

#213: MARCH 2016

THE INDYPENDER

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CUNY IN CRISIS

TUITION IS CLIMBING. AGING FACILITIES ARE CRUMBLING. THE FACULTY MAY GO ON STRIKE AND THE GOVERNOR KEEPS MAKING THINGS WORSE. WHAT NEXT? P12

WHAT IS UBER'S END GAME?, P4

DE BLASIO AT THE HALFWAY POINT, P6

GLOBAL MUSIC UPRISING, P20

READER'S VOICE, P2

COMMUNITY CALENDAR, P3

OCCUPY THE PARTY, P10

THE BLACK VOTE, P11

COLLEGE FOR ALL, P16

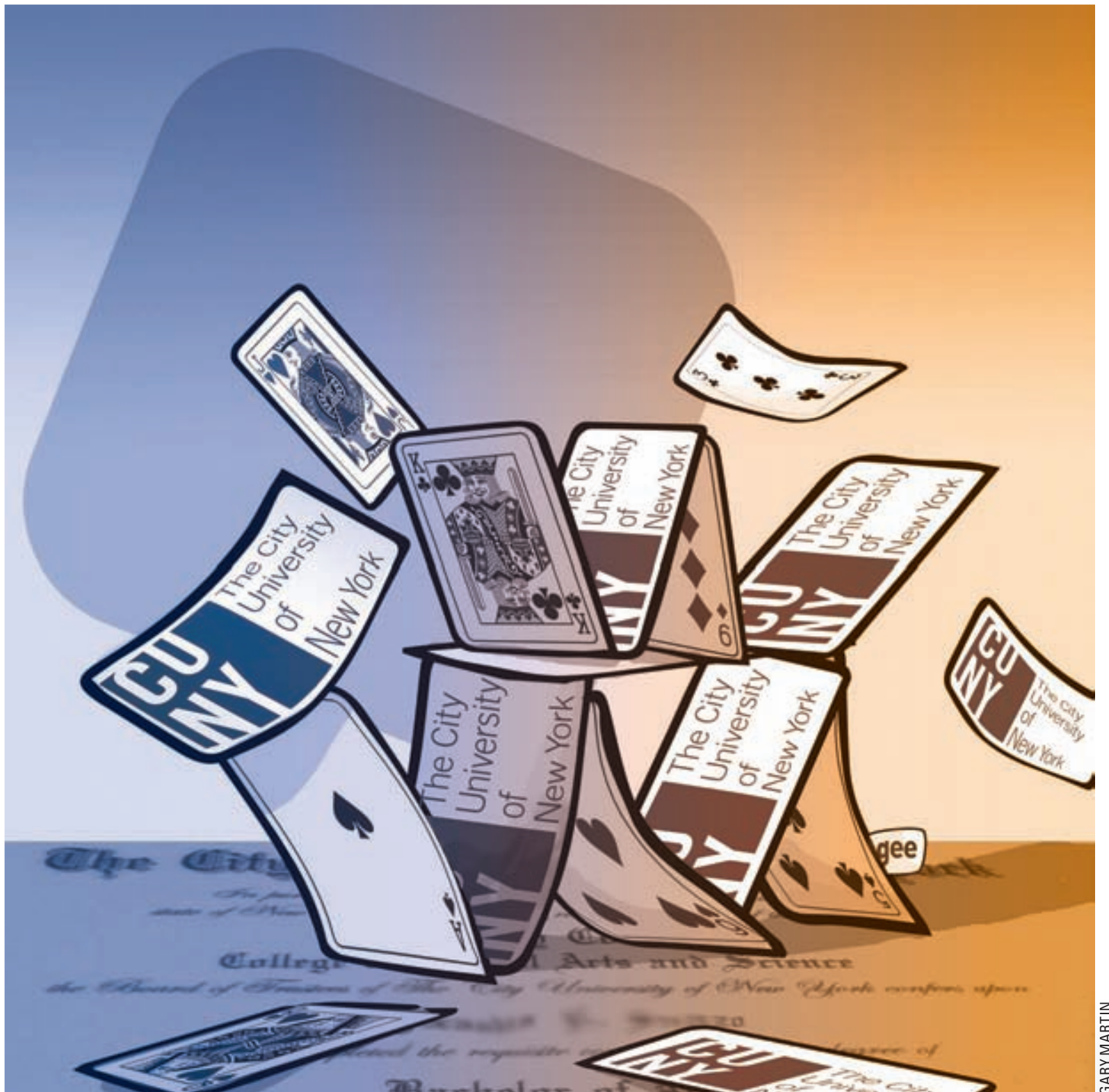
CLINTON WAR MACHINE, P17

ARAB & MUSLIM FRIENDS, P18

PALESTINIAN COMEDY, P19

HOW TO STAGE A REVOLT, P21

ASTRO NOISE, P22





THE INDEPENDENT

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READER'S VOICE

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

The words in Nicholas Powers's prose poem ("A Love Supreme: In Good Times and Bad, the Black Soul Embraces and Lifts Up Its People," February *Indydependent*) are powerful and they move me back to another time. A time in my life when sense of self and my own Blackness was being formed to when I learned the history of my people was not what I was taught in school but was buried below the white-washed B.S. served to me every day.

— DIANE MADISON-W.

Sure did love the article/poem. It inspired one from me and that's a good thing right there. Bless the *Indy* and bless Nicholas Powers. And I hope you can remember that there are so many white folks that hated and hate all the horrible wrongs done to you.

— SANDRA O'NEAL

HEALING WORDS

Jamara Wakefield, you do indeed have healing powers ("Why I Love Being Black: Reaching Deep into the Earth," February *Indydependent*). And as the mother of two black girls, I cannot tell you how comforting it is to read your embrace of your blackness. It is something I strive for everyday. Thank you for giving me hope that it is getting through!

— ANONYMOUS

Your blackness is magical! I salute you for articulating such a visual story of blackness and womanhood.

— SUSANA

ICE'S MISPLACED PRIORITIES

Your article "Feds Carry Out Stealth Raids Against NYC Immigrants" (February *Indydependent*) underlines the urgent need for immigration reform to change the law that makes all non-citizens with criminal convictions automatically deportable with no possibility of appeal. That is why lawful immigrants — with green cards and families including U.S. citizen spouses or children, such as the two fathers in this article — are targets for Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE). Why should even undocumented immigrants whose convictions occurred years, even decades, ago when they were youths, but have since lived law-abiding lives and formed families and established businesses and paid their taxes, be deportable now? Why should anyone who has already served his time be doubly punished by being exiled too — with no chance to appeal?

For now, ICE can review each person they detain, to decide whether to deport them or to give them "deferred action" and be sent home to await the possibility of immigration reform that will let them stay here with their families. People like those in this article should not be ICE's first targets, and on review, should not be deported at all!

— GRACE GOODMAN
Clerk, NYC New Sanctuary Coalition

STOP CRIMINALIZING DRUG USERS

One important step in reducing the impact of so-called stealth raids on immigrants is to decriminalize the users of drugs. In Michael Moore's must-see film *Where to Invade Next*, we follow him to Portugal, which has decriminalized all drug users since 2001. Possession and use is no longer a criminal offense but a symptom requiring treatment. The further our society moves away from the criminalization of its people, stops putting children on the pipeline to prison and ends the practice of criminalizing its citizens as an excuse for locking up to make the big bucks for our privatized prison economy, the better we will all be.

— DIANA STEWART

BERNIE WILL SHOW THE WAY

The author provides a very cynical ending to an otherwise good article ("Funding the 'Political Revolution' \$27 at a Time," February *Indydependent*) when he writes "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."

Public opinion can and should run on strong conviction, and Bernie is just the man to teach us all that.

— JACQUELINE HUDDLESTON



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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

MON MAR 7

7–9pm • \$30
REGISTER VIA SCHOMBURGCENTER.EVENTBRITE.COM
WOMEN'S JAZZ FESTIVAL: SACRED REVOLUTION
Sacred Revolution will kick off this year's Women's Jazz Festival at the Schomburg Center. With an eclectic and dynamic show full of soul, blues and funk. Contemporary musicians will explore the cross-genre works of artists such as Mahalia Jackson, Mavis Staples and Sister Rosetta Thorpe. Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard
nypl.org/locations/schomburg

MON MAR 7

7:30–9:30pm • Sliding Scale
\$6/\$10/\$15
BOOK LAUNCH: IT'S NOT OVER: LEARNING FROM THE SOCIALIST EXPERIMENT
From the Paris Commune to the fall of the Soviet Union, Pete Dolack analyzes past attempts to supplant capitalism with an eye toward what emerging and future movements can learn from this history.
Brooklyn Commons 388 Atlantic Ave.
marxedproject.org

TUE MAR 8

4–5:30pm • Free
PERFORMANCE: FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
Acclaimed actress Vinie Burrows will lead a celebration of the life of former slave Harriet Tubman who returned to the South to lead hundreds of enslaved persons to freedom via the Underground Railroad.
Hunter College Lang Recital Hall
Enter on E. 69th St. btwn Lexington and Park Ave.

grannypeacebrigade.org

TUE MAR 8

7am–8pm • Free
WORKSHOP: COMPOSTING 101
This introductory workshop will provide attendees an overview of composting in NYC including how to become involved in composting in your community.
Lower East Side Ecology Center
East River Promenade at Grand St
212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

WED MAR 9

6:30–8:00pm • Free
DISCUSSION: THE GREECE OF THE CARIBBEAN? PUERTO RICO'S DEBT CRISIS
What does Puerto Rico's \$72 billion debt crisis say about its relationship to the United States government? What led to this level of indebtedness, and who stands to profit from it? Participating in the roundtable discussion will be journalist Juan Gonzalez, filmmaker Sofia Gallisá and José Alejandro La Luz of the Stand With Puerto Rico Coalition.
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
275 Madison Ave., Suite 2114 (use 40th St. entrance)
rosalux-nyc.org

WED MAR 16

6–9pm • Free
TRAINING: POZITIVELY RESILIENT
Learn about HIV/AIDS through cultural work and performance. Participants will be exposed to safer sex tools, provided additional resources and information through connection with community partners, and will participate in communal conversations to strengthen the fight against AIDS. The challenge of accessible and preventative resources among communities of color will be addressed.
Audre Lorde Project Manhattan
147 W. 24th St
212-463-0342 • alp.org

