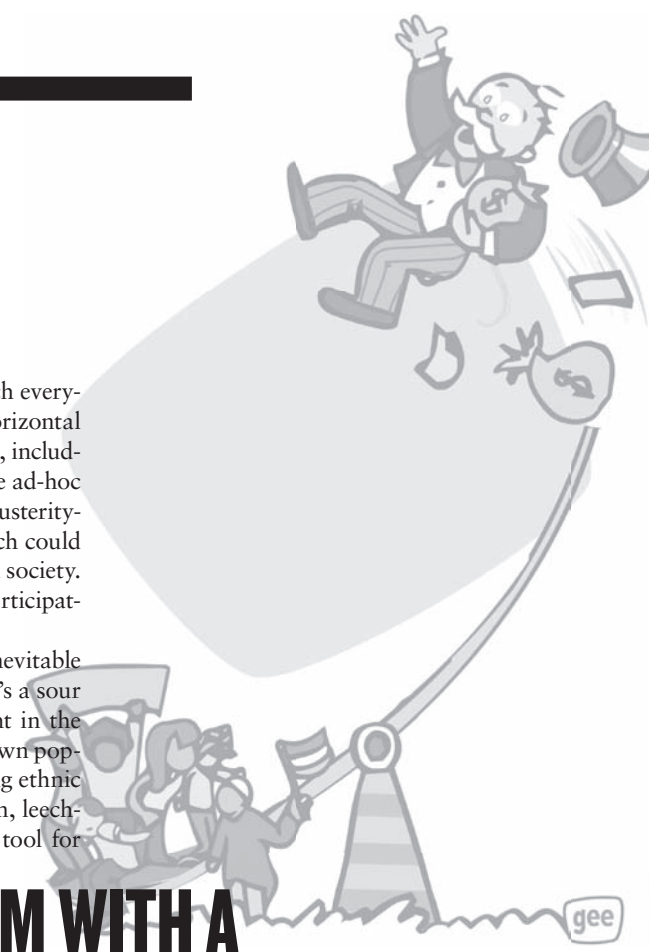
Perhaps Katch’s next book will give the political project we need as thorough and creative a treatment as he does this time for the many good reasons to bring it into existence.

SOCIALISM WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

Socialism . . . Seriously: A Brief Guide to Human Liberation

BY DANNY KATCH
HAYMARKET BOOKS, 2015

By Michael Hirsch



GARY MARTIN

SANDERS' MOVEMENT

Continued from page 9

WHERE POWER ACTUALLY RESIDES

It’s no accident that schools and the mainstream media urge us to look for empowerment in the wrong place: “Over here, under this streetlight!” For the 1 percent the 1960s was a truly dangerous decade. Too many people at that time discovered their power.

Cultural influencers in the mass media and academia therefore minimized and even ignored what people had learned about power through their nonviolent campaigns. The ’60s were characterized as either a hippie “summer of love,” or a violent time of the Weather Underground and Black Panthers, thereby ignoring the main events that involved the most people and had the largest impact. Martin Luther King, Jr. was caricatured as the “Day of Service” guy — even though, as far as I know, he never did a day of service in his life.

Despite this, working-class and poor people did wage campaigns in the 1970s and ’80s through unions and groups like ACORN, with little support across class and color lines. Environmentalists won their largest victory by stopping the spread of nuclear power with nonviolent direct action. Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network kept nonviolent campaigning alive, but failed to get the support they deserved because the electoral streetlight remained so appealing. Under the radar, Movement for a New Society, War Resisters League and other clusters of trainers and manual-writers helped keep the direct action craft in circulation, laying the groundwork for the Battle of Seattle and the subsequent resurgence of larger-scale

nonviolent direct action.

Throughout the period covered by the Princeton study, 1981-2002, and since, many continued to cling to electoral politics despite the onslaught of what billionaire Warren Buffett later acknowledged to be a successful class struggle initiated by his class. Over and over, middle-class liberal Democrats legitimated an arena that couldn’t work for them, acting against their own interests as the wealth gap grew. Some are now noticing that looking under the streetlight is the wrong place to find their power.