WED MAR 16, 23 & 30

5:30–7:30pm • Sliding Scale
\$25/\$35/\$45
CLASS: OIL, WAR AND VALUE CREATION: A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE
George Caffentzis will offer a unique three-session mini-class on how the petroleum industry operates at the intersection of some of the most important political phenomena concerning capitalism of our time, from climate change, to ISIS's self-declared caliphate,

to volatile oil prices.
The Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave marxedproject.org

THU MAR 17

7–9pm • \$5–10 sliding scale
DISCUSSION: WHY I LOVE BEING BLACK
Independent contributing writers Nicholas Powers, Jamara Wakefield and Brittany Williams - will join singer and performance artist Lady Dragonfly on March 17. They will discuss their experiences of learning to love their culture and themselves despite the deep-seated societal hostility to blackness grounded in 400 years of white supremacy.
Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave.
independent.org • 212-904-1282

FRI MAR 18

7pm • \$5 suggested
READING: THE VALUE OF HOMELESSNESS
Author Craig Willse draws on his own activist work as well as interviews with homeless services providers in several major cities to offer new ways for students and scholars of social work, urban inequality, racial capitalism, and political theory to comprehend the central role of homelessness in governance and economy today.
Bluestockings
172 Allen St. 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

SAT MAR 19

12–3pm • Free
MONTHLY POTLUCK: SHARE A COMMUNAL MEAL WITH FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS & COMRADES
Lend a hand in the communal kitchen from 11–2pm, or help with multiple building improvement projects from 12–2pm at this popular Bushwick community center. Food will be served at 2 o'clock.
176 St. Nicholas Ave.
facebook.com/events/1756175151278998

MON MAR 21

6:30pm • Free, Reservations Required
DISCUSSION: RACE AND OTHER DIVERSITIES
As Americans debate the role race plays in society, more thought is being given to how race, gender and sexuality intersect and combine. Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole will discuss these complexities with Wade Davis, a former NFL player and executive director of

the You Can Play Project. CUNY Graduate Center
C200: Proshansky Auditorium
365 Fifth Ave,
http://www.gc.cuny.edu/

MON MAR 21

\$30, Register via schomburgcenter.eventbrite.com
MUSIC: WOMEN'S JAZZ FESTIVAL: ALICIA HALL MORAN & MAL DEVISA
Performer and composer, Alicia Hall Moran, presents her project, Black Wall Street, a staged concert depicting a story about money and the lesser-known tale of Black American finance in New York City - and beyond. Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard
nypl.org/locations/schomburg

WED MAR 30

7pm • \$5 suggested
SCREENING: TRAPPED
In the past six years, 288 laws regulating abortion providers have been passed by state legislatures. Trapped is a riveting documentary that follows doctors, clinic workers and lawyers who are on the front lines of the battle to keep abortion safe and legal for American women. It won the Special Jury Award for Social Impact Filmmaking at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.
Bluestockings Bookstore & Cafe
172 Allen Street 212-777-6028 * bluestockings.com

SAT APR 2

8pm • \$18 suggested
LIVE MUSIC: PAT LAMANNA
Singer-songwriter Pat Lamanna performs politically-themed folk songs that are often poignant and funny.
People's Voice Cafe
40 E. 35th St.
peoplesvoicecafe.org



MUSIC TO OUR EARS:
The Schomburg Center will host its 2016 Women's Jazz Festival during the month of March.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE:
Saddled with \$72 billion in debt it can't pay, Puerto Rico totters on the verge of bankruptcy. At a March 9 roundtable hosted by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, panelists including Democracy Now! co-host Juan Gonzalez will discuss the origins of the crisis and how Puerto Rico might respond to the demands of international bankers.

APPED TO BE POORER

UBER'S LATEST FARE CUT PUTS SQUEEZE ON DRIVERS, TAXI INDUSTRY

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

“Last week, I worked 94 hours,” Uber driver Jobayed Choudhury says, standing outside City Hall on Feb. 17. A 35-year-old immigrant from Bangladesh who’s married with two children, he points to a pay-stub message on his cell phone that showed he’d grossed \$1,388 for 94.27 hours. After gas, car payments, tolls and insurance, he said, that worked out to about \$900 net. He cleared barely \$20,000 last year, he added.

Long hours and low pay were the biggest grievances Uber’s overwhelmingly immigrant drivers cited when they staged a 72-hour strike in early February, shutting down service at Kennedy and LaGuardia airports. “Friday I worked 19 hours. Saturday I worked 16 hours. Yesterday I only worked 8 hours,” said Alek, 29, one of several hundred drivers protesting outside Uber’s Long Island City offices on Feb. 1. (He did not want to give his last name.) A Russian immigrant and the father of a baby girl, he estimates that he averages between \$7 and \$8 an hour after Uber’s 25 percent commission, gas and tolls. He also pays \$500 a month for insurance and \$422 in car payments.

The strike was triggered by the company’s Jan. 29 announcement that it was cutting fares by 15 percent. That

money comes directly out of drivers’ pockets, as they work for a percentage of the fares collected, on top of fixed expenses like gas, insurance and car payments. The fare reduction was the second in the past two years, and Uber has also increased the commission it takes on fares. New drivers have to pay as much as 35 percent. Sales tax is also deducted, and tips are “included” in the fare.

The reduction in incomes has left many drivers feeling like the victims of a bait-and-switch scheme. In 2011, the minimum fare was \$12 and Uber took only a 10 percent commission, explained former car-service driver William Luciano, 43, of Brooklyn. Back then, he could make between \$1,800 and \$2,000 in a five-day week. But the minimum fare, the “drop,” is now \$7, and Uber charges him a 25 percent commission.

“It was good back then, but things changed,” said Rafata Hussain, 27, of Queens.

Mostafa Abdal, 60, of Brooklyn, switched to Uber after more than 30 years of driving yellow cabs, because he saw ads that drivers could make \$1,600 a week — ads he now calls “propaganda” and “garbage.” He quit a month ago and went back to a yellow cab.

Bhairavi Desai, head of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a labor union advocating for yellow-cab, green-cab

and Uber drivers, calls the rise of app-based cabs the biggest change in the taxi industry since the 1980s, when yellow-cab drivers were switched from working on commission to leasing their vehicles. That change increased the money drivers could make on a very good shift, but meant they had to buy their own gas and risked losing money on a bad shift — while the owner was guaranteed a lease payment. It also eliminated the drivers’ already weak union, as it made them independent contractors, who are legally prohibited from collective bargaining.

She says Uber’s business model is “driving us backwards to the Dark Ages.” Because it gets a percentage of every fare and has no investment in equipment — the drivers own and maintain their own vehicles — it can flood the streets with drivers, and it doesn’t matter how little they make because Uber gets its percentage.

She believes that Uber’s ultimate goal is using low fares and low wages to squeeze out competitors and gain a monopoly over taxi service, and it’s willing to take short-term losses to do that. “I think that’s what Wall Street expects them to do,” Desai said. “Why else would they have rates like Orange County’s and be flooding the streets with vehicles?” In Orange County, Calif., she explains, the drop is zero and the fare 64 cents a mile — and drivers make less than \$5 an hour after



WHY I LOVE BEING BLACK

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CONTRIBUTING WRITERS NICHOLAS POWERS, JAMARA WAKEFIELD AND BRITTANY WILLIAMS WITH LADY DRAGONFLY.

MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE WILL ALSO BE INVITED TO SHARE THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON WHY THEY LOVE BEING BLACK.

THURSDAY MARCH 17

BROOKLYN COMMONS, 388 ATLANTIC AVE.

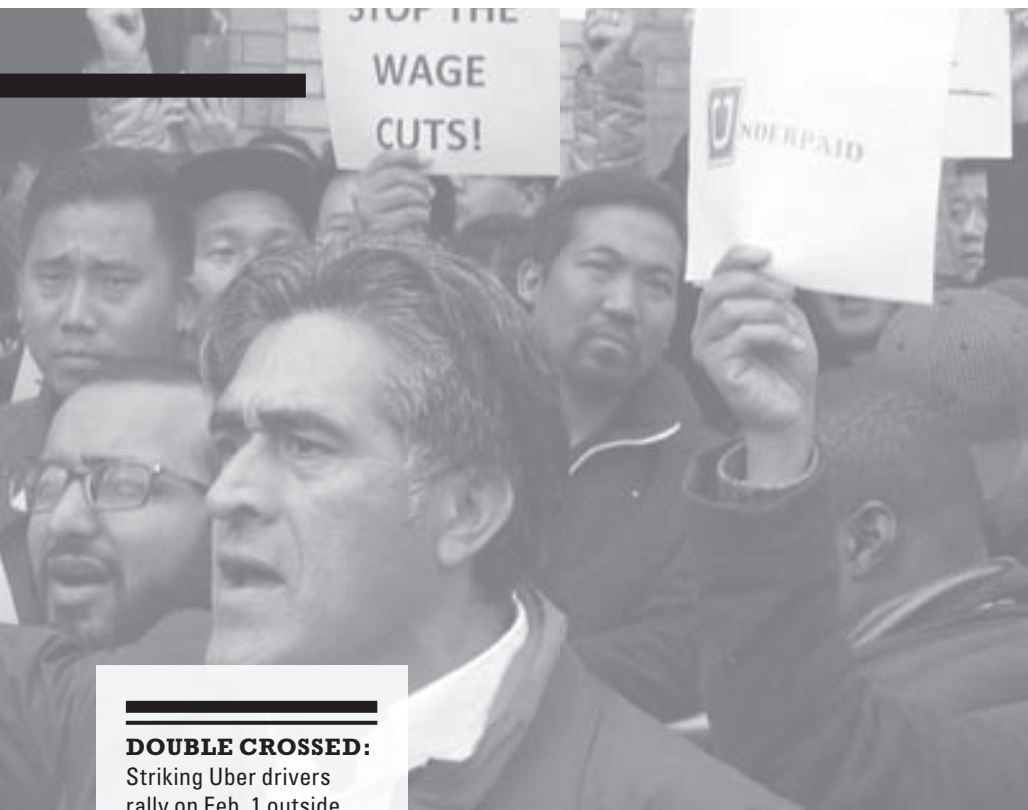
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SUGGESTED DONATION: \$5-10.