WHAT WOULD PLAN B LOOK LIKE

The Sanders campaign is doing fine work in projecting analysis and vision so people can recognize they are not alone, then claim it and work side by side with those who share it. The question of strategy remains. When the electoral arena reveals itself to be an instrument of the 1 percent, where will the Sanders movement go? Will people accept the lessons of their own experience, integrate the Princeton study into their worldview and re-form to claim their authentic power: nonviolent direct action?

Veteran campaigner Antje Mattheus suggests that the Sanders movement take a part of the vision that has the most potential and form a nonviolent direct action campaign to fight for it. Why not a national fight for free higher public education, say? Or fight for federally-guaranteed green jobs for all, a goal that would combine economic and racial justice with the climate justice imperative and expose the utilities and fossil fuel companies that try to stand in the way? Such a campaign could attract majority U.S. support across class and race lines and support us once again to go on the offensive for change.

When we don’t find our power under the streetlight, we need to shine a light of our own.

George Lakey has authored seven books on nonviolent social change, peace and organizational development. This article originally appeared at wagingnonviolence.org.

WHEN HAITI SHOOK THE WORLD

Confronting the Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic
GERALD HORNE
MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS, 2015

By Don Jackson

By the late 18th century, the colony of Saint-Domingue was the crown jewel of the French empire, producing 40 percent of the sugar consumed by Europe and 60 percent of its coffee. Saint-Domingue's wealth was extracted with inhuman cruelty from as many as 800,000 enslaved persons of African descent who made up 90 percent of the population.

The colony's small white population was sleeping on a volcano. With Jacobin revolutionaries back in France clamoring for "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité," the volcano erupted in August 1791 as the enslaved rose up across the island against their so-called masters.

The 13 years of warfare that followed saw the Africans form an army and alternately oppose and ally with the French, the British and the Spanish and ultimately defeat them all. On January 1, 1804, the newly independent nation of Haiti was proclaimed, the first and only country in recorded history to be born of a slave revolt. It was also the first Black republic in the Western Hemisphere and declared slavery illegal within its borders. No other country at the time had such laws guaranteeing the extension of human rights to all its citizens.

INVISIBLE

Compared to other world-shaking revolutions of the modern era, the Haitian Revolution and its impact have largely been invisible to many in the West.

Confronting the Black Jacobins, Gerald Horne's new book, revisits the revolt and the period immediately after. A historian who has written numerous works about colonialism and slavery, Horne dives deep into the decades after the

revolution — up to 1874 in fact, to more clearly demonstrate the far-reaching reverberations of the revolution from the United States to Europe to the formation of the Dominican Republic,

with which Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola and a long and troubled history.

Horne argues that the Haitians' victory over Western imperialists and their practices of white supremacy created a crisis in the system of slavery, leading to its abolition in the Caribbean by the 1830s and ultimately in the United States in 1865. He reminds us that history is not made just from the top down but by the actions and reactions of people at the bottom and in the middle as well.

It was formerly enslaved persons brought from Haiti to Louisiana who led a revolt there in 1811. Denmark Vesey and his fellow conspirators were in contact with Haiti as they planned a massive slave revolt in 1822 in Charleston, South Carolina. Nat Turner's 1831 revolt in Virginia has been thought by some scholars to have had Haitian fingerprints on it.

However, history rarely unfolds in a single linear direction. While Haiti's victory inspired acts of resistance in the United States, historians have also noted that the French defeat in Haiti convinced Napoleon to abandon his dream of extending the French empire into the Mississippi River Valley. Instead, he sold off the vast Louisiana Territory (which would encompass 15 future states) and the strategic Port of New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River for \$15 million in 1803. This set in motion the rapid expansion of slavery in the United States over the coming decades.

The growing evils of slavery helped spur the abolitionist movement into existence during the 1830s. For both sides in battle over slavery, Haiti was a touchstone. For abolitionists, it provided a symbol of defiance and liberation. For an increasingly paranoid Southern slavocracy, it was the ultimate nightmare and would come to be

seen as an all-purpose bogeyman and fomenter of subversion. Thomas Jefferson, for example, warned a colleague to "expect pirates from St. Domingo."

JOHN BROWN AND HAITI

John Brown's failed raid on a government arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859 sent the South into paroxysms of fear and loathing. Brown and his small band of followers had sought to acquire enough arms to launch a slave rebellion/guerrilla war throughout the South. Brown had studied the Haitian Revolution in advance of the raid. Flags were flown at half-mast in Haiti when Brown was executed and to this day John Brown Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince.

Already alarmed by Brown's brazen plot and the outpouring of public support for him in the North, the South greeted news of Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election to the presidency by opting to secede from the Union. It would turn out to be a disastrous choice. The North prevailed in the Civil War, with 200,000 Black soldiers in the Union Army and Navy playing a decisive role. In addition, many African-Americans served as spies, scouts and agents for the Union.

In the United States, as in Haiti, the abolition of slavery was not granted, it was fought for and won.

The version of history we are taught in school very often presents the past as a series of separate and unrelated happenings. No wonder it's hard to see historic events like the end of slavery in Haiti and its subsequent demise in the United States as being interrelated. But thanks to books such as *Confronting the Black Jacobins*, we no longer have an excuse for such limited understanding. As Horne puts it, "Africans in particular and the international working class in general owe a massive debt of gratitude to the Black Jacobins of [Haiti]."



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FINAL BATTLE:

African and French troops clash in the Battle of Vertières, the final blow to the French attempt to defeat the Haitian Revolution and restore slavery. Original illustration by Auguste Raffet, engraving by Hébert.

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FEBRUARY 2016 EVENTS

WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 3 • 7:30 pm

Our Mother Ocean
book discussion with
Silvia Federici

Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Monica Chilesse's book on The Fisherman's Movement with Silvia Federici.

MONDAY • FEBRUARY 8 • 7:30 pm

CAMBODIA: Forced Eviction & the Violence of Law
with Simon Springer



Rethinking Property and Dispossession
This talk examines how proprietorship is inextricably bound to the violence of law.

TUESDAY • FEBRUARY 9 • 7:30 pm

Encyclopedia of Imperialism & Anti-Imperialism
Manny Ness with Eric Draitser and Christos Mais



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MONDAY • FEBRUARY 15 • 7:30 pm

PRISON & SOCIAL DEATH
Joshua Price with Silvia Federici



Prison and Social Death concerns American prisons' damage to prisoners and parolees.

SUNDAY • FEBRUARY 28 • 2:00 pm

Hillary Clinton: Born Again Progressive or Architect of Empire?
Doug Henwood

Join Doug Henwood for an afternoon discussion of Hillary Clinton based on his new book *My Turn* available from O/R books (orbooks.com)

MONDAY • FEBRUARY 29 • 7:30 pm

FAMILY, WELFARE & THE STATE
Silvia Federici

"Dalla Costa shows that with the New Deal, the state began to plan the 'social factory'...and was structured to maintain a patriarchal & racist order."
—Silvia Federici, from the Preface

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WED FEB 10 • 7PM • \$5 SUGGESTED

BOOK RELEASE: Kate Jessica Raphael will read from her new murder mystery novel that follows a female Palestinian police detective, a gay Jewish-American peace activist and an annoying Israeli police officer as they uncover secrets that point to war crimes and Israel's thriving underground sex trade.

TUES FEB 23 • 7PM • \$5 SUGGESTED

WOMEN'S/TRANS' POETRY JAM & OPEN MIKE: The jam showcases the famous, the infamous, the unknown. Deliver up to 8 minutes of your poetry, prose, songs and spoken word (for women and trans only).

THURS FEB 25 • 7PM • \$5 SUGGESTED

BOOK RELEASE: FUTURE OF WHITENESS. CUNY philosophy professor Linda Martin Alcoff will discuss her new book on the profound impact changing demographics are the racial identity of white, European Americans in the United States. Change is on the horizon, and the most important battleground is among white people themselves.