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STEVEN WISHNIA

DOUBLE CROSSED:

Striking Uber drivers rally on Feb. 1 outside company's offices in Long Island City. Uber cut the drivers' fares by 15% in late January.

LOOKING FOR

HELP: Taxi drivers rally at City Hall to protest Uber's unfair business practices.



STEVEN WISHNIA

expenses.

Uber also envisions developing driverless cars. "When there's no other dude in the car, the cost of taking an Uber anywhere becomes cheaper than owning a vehicle," CEO Travis Kalanick told a tech-industry conference in 2014. On the other hand, that might mean the company would have to pay for buying, insuring and maintaining those vehicles.

In New York, the Taxi Workers Alliance, along with the black-cab drivers represented by District 15 of the International Association of Machinists, want the City Council to pass laws and the Taxi and Limousine Commission to create regulations that would set a minimum fare for app-based rides, guarantee app-company drivers a minimum number of trips, give passengers the option to tip and require the companies to show that new drivers can make a living wage before expanding their workforce. They also want to establish a fund to cover workers' compensation, disability, retirement and basic health benefits for drivers, said James Conigliaro of District 15.

The courts are another front. In California, a trial is scheduled for June in a class-action suit to declare Uber drivers employees instead of independent contractors. If workers are independent contractors, the company that hires them doesn't have to pay into Social Security, disability, unemployment or workers' compensation for them. The suit also seeks a ruling that drivers are entitled to be reimbursed for expenses like gas and vehicle maintenance, and challenges Uber's instructing passengers

not to tip drivers.

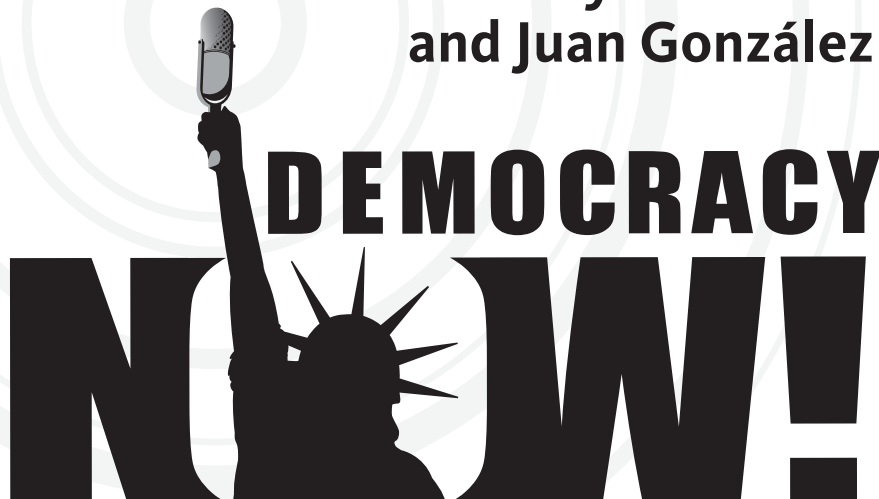
Uber, says Conigliaro, claims it's not an employer and that the drivers are independent contractors, but, he added, "it controls the rates, it controls the dispatching of cars and it controls who gets work."

Efforts to regulate Uber face a massive lobbying operation. Uber has hired David Plouffe — formerly a top adviser to President Barack Obama — as an executive. Last year, when Mayor Bill de Blasio backed temporarily capping the number of Uber drivers, the company slammed him with an ad campaign calling him a pawn of the medallion-cab monopoly, protecting racist drivers who won't pick up black people and trying to "destroy 10,000 job opportunities." The mayor dropped the idea.

Uber is also seeking state laws that would define it as a "transportation network company" exempt from the usual regulations for taxis. These are based on the legal premise that it is not a taxi company, just an app by which people who own cars can give rides to people who want them.

People like the cheapness and convenience of app-based cabs, Congliaro says, but "we have to think about what it does to our society." Uber, he says, is "a company that's proven they're not into laws and regulations stopping them."

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



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PINNED DOWN AT CITY HALL

UNDER STEADY ATTACK FROM THE RIGHT AND A GROWING DISAPPOINTMENT TO HIS SUPPORTERS ON THE LEFT, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY BILL DE BLASIO CAN REVIVE HIS FADING FORTUNES

BY ETHAN YOUNG

The 1993 unseating of New York City's first — and so far only — mayor who wasn't a white guy is pertinent to Mayor Bill de Blasio's mid-term predicament. Mayor David Dinkins' ouster involved a near-riot by police outside City Hall, led by Rudy Giuliani. Rudy, that former fair-haired boy of city government reform, stirred the cops to a high boil with chants and curses aimed at the incumbent. As a result, after one term, the progressive alliance that pushed out presumed mayor-for-life Ed Koch in 1989 was beaten by a cop-centered law-and-order drive. Race and real estate values were major but unspoken driving forces in the election.

Today, de Blasio is a progressive to the mainstream media; by red state standards, he's a Bolshevik. His base is eroding, in part due to relentless attacks from the press, but also because of a history of compromises with powerful foes. Voters now see him as a fading liberal, demoralizing his supporters and inflaming the right.

A little context is necessary here. De Blasio's election was a win for progressives in New York City, because it brought together a range of demographic groups — working-class voters of various nationalities and races, unions and upscale

liberals. The mayor is a textbook example of a one-time radical whose political instincts and savvy took him to the heart of Democratic Party politics in the city and state. He flew a lefty flag and sped by Christine Quinn, the presumed Democratic centrist heir to former Mayor Michael Bloomberg. De Blasio promised reform, especially in the key areas of education, policing and housing. He has delivered but also defaulted on some of what his base demands and expects.

As for the right, it has a different shape in New York than a lot of the country. We have our *New York Post* readers, but they tend to be fueled more by the sports pages and photos of scantily clad young women than by Rupert Murdoch's perpetual editorial lies and slander. For all intents and purposes there is no Tea Party. Instead we have several centers of corrupt power.

Economic power in the city is dominated by finance, insurance and real estate, otherwise known as the FIRE sector. Their main concern is that government keep money flowing toward them, changing hands among smaller businesses and not diverted into public services. Their enemies are the public sector unions and community groups that were the main get-out-the-vote engine of de Blasio's campaign. Big money in the city views de Blasio as a threat, reflected in hostile press reporting depicting a city consumed by raging crime

and homelessness, and a mayor in thrall to greedy citizens and thuggish unions. Crime is not actually rising, though homelessness is. But the presence of the poor is viewed as the presence of crime by much of the wealthy property owners taking over Manhattan and Brooklyn and finding new "hot spots" to promote for gentrification in the Bronx.

The police department is a power in itself. The ranks are dominated by whites who fear civilians. Officers answer not to City Hall but to the commissioner. Many are on the take, while many more see their job as using force to keep the populace in line. This modus operandi is backed up by orders from the top and by a department culture that views police as victims of an ungrateful city. The largest police union, the Patrolman's Benevolent Association (PBA), has become the most outspoken voice of hostility toward black and brown city residents, and the NYPD is in serious trouble for its spying and interfering with Muslim civilians.

The tensions between the mayor and the NYPD are unusual because de Blasio's commissioner, Bill Bratton, was seen as the only available counterweight to his predecessor. Ray Kelly served for 12 years under Bloomberg, making him the longest-running top cop in the city's history. Kelly built up a loyal hierarchy, with a hard-line street confrontation strategy that became too much for the majority of

HOW'S HE DOING?

Bill de Blasio recently passed the halfway point in his first term as mayor. Here's what some leading progressive thinkers have to say about how the mayor is handling some of the most pressing issues facing the city.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Bill de Blasio's housing plan promises to build and preserve 200,000 units of "affordable" housing in 10 years. It may deliver on the numbers, but most of the housing won't be affordable to those who need it the most. And, contrary to the claims from City Hall, the mayor's zoning plans will fuel gentrification and displacement instead of stopping it.

This mayor's approach is not significantly different from the housing plans of previous mayors, also defined by their quantitative goals, incentives to private developers and subsidies to middle- and upper-income households. Still, de Blasio's policies are presented with a new twist.

Unlike Bloomberg, de Blasio's team supported limiting rent increases in rent-stabilized buildings. They also talk a lot about neighborhood preservation and planning with people. But the talk is getting them in trouble because people who pay attention see it for what it is — just talk. All of the action is going into getting more housing units — even if that feeds gentrification and displaces current residents and businesses. Also, de Blasio has revived and surpassed Bloomberg's failed plan to privatize public housing. He has leased some buildings to landlords and plans to build

new housing with private partners on New York City Housing Authority land. He privatized one public library site in Brooklyn to get a few "affordable" housing units and is planning to privatize another.

This is just the beginning. Mayor Bloomberg rezoned huge areas of the city, giving upscale developers plenty of new opportunities to make a killing. It's now de Blasio's job to rezone the prime territory that's left, also to spur new development. These are communities of color that are already facing gentrification and displacement. This is where the administration's rhetoric about community preservation and planning is being deployed with gusto, along with a new tactic, inclusionary zoning.

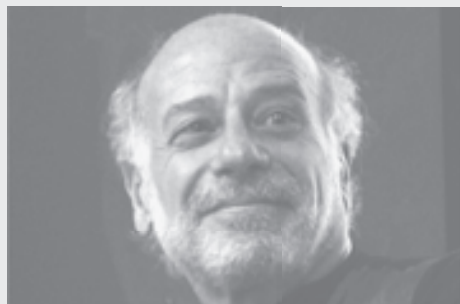
The mayor's proposal for inclusionary zoning, soon to be up for a vote in the City Council, would require that a proportion of new housing built in rezoned areas be permanently affordable to people who meet specific income limits. In principle, this is a good idea. In practice, the rezonings in communities of color are bound to result in the displacement of more affordable housing units than they create. And most of the "affordable" units would be out of reach for existing residents.

Facing intense community opposition, this "progressive" mayor may well get thrown off his high horse. He may get some of these rezonings, but at what price? Will his supporters in communities of color decide to stay home during the next election instead of going out to the polls?

Finally, de Blasio's stumbling over the homelessness issue suggests there is something to the claim that he has ignored the more than 60,000 people who have no place to sleep. These are people who cannot wait for, or qualify for, his affordable housing units. While recent moves to

reduce the use of shelters and provide permanent housing are good, it remains to be seen whether he can deliver. The mayor is, however, pacifying his conservative critics by unleashing more police to round up the homeless.

— TOM ANGOTTI



Tom Angotti is professor of urban affairs and planning at Hunter College and the Graduate Center. He is the author of *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate*.

POLICING

Bill de Blasio's mayoral campaign masterfully produced the impression that he would create sweeping police reform in response to the movement against stop-and-frisk. A careful review of his statements, however, shows that he had a more nuanced position than someone like John Liu, who called for a blanket ban on the practice. In fact, de Blasio made it clear that he favored the neoconservative "broken windows" policing philosophy initiated under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani that underlay many of those stops.

Therefore, it should come as little surprise that

reforms in the NYPD have been thin at best, even in the wake of the death of Eric Garner and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. There has been a significant reduction in stop-and-frisk activity, but this began even before he took office and was driven by the outpouring of opposition in communities of color and a successful federal lawsuit.

The appointment of William Bratton as police commissioner was the first indication that change would be slow to come. Bratton, an architect of broken windows policing, maintained an adherence to that philosophy even as the NYPD dialed back in a few areas such as arrests for low-level marijuana possession. Contacts between the police and the public have declined somewhat, but the starkly racialized nature of those contacts remains in place. As the Police Reform Organizing Project has shown in its Court Monitoring Project, the vast majority of people appearing at arraignments and receiving summonses are Black and Latino.

In the wake of Garner's death, there was hope that some reforms would be made in overly aggressive policing. De Blasio and Bratton announced new training, of dubious value, but continued to defend the order maintenance policing orientation that contributed to Garner's death. What's worse is that instead of reducing the burden of policing, de Blasio actually agreed to significantly expand the number of police by 1,300 officers. Politically, de Blasio is intent on suppressing crime and disorder in keeping with the city's overall renaissance and accompanying real estate boom and seems willing to invest more resources and power in the police to achieve it. This can be seen most clearly in recent NYPD efforts to drive homeless people out of public places in ar-



JESSICA PATRICK

New Yorkers. This was a big factor in de Blasio's election; he was running against Kelly's record as much as Bloomberg's. Bratton had previously served as commissioner under Giuliani before being bounced because he was just as camera-hungry as his boss, a big no-no for the showboating ex-mayor.

Bratton was de Blasio's pick because he had the background and ties to the NYPD to enable a promised shift away from Kelly's abusive "stop-and-frisk" policing. Bratton favored a more moderate, but still abusive, "broken windows" approach, emphasizing arrests for minor crimes rather than constant harassment of civilians. This dialed back a grossly unjust standard of policing, but only slightly. Bratton has held firm to the view that the NYPD must be only lightly regulated from outside. Those hit by aggressive policing are feeling abandoned by the mayor. Yet between Kelly loyalists and the PBA, both mayor and commissioner

are still at loggerheads with a restless, paranoid armed force.

These poles of power are setting limits on what de Blasio might (or might not) do to fix the gaping holes in public services. But his biggest headache is his endless battle with fellow Democrat, Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The de Blasio-Cuomo "feud" is about the divide in the Democratic Party. Both the mayor and the governor proclaim their dedication to government serving the public, unlike the rightwing anti-government populism that has become the single message of the GOP. Cuomo represents the deal-making, machine maintenance approach, in the tradition of Ed Koch and Rahm Emanuel. Like those two specimens, he has his eye on bigger things and is openly reaching for them: power, money and the support of the powerful and rich. In contrast, de Blasio is trying

Continued on next page

as like East Harlem, where the NYCLU is now suing them for illegally destroying people's medications, IDs and personal property.

One area that has shown some improvement is the policing of protests. Early climate change demos were treated much better than under the previous two mayors and the early Black Lives Matter protests generally were as well. Since then, things have become a bit more restrictive again, and participants at some events, like Critical Mass, continue to face harassment. There are also concerns about a more militarized response from the new Strategic Response Group, which also has counter-terrorism duties as opposed to the older borough-based Task Force units.

As for the future, the best hope lies in expanding the mayor's funding of programs that could reduce the need for police. Community-based violence intervention programs, mental health services and supportive housing could contribute to a safer city without the use of police. Activists need to push for more of these alternatives as well as demands to shrink the criminal justice apparatus to pay for it. New Yorkers should look to the example of the Youth Justice Coalition in Los Angeles, which recently called for diverting 1 percent of all criminal justice spending in L.A. County — that's \$100 million — to programs for youth, including jobs, youth centers and violence intervention workers. Real police reform would involve even more such shifting of resources in a host of areas, such as fewer police in schools, dialing back the war on drugs and ending the punitive policing of homeless people.

— ALEX S. VITALE



ELIZABETH PALLEY

Alex S. Vitale is an associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics* and senior adviser to the Police Reform Organizing Project

HOMELESSNESS

Like many progressive New Yorkers, lots of homeless people were excited when the candidate who campaigned on a platform of police reform and attacking income inequality won the mayoral election. But few were surprised when he turned around and intensified the misguided, punitive Bloomberg/Giuliani-era policies that he promised to end.

Before he even took office, de Blasio made homeless people nervous by appointing Bill Bratton as police commissioner — a man who's made quite a career for himself, in New York and in Los Angeles, by adopting "broken windows" policing strategies that explicitly target homeless people as emblematic of disorder and needing to be pushed out of public space even when they're not breaking any laws. And barely a month had passed after de Blasio's inauguration when Bratton announced a plan to purge fare-paying homeless people from the subway system. We fought

back, and we won, but Bratton hit back hard in 2015, implementing a massive citywide campaign that aggressively violated the rights of homeless people for occupying public space.

It is unacceptable for a mayor who campaigned on a platform of police reform to turn around and intensify the unconstitutional policing practices targeting homeless people used by his recent predecessors. These include well-documented incidents [captured on video!] in which homeless people had their belongings seized and destroyed by the cops. De Blasio can and must rein in the NYPD.

When it comes to housing, the first warning sign was his "LINC" housing subsidy for homeless families in shelters, which repeated the mistakes made by Bloomberg's doomed "Housing Stability Plus" and "Advantage" vouchers — which only lasted a short time and almost always resulted in households returning to the shelter system.

In December the mayor made headlines again by announcing the new HOME-STAT program, a "data-driven" approach to street homelessness that seems to consist of additional social workers and additional police officers.

"HOME-STAT is just more of the same," said Jesus Morales, a Picture the Homeless (PTH) member who has lived on the street for over 15 years. "More case workers, more cops — that does nothing for me. Meanwhile the cops are treating homeless people like dirt, every day. People are dying out here. Find us housing."

Committing to create 15,000 units of supportive housing is a solid step, but that's spread out over 15 years — and we currently have 60,000 homeless people in shelters. Also,

as PTH member Arvernetta Henry says, "Lots of people don't qualify for supportive housing. If you are on a fixed income, don't have a mental illness or a substance abuse problem, you still need a place to live and you can't afford to pay rent in New York City."

Three bills are currently before the City Council that would help address the enormous quantity of vacant property still idling in private and public hands. New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer just released an audit of city-owned vacant lots, and echoed our demands that these become housing for the poorest New Yorkers. These are important steps, but the burden of action is on the mayor.

Good things have happened during de Blasio's tenure, including a commitment to end the cluster site shelter program, but they've happened because of diligent organizing. Few politicians have the courage to challenge the NYPD and the real estate interests that control so much of city politics, but that's what's needed if we're going to truly address homelessness. We still hold out hope that in the latter half of his first term, de Blasio will find that courage.

— PICTURE THE HOMELESS



COURTESY PICTURE THE HOMELESS

Continued on next page

PINNED DOWN

Continued from previous page

to balance the demands of the powerful while winning points with his base through reforms. Cuomo seems determined to pull the rug out from under the mayor, most recently by shorting New York City in the state budget, to solidify his influence in the capital city of capital.

In short, de Blasio is surrounded by dangerous enemies. And, as noted, the Murdoch press — which includes the biggest-selling paper in town, the *Wall Street Journal*, and numerous TV channels — is going for the jugular, claiming that the days of urban decay have returned thanks to another alleged black-controlled bleeding heart in City Hall.

Yet de Blasio is not completely isolated. His relations with public sector unions are stable. The City Council is the most progressive one in recent memory, including several new

members who won seats in the midst of his own success.

What de Blasio needs is the favor, not just the votes, of the majority of New Yorkers. The diverse population relies heavily on public services, and many are steadily being pushed out of the city by housing costs. There is no history of renters bringing comparable power to head off or drive back real estate on a large scale. But that is what has to happen — and it has to be backed by the mayor — if the glaring contradiction at the heart of the city is ever to be resolved. Money for public education has to be expanded, not siphoned into privatization schemes, which Cuomo supports. De Blasio has to get further out in front, taking the lead in demanding what local capitalists and a hostile state legislature seek to prevent.

All this will, of course, open a floodgate of opposition, not just statewide but nationally, and increase the polarization between the “two cities,” the overfed and the underserved. It’s a steep price to pay, and could end de Blasio’s mayoralty.

It’s an indication of the severity of the crisis that only an organized opposition, with or without the mayor (but preferably with), has a chance against the entrenched power of the money and property movers. If de Blasio can’t emulate Bernie Sanders and effectively address the demands of the real city, directly to the voters, he will continue to be outflanked.

HOW IS HE DOING?

Continued from previous page

Picture the Homeless is a New York City-based non-profit organization led by and for homeless people.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña recognize that their responsibility is to strengthen our public schools rather than close them. In this, they are far better than Michael Bloomberg, who actively encouraged the growth of privately run charter schools that too often feature abusive disciplinary policies, suspend and push out students at high rates and increase segregation and inequities across the system.

Yet the programs the de Blasio administration is introducing in our schools are not likely to be effective in improving student outcomes. The only significant reform the chancellor has proposed for elementary schools is hiring second grade literacy coaches in 100 elementary schools in four districts — Districts 9 and 10 in the Bronx and Districts 17 and 32 in Brooklyn. This proposal has little research to support it, and in

the early years of the Bloomberg administration, literacy coaches were hired for every elementary school, with few, if any, positive results.