HISTORY
STATES

BOOKS

AN IRRESISTIBLE TEMPTATION

God's Bankers: A History of Money and Power at the Vatican
GERALD POSNER
SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2014

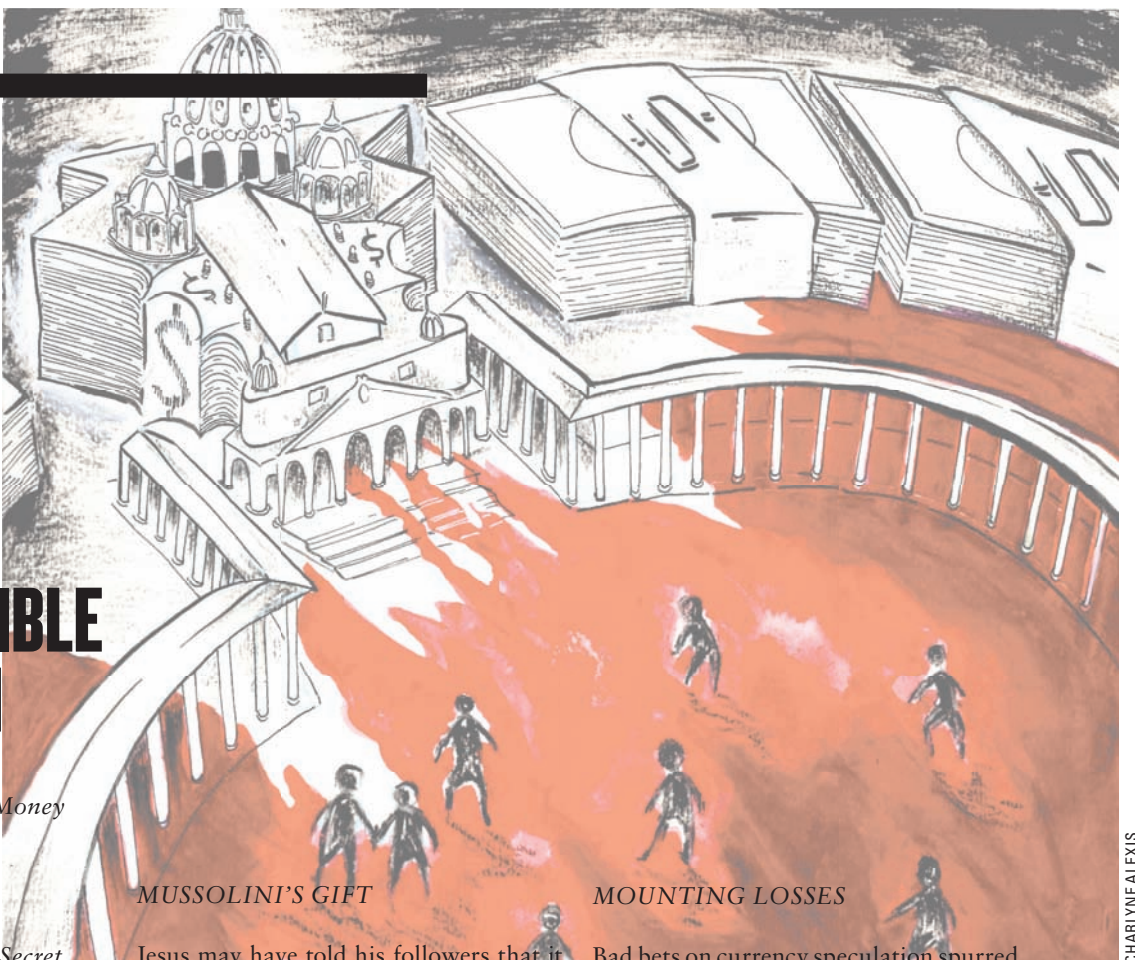
The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe
DAVID KERTZER
RANDOM HOUSE, 2014

By Bennett Baumer

God's Bankers begins with a corpse dangling from a London bridge — suicide or murder? On the dead man's wrist hangs a \$15,000 gold watch. There are plenty of skeletons in the Vatican's closet, both literally and figuratively. *God's Bankers* digs up these skeletons but focuses on the Vatican bank, known by its Italian initials, IOR. The book reads like a thriller but teaches like a history book and an investigative magazine piece.