At the same time, the number of students in grades K-3 in classes of 30 or more continues to increase, with more than 48,000 students in the early grades in classes this large, and more than 350,000 students overall in classes this large. Class size reduction is a research-proven reform, and the top choice of parents on the Department of Education’s (DOE) own surveys. Despite this, the chancellor has repeatedly stated that she doesn’t consider class size reduction a priority.

This summer, the city also rejected the recommendations of its own appointed task force to align the school capacity formula with smaller classes. Despite a promise to the state to focus its efforts on lowering class size in the 93 struggling Renewal schools, we found that 40 percent did not lower class size and over 60 percent still have classes of 30 or more.

Our schools are still underfunded, with the state reneging on its promise to provide the resources promised by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision, and the city proposing to add only enough dollars to provide schools with 91 percent of their Fair Student Funding. Meanwhile, the DOE is still spending far too much

on wasteful contracts with testing companies and consultants, including paying the Scholastic Corporation for parent training at Renewal schools at a cost of \$2,291 per hour.

School overcrowding is worsening, with more than 550,000 students crammed into overcrowded schools. Many schools have lost their art, music and science rooms, and special needs students attend class in hallways and closets. In the latest version of the capital plan, the DOE officials added funds for school construction, but still are only planning to build about 59 percent of the 83,000 seats they now estimate are needed. Meanwhile, our analysis suggests that more than 100,000 new seats will be required to alleviate overcrowding and keep up with enrollment growth. The gap will grow even larger if the mayor is successful in changing the zoning laws to encourage the creation of tens of thousands of new market-rate and affordable housing units.

As to parent involvement: Along with Public Advocate Letitia James, we intervened in a lawsuit when the DOE decided to close School Leadership Teams to the public — with the excuse that these state-mandated decision-making bodies, made up of parents and staff at every school, are only “advisory.” Though we won the lawsuit, the city is now appealing. This refusal to

grant parents any real authority via their School Leadership Teams reflects a larger problem: the DOE is still excessively wedded to top-down policymaking, with far too little respect for the views of the parents and other stakeholder groups whose input will be critical to improving our schools.

— LEONIE HAIMSON



Leonie Haimson is the executive director of Class Size Matters, a New York City-based non-profit that advocates reduction in class sizes.

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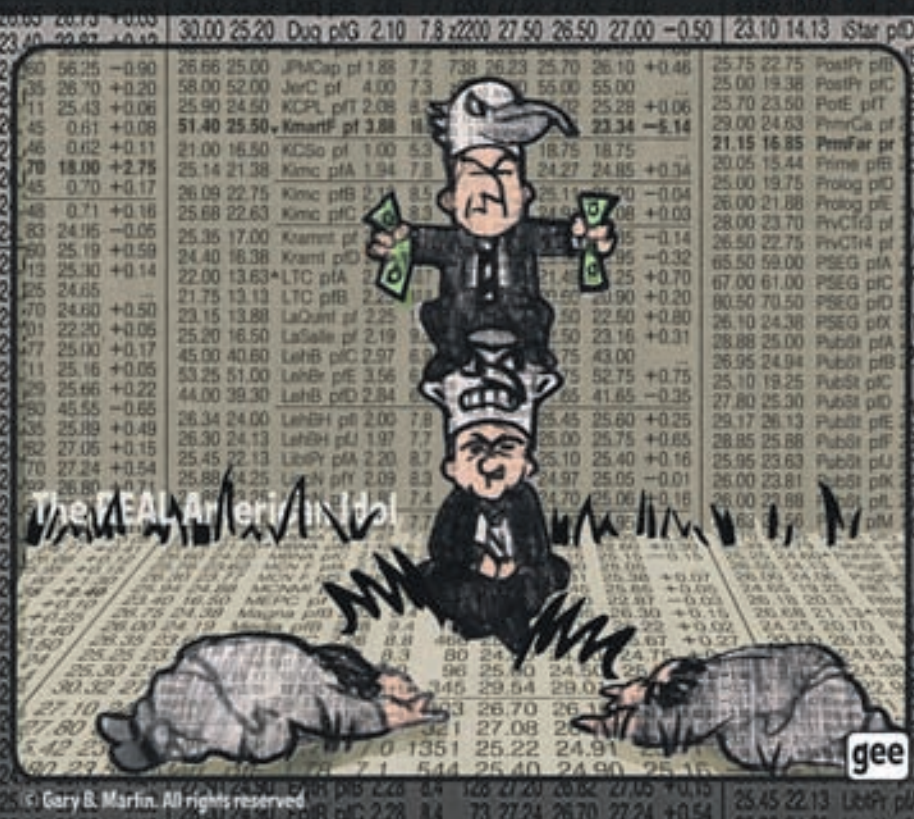
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OCCUPY THE PARTY

THE SANDERS CAMPAIGN IS ABOUT CHANGING OUR SENSE OF WHAT IS POLITICALLY POSSIBLE

BY NOT AN ALTERNATIVE

Bernie Sanders' campaign to be the Democratic Party's nominee in the 2016 U.S. presidential election presents the far left in the United States with some hard questions.

For those convinced that the electoral process is a vehicle through which the capitalist class enlists the rest of us in consenting to our own subjection, Sanders' campaign makes us ask why this time might be different. For those focused on internationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-racism and worker control of the means of production, there seems no principled reason to support Sanders. And for those convinced that only a politics that develops outside the system can change the system, it's unclear how the campaign is anything but another iteration of the society of the spectacle: Enthusiasm is mobilized and directed until redirected to the next new thing.

But these aren't the hard questions.

The hard questions involve how, exactly, the left conceives of political change and what we are willing to do to bring it about. The hard questions involve the relations between principle and practice. The more we uphold left principles, the less likely we are to have the capacity to implement them. Our principles become barriers to their own realization. Conversely, the more we get our hands dirty by engaging in the processes that might bring about significant political change, the less left and less significant these changes are likely to be. We will have had to compromise, water down, rank and involve ourselves with strange bedfellows. The dilemma of left politics is that we appear stuck between beautiful souls and dirty hands.

SEARCHING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

Politics involves knots of principle, compromise, tactics and opportunity. Their push and pull against one another accounts for much of what many dislike about politics: banal rhetoric, betrayals, splits. Finding a candidate or party with which one fully agrees is impossible. Something is always missing, always off.

This is not (only) the fault of the political system. It's (also) a manifestation of the ways people are internally split, with conflicting, irreconcilable political commitments and desires. After the tragic capitulation of Syriza to the coercion of the European institutions last summer, for example, a taxi driver in Athens explained with a shrug of his shoulders, "What could they do? We wanted two things and couldn't have both: eliminating our debt and staying with the euro." Politics forces us to confront conflicting goals: guns or butter, security or freedom, now or later. The conflicts are within us, between us, and between us and the settings in which we seek to intervene.

The institutions through and in which we might intervene are also split. They are not uniform or

self-identical. There is disagreement between members and flanks, between candidates and platform, between aspirations and actions. No institution is a uniform whole. It's always divided, the site of myriad conflicts and struggles always threatening to tear it apart.

A question for left politics, indeed any politics, is the terrain on which to fight. We have to be in the fight if we want to affect its outcome. For many of us, the terrain of political struggle is the streets and the squares, the insistent push of protest. Emphasizing the power of political movements, we push to demonstrate the power of the people, to confront those who seek to control, imprison and coerce us with the force of our number.

In the United States, the most recent examples of such movements are Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street. Not only did both refuse the status quo but both have changed the conditions of political possibility. Because of the advances of these movements, inequality and incarceration, and the racist capitalist structures that intertwine them, are driving the mainstream political conversation in ways that we haven't seen in a generation.

How do we extend the force of the movements? How do we make them endure? One way is to occupy institutions that have the capacity to realize movement aims. Party and state institutions can be tools and terrains that we seize in order to push our ends. The party isn't opposed to the movement. It's a terrain that the movement can occupy.

With regard to Occupy, we all knew that no one could speak for the movement. We all knew that the movement could not be reduced to one group of people in one park. The power of the movement was its capacity to replicate and extend itself, to be more than any city or practice.

CONFRONTING THE DEMOCRATS

The Sanders campaign extends the fight to the terrain of the Democratic Party. Since Bill Clinton's co-creation and occupation of the Democratic Leadership Council in the 1980s, the Democratic Party has shifted ever rightward, jettisoning any commitment to the working class it might once have had, courting the finance sector and other elements of the corporate elite, and adorning itself with just enough cultural politics to placate its base. No wonder most of the left left the party. Like the other institutions of extreme capitalism, the Democratic Party is not for us. But we can treat it as a site of struggle. Black Lives Matter activists have recognized this crucial fact.

The Sanders campaign is forcing a split in the Democratic Party. Sanders is confronting the Democrats' claim to democracy with the party's practice as an instrument of oligarchic political control. He is doing this with the language of social democracy, reintroducing socialism into a political setting based on its disavowal.

The political question this poses for the left is

whether we want to join the battle tearing apart the Democratic Party. Instead of treating the party as some kind of authority with the power to co-opt our message, we need to treat it like any street or park and occupy it. The more we engage, the more damage we can do, at every turn demonstrating the gap between people and practice.

If we win, that is, if Sanders gets the nomination, we have access to a political apparatus that extends throughout the United States, into every state and community. If we lose, we have gained valuable political experience and created an opportunity for building a new political organization for and of the left.

Just as Occupy was never about one group, so the Sanders campaign is not about him. It's about changing the conditions of political possibility. The Democrats are terrified of this, which is why they dismantled the rules barring PAC donations to the party.

The left has been alienated from the Democrats yet now their elite is terrified that the left will take it over. We should give them reason to be afraid. When we occupy the party, we continue the movement, pushing the power of the people.

WHY FIGHTING FOR YOUR PRINCIPLES MATTERS

Can "socialism" be part of the mainstream political vocabulary in the United States? Can it displace the hegemonic sense of "no new taxes," "there is no alternative," and "the era of big government is over"? Is it a term we can fight over and through in the context of a national politics, or is it relegated to the sectarian struggle over 20th-century failures?

The only way we can be adequate to our principles is if we are willing to fight for them. This means taking on the battles that present themselves. Too often left voices invoke self-organization, as if what this means were clear, as if somehow workers all over the country were but one step away from generating of their own autonomous collectives. But when we join, build and co-opt parties, are we not self-organizing? Too often left voices invoke social movements as independent of political organization, as if the momentary presence of crowds in the street translated automatically into power that endures. Such an invocation leaves out the institutions through which movement power becomes political change, the sites where the meaning of the movement is fought over and advanced.

The far left should support the Sanders' campaign not in order to broaden or energize the Democratic Party but because this party, for now, is a site of struggle over the horizon of U.S. politics.

Not An Alternative is a Brooklyn-based arts, politics and theory collective. An earlier version of this article appeared at roarmag.org.



READY TO CLEAN HOUSE:

Occupy Wall Street activists give Zuccotti Park a fresh scrubbing during the fall of 2011. Many Bernie Sanders supporters would similarly like to take a mop and a broom to the corporate-dominated Democratic Party and move it to the left.

THE DEMOCRATS, THE BLACK VOTE AND THE POLITICS OF FEAR



BY GLEN FORD

I can hear it now: “For the third time in this century, Black voters (‘the hands that picked cotton’) are picking a president of the United States.” Such inanities will ring out from every bastion of Democratic Party hegemony in Black America in celebration of Hillary Clinton’s sprint toward coronation as the Third Black President (her husband having purportedly been the first).

Although the young, white Sandernistas may not grasp it yet, their doomed quest to transform the Democratic Party “from below” has failed to move the voting bloc that makes up the actual “bottom” of the party: the bedrock 25 percent that is Black. In South Carolina, where Clinton ran up a 48-point victory, Blacks were 61 percent of Democratic primary voters on February 27, — a “demographic buzz saw,” as a *Washington Post* headline put it, with Clinton sweeping all the African-American age cohorts.

Although Bernie Sanders garnered 84 percent of Democrats aged 29 and younger in overwhelmingly white New Hampshire, and beat Clinton by 21 percentage points among voters age 30 to 45, exit polls show in South Carolina show him winning only 43 percent of Black voters 29 and under and losing by a margin of 96 to 3 percent among Black voters age 65 and up.

Entrance-exit polls show Clinton won 76 percent of the Black vote in Nevada. The March 1 contests in Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas and Tennessee will seal the deal, allowing warped practitioners of Black electoral power politics to claim Hillary owes her nomination to African-Americans.

Statistically, they will be correct. But Bernie Sanders, whose domestic politics is a much closer fit with the historical and current Black world view, is not losing to Hillary because of his positions on the issues, or because Blacks trust in Clinton’s honesty and integrity (huge numbers don’t, in every demographic). It is also no longer the case that most Blacks are unfamiliar with Sanders’ platform. African-Americans are, by some measures, more tuned in to the “news” than whites (although Blacks trust the media less). But they tune Sanders out, because their main purpose for voting in national elections is to keep the white man’s party, the Republicans, out of the White House, and believe Clinton has a better shot. Almost everything else is bullshit.

There is a direct and dialectical relationship between this historical politics of fear and the hegemonic domination of a calcified and infinitely corrupt Black Miseducation Class whose primary loyalty is to the Democratic Party, which for two generations has been their route into the corridors of money and power. They “deliver” that vote to the highest bidders in a party structure that is under the commanding influence of finance capital and its representatives (currently, the many-times-over-bought-and-paid-for Clintons). The mantra is, effectively, “All Power to the Democratic Party!” — brokered, of course, by the Black political

class. Paralyzed by fear of the white man’s party, Black voters find a false sense of power in clustering around the perceived “winners” on the Democratic Party menu.

That’s why it makes no decisive difference at the polls when a genuine Black popular icon like my dear friend Cornel West contradicts Atlanta Congressman John “De Lawd” Lewis’ contention that Clinton has “been there” with Black folks over the decades, while shamelessly questioning whether a 20-something Bernie Sanders was actually among the 200,000-strong crowd at the March on Washington in 1963. As Dr. West wrote:

“Clinton has touted the fact that, in 1962, she met King after seeing him speak, an experience she says allowed her to appreciate King’s ‘moral clarity.’ Yet two years later, as a high schooler, Clinton campaigned vigorously for Barry Goldwater — a figure King called ‘morally indefensible’ owing to his staunch opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And she attended the Republican convention in 1968! Meanwhile, at this same moment in history, Sanders was getting arrested for protesting segregation in Chicago and marching in Washington with none other than King himself. That’s real moral clarity.”

But moral clarity — and coherent thought — withers amidst the politics of fear. “Black Power” devolves to a shuffling and clustering around the most well-heeled, right-wing Democratic candidate vetted by Wall Street. That candidate’s victory represents an objective defeat for the historical Black political agenda on social justice and peace. Yet, it will be celebrated as a benchmark of Black progress and power (“the hands that picked cotton”), because African-Americans were on the winning side of the contest. Such is the great paradox of Black national electoral politics since the demise of the Black Liberation Movement and the rise of the Black Miseducation Class.

The question of self-determination lies at the heart of the political crisis in Black America. If masses of Blacks at this point in history cannot overcome a mind-twisting fear of the Republican/white man’s party, to vote their own, thoroughly documented leftist politics in national elections, then activists should treat the duopoly process itself like poison. History shows us that the imperative of Black self-determination blooms and thrives in movement politics — the only kind of politics that can circumvent and ultimately overcome the entrenched and morally defective Black Miseducation

Class, who are inextricably entwined with the Democratic Party and its rich financiers.

Glen Ford is the executive editor of Black Agenda Report. An earlier version of this article originally appeared at blackagenda.com.

THEY’VE GOT HER BACK:

Hillary Clinton supporters at a rally in honor of Martin Luther King Day in Columbia, S.C. Black voters overwhelmingly backed Clinton in the Feb. 27 South Carolina Democratic Party primary.



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PUT TO THE TEST

CUNY FACULTY CONSIDERS STRIKE VOTE AS CUOMO TOYS WITH UNIVERSITY'S FUTURE

By Peter Rugh

Hundreds of people swamped 42nd Street one day last November, forcing police to shut down a section of the busy thoroughfare. These weren't tourists or Broadway ticketholders gone mad, but professors from the City University of New York (CUNY) and their supporters, 53 of whom were arrested for sitting down and blocking the doors of CUNY's administrative headquarters.

"We took matters into our own hands," said James Davis, a member of the English Department at Brooklyn College since 2003. "It might seem like an ironic statement given that the cops tied our hands behind our backs, but we were making a strong public statement in opposition to CUNY's austerity regime."

With 278,000 degree students enrolled in more than two dozen undergraduate and graduate schools, CUNY is the nation's largest urban university system. Since it was founded in 1847 as the Free Academy of the City of New York with a mission to "serve the children of the whole people," CUNY has served as a gateway to opportunity for working-class students. That continues to this day with 75 percent of undergrads being students of color and more than half coming from households earning less than \$30,000 per year. Since the 1970s CUNY has been the largest granter of degrees to students of color in the United States.

When the financial crisis of 2007-08 hit, public sector institutions like CUNY were made to pay the price. The bulk of CUNY's funding comes from the State of New York. According to recent testimony to the State Legislature by City Comptroller Scott Stringer, if aid to CUNY had grown at the same rate as the state's operating budget over the past seven years, the system would have an additional \$637 million on hand today.

Instead, students were hit with a five-year, 31 percent tuition increase in 2011 to help cover the funding shortfall and now CUNY is asking the legislature for permission to sock students with five more years of similar tuition increases. The higher tuition has been touted as a way to fund improvements at CUNY, but amid relentless budget cuts in Albany that has not been the case (see sidebar).

Austerity has also taken its toll on the members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the unabashedly progressive union that carried out the November sit-in at CUNY's central office. The union represents 27,000 full- and part-time faculty and professional staff. Its members have worked without a new contract for five years and haven't had a raise in six. Despite a 23 percent rise in the cost of living in New York City, their salaries have remained where they stood in 2010. Now, exasperated by what it describes as the administration's refusal to make a serious economic offer, the union has raised the specter of going on strike.

In October the PSC began circulating a petition among its members, asking them to pledge to vote "yes" on a strike authorization measure. Fearing a potential walkout, CUNY management filed a notice with the statewide Public Employment Relations Board in January, asking it to provide a mediator who would assist the parties with their negotiations. Frederick Schaffer, general counsel for CUNY, described a speedy resolution to the dispute as "critical for the stability of the workplace and morale of our faculty and staff." However, the addition of a mediator to negotiations could extend the stalemate into next year as she or he gets up to speed with the details of the matter.

CONFRONTING THE TAYLOR LAW

Complicating matters, New York State's Taylor Law forbids public employees from striking. The last union to openly defy the Taylor Law was Transit Workers' Union Local 100, whose members struck for three days in December 2005. The State retaliated by jailing Local 100 President Roger Toussaint for three days, fining the union \$2.5 million and suspending automatic dues collection for more than two years before the union finally pledged not to strike again. PSC President Barbara Bowen acknowledges the risks associated with a strike would be high but warns that it might eventually be the PSC's only option.

"We've done everything necessary to settle this without a strike," Bowen told *The Independent*. "We've held rallies, press conferences,

written letters, worked with legislators, conducted sit-ins. We've done everything we can think of and having found that those things have not fully succeeded, we've had to consider a strike. We're well aware of the penalties and hope that we, that none of our members, have to face them. That's not something we look forward to."

The PSC's current leadership emerged out of a wave of student and faculty struggles in the 1990s against budget cuts and other neoliberal reforms to CUNY favored by Republican Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Rudy Giuliani. In 2000, Bowen and a slate of reformers were swept into power, pledging to create an activist culture within the PSC that would catalyze the fight to win full funding for the university and keep it accessible and open to all New Yorkers. Sixteen years later the union continues to fight for that vision. Faced with a governor who by all appearances is indifferent to higher education, the PSC's long-running contract campaign may be its most difficult battle to date.

Together with the union's executive council, Bowen raised the possibility of strike authorization with PSC members at a union-wide meeting in November, and she expects a vote sometime in March, a time frame, Bowen said, that will allow for "serious conversations to take place and for real democratic consideration of what a strike will mean."

Bowen also stressed that a strike authorization is not equivalent to a strike. It does, however, empower the union's 27-member executive council to call for a walkout should it deem one necessary. PSC leadership will be "doing their best" to work with the Public Employment Relations Board-appointed mediator, Bowen said, but, she observed, "The real problem isn't mediation. It's money."