It comes at a time when Pope Francis has garnered headlines because of his turn away from previous popes' stern conservatism, acknowledgment of crimes against children, more tolerant attitude toward gays, lesbians and divorced congregants and of course his critique of wanton environmental destruction and climate change. Less publicized are his efforts to clean up the scandal-tarred Vatican bank, a \$6.5 billion institution that has long served as a conduit for money laundering by mafioso, corrupt Italian politicians and other less than saintly characters.

Prior to the bank's 1942 founding, the Vatican had been reliant on tithing by the faithful called Peter's Pence, and prior to that, indulgences — a 16th-century pope even began an indulgences futures market — payment to the Church for sins committed (or yet to be committed!). After the fall of the Papal States and the unification of Italy in 1870, a series of popes refused to set foot outside the Vatican while continuing to warn of the evils of modernity and liberal democracy. Modern bookkeeping also eluded the church; revenues and expenses were murky and in cash crunches, the church turned to wealthy American dioceses and to the Jewish Rothschild banking family. Overreliant on tithing and taking on debt, the church turned to a string of Italian businessmen. *God's Bankers* follows the money trail.



MUSSOLINI'S GIFT

MOUNTING LOSSES

Jesus may have told his followers that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, but it was Italian financier Bernardino Nogara who advised Pope Pius XII to create the Vatican bank. The original seed money was \$92 million provided by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in the 1929 Lateran Pacts that codified the Vatican's relationship to the modern Italian state.

David Kertzer's *The Pope and Mussolini* is a deep dive into the political maneuverings between the Vatican and fascist Italy, while *God's Bankers* explores the Vatican bank's role in laundering Nazi money and the historic influence of anti-Semitism on church practices. The arrangement reached with Mussolini — which continues in force to this day — compensated the Vatican for lost lands during Italian unification and established Vatican City as a sovereign entity. The church in turn agreed to curtail Catholic political parties that were critical of Il Duce's fascist state. A common theme in both books is the church's silence towards the Nazis' destruction of European Jewry and its tacit alliance with fascism.

Nogara did business with both the Axis powers and the Allies. In the postwar era, Posner recounts, the Vatican bank wheeled and dealt like “any Wall Street investment bank” and counted a “postwar concentration in Italian industry” as well as international holdings.

According to his research, the Vatican bank's financial chicanery grew more complex and shady. Italian bankers Roberto Calvi, Michele Sindona and Lithuanian-American Archbishop Paul Marcinkus pursued speculative schemes that proved disastrous. Marcinkus, a bodyguard and close confidant of Pope Paul VI with no formal training in banking or finance, was appointed the Vatican bank's president in 1971. The questions about his business practices soon followed. Posner's investigative and journalistic prowess are on display as he interviews Justice Department prosecutors decades later about their unsuccessful pursuit of Marcinkus' involvement in a '60s fake bonds scheme linked to the mafia (Posner also reveals Marcinkus as being a U.S. spy).

Bad bets on currency speculation spurred the failure in 1974 of Long Island-based Franklin Bank — then the United States's 19th-largest bank — which was controlled by Sindona. Franklin's collapse became an international scandal and the Vatican bank lost an estimated \$56 million. Sindona's business empire in Italy subsequently unraveled as well. He paid the Mob to murder an Italian prosecutor who was hot on his case and blackmailed Calvi for his compromised financial dealings.

The Vatican bank suffered further losses and embarrassment in 1982 with the collapse of Banco Ambrosiano, of which the church was the main shareholder. No church officials ever faced criminal charges but the Vatican did acknowledge its “moral involvement” in the fiasco and paid out \$244 million to its creditors.

There were more plot twists to come. Sindona would die in prison from drinking cyanide-laced coffee, and Calvi? He was the banker found hanging from a London bridge. Investigators initially ruled his death a suicide but later declared it a murder. No one has ever been convicted of the crime. As for Marcinkus, he was never indicted or arrested and quietly retired to Sun City, Arizona where he died an assistant parish priest in 2006.