It wasn't until last fall's sit-in at CUNY headquarters that the administration made an economic offer to PSC members: a 6 percent pay increase from 2010 to 2016 with no retroactive raises in four of those six years. Yet, as the union points out, the proposed raises are below the rate of inflation, amounting to a virtual pay cut.

"I have to make choices like whether to put food on my table and make rent versus whether to get new clothes for my kids and me," said Brooklyn College Professor James Davis, a father of two.

CUNY teachers earn substantially less than their counterparts at

comparable institutions. For instance, the average CUNY associate professor earns \$91,500 a year, according to testimony Bowen delivered to the state legislature in January, whereas educators with the same title at the University of Connecticut earn \$99,700 and \$102,800 at the University of Delaware. Such a salary might seem ample but, in addition to the cost of living in New York, most professors accrue significant amounts of debt covering the costs of their undergraduate and postgraduate education.

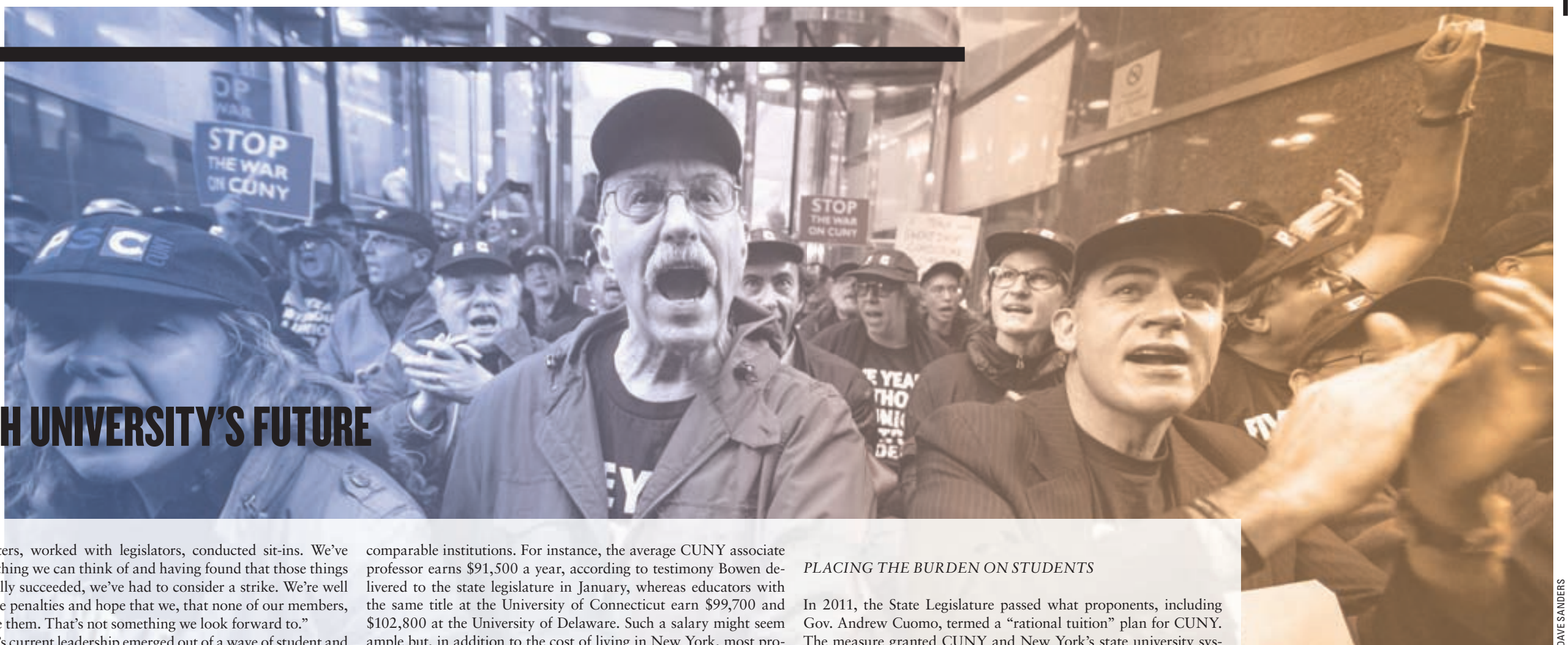
"People's spending habits have definitely become more constrained," said Davis. "But beyond that it has become really hard for departments to hire top-quality teachers. Even if we can make a comparable salary to other institutions, candidates have to think seriously about coming here, given that the cost of living in this city is astronomical and climbing."

Additionally, the PSC represents 10,000 part-time instructors who make poverty wages and have no job security, despite teaching 52 percent of classes at CUNY.

"We are not paid for class preparation or grading papers or email correspondence with students or writing students letters of recommendation or attending sometimes mandatory faculty seminars/meetings," wrote Marcie Bianco, an adjunct in Hunter College's English Department, for the news website Quartz in July. "If we teach at more than one school, we are limited to teach a total of three courses a semester, which, at my current rate, means I'd earn approximately \$13,200 before taxes each semester."

Note Bianco's use of the past tense: her courses last fall were summarily cancelled due to a decline in enrollment.

To put things in perspective, CUNY Chancellor James Milliken received a base pay of \$670,000 last year plus an \$18,000 per month housing stipend and a free car and chauffeur. Milliken's predecessor, Matthew Goldstein, was granted a lavish six-year, \$2 million severance package by the CUNY Board of Trustees when he resigned in 2013 to become board chair at J.P. Morgan Funds for an estimated salary of at least \$500,000 per year. Under Goldstein the university implemented the tuition hikes that have gone hand in hand with stagnant faculty wages.



DAVE SANDERS

PLACING THE BURDEN ON STUDENTS

In 2011, the State Legislature passed what proponents, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo, termed a "rational tuition" plan for CUNY. The measure granted CUNY and New York's state university system, SUNY, the ability to raise tuition by 31 percent over five years, which the CUNY Board of Trustees promptly elected to do.

The rational tuition legislation included a "maintenance of effort" commitment, stipulating that the state would maintain a steady level of funding that would encompass normal inflationary increases in operating costs. Yet CUNY suffered a \$51 million dollar shortfall in 2015, despite the state's multi-billion-dollar surplus (its largest since the 1940s) and in December Cuomo vetoed a maintenance of effort bill that passed the State Legislature with widespread bipartisan support. Now, CUNY management is asking the legislature to extend tuition increases for another five years.

For students of CUNY's history, today's austerity echoes back to 1976. New York City was in the midst of a fiscal crisis, the state took control of CUNY and, for the first time CUNY began charging tuition. Since then the university has increasingly been shifting its costs onto the backs of students, who are paying more for their education and getting less in return.

"When people are paying more they think that it will be invested in computers, classrooms, teaching salaries, student resources, but none of it is actually going to the maintenance of CUNY's campuses" said Conor Tomas Reed, a doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center who works as a writing fellow at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn.

Today, the university draws about 45 percent of its budget from tuition while teachers and students complain of ballooning class sizes, fewer courses, under-staffing and damaged equipment, not to mention the difficulty departments face attracting educators without the ability to offer a competitive salary. The state's Tuition Assistance Program has not kept up with the cost of attending CUNY,



DAVE SANDERS

STANDING UP BY SITTING DOWN: 53 members of CUNY's faculty union were arrested Nov. 4 for blockading the entrance to the administration's central offices.

FED UP: The faculty and professional staff at CUNY have been without a new contract since 2010.

Continued on next page

CUNY STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

'I DID EVERYTHING I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO'

I have been in and out of City College for six years and will graduate this year with a degree in political science and gender studies. I was one of those people who did everything I was supposed to do working a job in high school to save up money for college. I still had a job when the first tuition hikes passed. It made things a lot more financially difficult for me, and I had to take a loan.

As a Puerto Rican woman I am expected to do laundry and household work. I feel like a lot of working class women will do that, where they go to school, go to work and then they



ALYSSIA OSORIO

BEING MUSLIM AT CUNY

My four years at Brooklyn College have been full of battles and anxiety and deep depression because existing as a young Muslim woman of color in CUNY who believes in justice for the Palestinians means that I must fight to be me, to exist, every day. I joined Students for Justice in Palestine in my freshman year. We have repeatedly been attacked by City Council members and our campus administration, which refuses to condemn the NYPD for sending an undercover cop to spy on us.

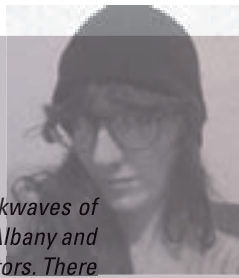
These frustrations are, of course, augmented by a crumbling campus: from peeling paint, to roaches in the cafeteria, to non-existent wifi, to an ancient heating system that leaves us either so hot that we've renamed Boylan Hall "Boiling" Hall or so cold that we might as well have class outside in the dead of winter, to classrooms where 10 minutes of the class period can go to

Continued on next page

A LAWYER IN TRAINING

As a law student, I have felt the shockwaves of the austerity politics implemented by Albany and capitulated to by top CUNY administrators. There is far less financial aid for low-income students and students of color than there should be and this has a devastating impact.

Like many transgender women, I have dealt with cyclical unemployment, debt, and have never been able to make a living wage. I chose CUNY School of Law because not only does it offer an exemplary education and unmatched clinical program, but it is full of students like me who are not becoming lawyers just to collect a paycheck. I want to not only have some eco-



EMMA CATHERINE

Continued on next page

FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

I came to the U.S. as an international student five years ago and because of my status I have to pay out-of-state tuition, which is \$8,000 out of my pocket every semester.

I wonder where the money goes that is taken from students, both local and international. Professors do not get any raise. They are tired and frustrated. Buildings are not getting repaired. Every room is filthy. About 90 percent of my professors are folks from the Graduate Center, and I love most of them, but sometimes you can see the lack of experience and desire to teach on their part. The campus is pretty and all, but on the inside it's a nightmare. The restrooms are out of a horror movie scene and the toilet paper must be the cheapest you can find because it's super thin and has holes in it.

I have one more semester to go. I like the diversity in CUNY,

Continued on next page

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

With over a decade of life as a CUNY undergraduate, doctoral student, adjunct teacher and movement participant, I've experienced many cycles of study, organizing, eruption and repression.

The first time I set foot on a CUNY campus, in March 2005, was for a protest to defend four students and a campus worker who had been arrested for picketing a military recruiters' table. Since then, I've been overworked, surveilled, arrested and indebted at this same university in which I've made enough profound friendships and teaching/learning bonds to fill several lifetimes.