Despite the bad press, the Vatican bank's culture of secrecy and corruption has remained largely intact. Under pressure from European Union regulators, Francis' predecessor Benedict XVI enacted some minor reforms, including the Vatican's first anti-money-laundering statute. Since ascending to the papacy Francis has moved aggressively, appointing an independent financial auditor and a 15-member advisory group, which includes seven lay members, to make the Vatican bank more transparent and comply with international banking standards. Still, after reading Posner and Kertzer's deeply researched and well-written books, one can't help but be skeptical about whether church officials can resist the worldly temptations provided by overseeing a multibillion-dollar bank.

LONG LIVE THE GOBLIN KING

BY DAVID MEADOW

The Goblin King is dead. Long live the Goblin King.

My first substantive experience with David Bowie — that is, beyond hearing a hit song at a party — was watching him as the big-haired, Spandex-clad, humanoid Goblin villain in *Labyrinth*. I didn't know much about Bowie going into that cult film, but I was clearly seeing the work of a consummate performer. Every sinister cock of the eyebrow was studied, every baring of the lower teeth was purposeful and every swooping vocal interval drew on years of practice, all to create an aura of forbidding glee. For some people, it was much deeper: my acquaintance in college gushed, "I loved his androgyny in *Labyrinth*, even before I knew I was transgender!"

Bowie's thoroughgoing genderfuckery is only the most obvious thing he did to broaden horizons. (To be sure, he turned in far more distinguished film performances than the above, in a set of three dozen). The liminal spaces he occupied in music, film and elsewhere, and the cultural bridges he built, allowed new possibilities for all audiences. He constantly visited themes of otherness — does it get any more alien than song and album titles like "Space Oddity," "Rebel Rebel" and *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars?* — yet he was also utterly self-possessed in mainstream contexts.

None of this occurred in a social vacuum. I've read and heard countless stories of how Bowie gave people the courage to be themselves, as he defiantly wore a succession of dresses, space suits, jumpsuits, double-breasted suits, lightning jolts, lipstick/eye shadow schemes and historical costumes. Granted, there are competing narratives about what kind of underlying queerness all these getups reflected. Bowie unabashedly mentioned relationships with men and women, but when asked to assign himself a label, he often played coy (as was his right). He loved saying he and his first wife Angie met while "fucking the same bloke," but later claimed he regretted calling himself bisexual. Still, dare we police the identity of anyone with the guts to push the envelope that much — and anyway, is ambiguity such a bad thing? Surely, Bowie was instrumental in increasing our comfort with it.

Besides blurring gender and sexual lines, Bowie was among the more outspo-

ken white musicians in advocating against racism. Witness his 1983 MTV interview criticizing the channel for marginalizing Black artists. Few whites, even now, are this direct about the problem, and this adamant in rejecting excuses. Bowie's "racial record," of course, is mixed. He stained that record with bizarre statements in which he appeared to endorse fascists and Nazis (and also appeared to be drugged out of his mind), but later formed the group Tin Machine, which cut an album warning about neofascism. There's also his cringe-inducing "China Girl" video, visually groundbreaking but full of dated stereotypes. On a subtler level, Bowie probably sensed his own participation in a grossly unfair pattern of white profit from Black creations, and sought to push back by championing current Black and Latino artists (check out the *Today Show* interview from '93 touching on hip-hop) and celebrating the cross-pollination. An article on MTV.com, "11 Rap Songs You Didn't Know Sampled David Bowie," chronicles how household-name rappers like Dr. Dre and Jay-Z continued that cross-pollination.

Speaking of mixed records, there are the claims that recently resurfaced — that Bowie once committed statutory rape on the then-14-year-old groupie Lori Mattix and others, and forcible rape on Wanda Nichols. There's plenty in there about his deep flaws as a human being, but there's also the enabling media and the culture of celebrity, and it's good that we're having these discussions and holding our idols accountable, not a minute too soon.

Whatever his personal shortcomings, Bowie has the distinction of inspiring — and healing, vexing and amusing — multiple generations. He was a complete artist and a fairly complete world citizen, and used his faculties in unorthodox ways. So I say again, long live the Goblin King. And Ziggy Stardust. And the Thin White Duke. And the David Bowie behind them all. But this declaration doesn't change much. They all assured their own immortality through their own stubborn, searching, brilliant effort.

DAVID BOWIE
1947–2016

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