I've seen some friends move up the conveyor belt to honors classes, scholarships and sub-



MICHELE HARDESTY

Continued on next page

CUNY Popular Assembly
Saturday, March 12
10am-5:30pm
Graduate Center, room 6304.01
365 Fifth Ave., Manhattan
Hosted by: CUNYStruggle.org
RSVP: Facebook.com/
events/1567877590198429/
Adjuncts, HEOs, full-timers, students,
alumni and community members
welcome.

PUT TO THE TEST

Continued from previous page

either. The maximum \$5,135 students can receive falls almost \$1,200 short of what it costs New York residents to attend one of CUNY's four-year colleges and is not available to part-time students who often take fewer courses because they are carrying other responsibilities outside of school.

"There are a lot of CUNY students who are working minimum-wage, part-time service industry jobs and taking care of family needs because their families are at or below the poverty line," said Reed, who worries the cost of the tuition hikes is having a disparate impact on low income and students of color at CUNY. Forty percent of CUNY students are the first generation immigrants.

"Our students very much understand there are economic choices here," said Ben Shepard, an associate professor in New York City College of Technology's Human Services Department who was arrested in the November sit-in. "They can participate in the black market economy: they can sell drugs. Or they can get an education and go to CUNY. CUNY gives them an opportunity to do something with their careers and their lives and yet it gets more expensive every year. This fight [over our contract] really is about the students because the sad fact is when faculty are underpaid the really great teachers are going to leave."

The PSC is not the only group organizing for a possible strike. The Hunter College Graduate Student Union has begun an intensive one-on-one organizing effort among Hunter's 5,300 graduate students with an eye toward carrying out a strike action in support of a tuition freeze full funding of CUNY, and a union contract with pay parity, job security, and workload flexibility for part-time faculty.

"Our approach has been to apply the basic tools of union organizing to student organizing," said Erik Forman, President of the Hunter College Graduate Student Union. "By that I mean very systematically reaching out to students in different

programs, identifying issues, building committees, and beginning a process of escalating action."

Other groups that are mobilizing includes the University Student Senate which is organizing a March 6 march over the Brooklyn Bridge to oppose the new round of tuition increases and CUNY Struggle, a group of radical CUNY academics and their allies who will be holding a popular assembly at the Graduate Center on March 12.

CUOMO DROPS A BOMBHELL

The most immediate challenge facing CUNY and its supporters is in Albany where state legislators are looking to conclude the annual state budget by the end of March.

After vetoing "maintenance of effort" legislation in December, Cuomo stunned many observers in January by proposing a whopping 30 percent cut in state support for CUNY's 11 senior colleges, or \$485 million that the City of New York would be invited to cover. It was Cuomo's latest salvo in his long-running feud with New York Mayor Bill de Blasio who received strong support from the PSC during his long-shot bid for the city's top spot in 2013.

Cuomo also proposed putting \$240 million aside in this year's budget to cover the costs of settling contracts with CUNY employees. But that figure would come out of the proposed \$485 million cut.

Testifying recently to legislators in Albany, Chancellor Milliken described the consequences of nearly a half billion dollars reduction in state funding as being little short of catastrophic.

"Numerous colleges, depending on how you did this, would have to be closed," Milliken said. "Or you'd take a 30-percent decrease across the entire system." But Milliken added he was not preparing for any decrease in CUNY's budget and referred to the cut as a "shift in funding" in the belief that the city would pick up the tab if necessary.

CUNY's faculty and students are caught in the middle of a political game of chicken, but If Cuomo's \$240 million contract

settlement offer was an effort to divide-and-conquer them, it has so far failed. In January the union joined with several student and community groups to form the Community Alliance for a Free and Quality CUNY. Members of the coalition are actively engaged on a number of social justice fronts on and off campus — Black Lives Matter, defending the rights of undocumented students, opposing gentrification and the presence of military recruiters at CUNY schools — and have united to push back against the cutbacks the university faces. Building community support proved key to the success of the Chicago Teachers Union in its 2012 strike and PSC is deploying a similar strategy in New York. An outpouring of solidarity from the communities the faculty serve will strengthen the bottom-up pressure the union is seeking to put on Cuomo and CUNY management.

While Bowen argues money should be set aside for a new contract, she says it shouldn't come at the expense of regular state funding. She estimates the real cost of providing new contracts for the faculty and professional staff and an additional 10,000 CUNY's support staff who are not PSC members but have also been without a contract for six years, at \$350 million. Albany is expected to approve this year's budget by April 1, by which time a PSC's executive council may or may not have been granted the authority to strike.

"We're fighting for a vision of education for the people of New York City and New York State," said Bowen. "That's what's at stake in our contract. It's about whether the state and the city and CUNY management believe in high quality education for the people we teach or whether they do not. Investing in our contract is a direct investment in the quality of education at CUNY."

'I DID EVERYTHING I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO'

Continued from previous page

come home and have to do a third shift taking care of the people they love.

I went to CUNY to experience the economic and racial diversity that it had but is now losing. CUNY has great identity-based programs, which are very, very important because they teach us a lot of our histories we're not otherwise taught. But if I started CUNY now I would leave after one semester. It seems like a lot of the money from the tuition increases goes to public safety officers who are now everywhere on campus while the escalators don't work, ceiling tiles are missing in our classrooms and there's often no toilet paper in the bathrooms.

The CUNY Board of Trustees has a bunch of finance people who don't understand what it's like for the average student. If CUNY had the resources it deserves, it could be free and open to the public and it could really be a tool of educational and financial security for a lot of working-class people.

— ALYSSIA OSORIO
Senior

City College of New York

BEING MUSLIM AT CUNY

Continued from previous page

waste because there is no chalk, and on and on.

I am graduating this semester, and I will always cherish my college years for the friendships I've made with the amazing young revolutionary students of CUNY and with the professors that have mentored me and helped me survive a system that has become entrenched and allows me to continue to be criminalized and marginalized.

— SARAH ALY
Senior
Brooklyn College

A LAWYER IN TRAINING

Continued from previous page

economic security for myself but a career where I can fight for that right for others. Cutting our funding will decrease the number of public interest lawyers with a serious commitment to defending social movements and the most marginalized people in our society.

— EMMA CATERINE
CUNY Law School

FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Continued from previous page

and you do find supportive faculty and staff. But I wish I didn't have to spend all that money, because there is no guarantee after graduation our degrees will amount to anything.

— EVA
Senior
Brooklyn College

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Continued from previous page

way ads, and more often, other friends move down to crushing debt, unfinished degrees, and unemployment. I've seen the callous racism that has imposed and raised CUNY tuition since 1976 be remixed as a "Rational Tuition Policy" 5-year increase in November 2011 (when CUNY and NYPD cops arrested 15 and attacked dozens more outside a Board of Trustees public hearing, and then an entire campus building was evacuated for the tuition hike to pass), and now again be proposed as a "Predictable" 5-year increase starting in 2016.

Even so, my dedication to re-envisioning CUNY from below recognizes that campus upheavals can set off wider social changes — in which a classroom dialogue, student club event, union contract campaign, and support between friends could ultimately transform New York City.

— CONOR TOMAS REED
PhD Candidate in English,
Graduate Center
Writing Instructor, Kingsborough
Community College

CUNY RISING ALLIANCE

Tell Gov. Cuomo:

Now is the time to
invest in students,
faculty and staff
#CUNYrising

Gov. Cuomo has released plans to cut state funding to the City University of New York by \$485 million, despite a \$1 billion state budget surplus.

Since Gov. Cuomo took office, **tuition has increased by 38 percent at four-year colleges and by 45 percent at two-year campuses.** Since 2008, the state has reduced its investment in full-time-equivalent students by 17 percent in four-year colleges. Currently, Gov. Cuomo backs legislation that would increase tuition at four-year colleges by \$1,500 over the next five years.

At the same time, **CUNY faculty and staff have been working without a contract or salary increases for over six years.**

Join us to tell Gov. Cuomo: CUNY students deserve a first-rate college education. CUNY faculty and staff deserve a fair raise.

Urge Gov. Cuomo to invest in a strong CUNY system.

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 5 P.M.
RALLY, MARCH AND MEETING

Begin at Gov. Cuomo's Manhattan office (633 Third Ave., between 40th and 41st streets) at 5 p.m., then march to the Community Church of New York (40 E. 35th St.) to hear about the crisis at CUNY and plan next steps.

For more information, email mfabricant@psccmail.org or tbrown@nypirg.org or call 212-354-1252.

LIST IN FORMATION:

United Students Against Sweatshops
Greater New York
Labor-Religion Coalition
Strong Economy For All Coalition
Citizen Action of New York
Young Invincibles

Alliance for Quality Education
NYPIRG
CUNY University Student Senate
NY Working Families Party
NY Communities for Change
PSC CUNY
DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

Make the Road New York
Coalition for Educational Justice
Hispanic Federation
Urban Youth Collaborative
Federation of
Protestant Welfare Agencies

 #CUNYrising

FREE COLLEGE FOR ALL

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME (AGAIN)

BY STEPHEN BRIER

Public discussion about New York State's responsibility to provide financial support to the City University of New York (CUNY), the nation's third largest public university system, has been much in the news lately, thanks in large part to Governor Andrew Cuomo's surprise announcement in January that he wanted to offload \$485 million of CUNY's operating costs from the state budget onto the city. Cuomo's dramatic budget demand raised fundamental questions about exactly what is the ongoing responsibility of state government to provide budgetary support to public higher education entities within its jurisdiction. To fully understand and come to terms with this key political and fiscal question it is instructive to look back to see how taxpayer-supported public higher education emerged and evolved across the country.

State and federal support for public higher education has a long history, dating back in some states (e.g., Georgia and Virginia) to the decades before and immediately after the American Revolution. CUNY's own history with its municipal colleges begins in 1847 with the founding of the Free Academy (which would later become City College), followed in 1870 by the opening of Hunter College; both were taxpayer-supported, tuition-free (at least for full-time undergraduates) public entities. Most state-funded public higher education systems, many of them initially created using funds derived from federal land grants to the states, remained fairly small in the decades before World War II in terms of the numbers of students served (New York State, unlike almost all other states, had in fact not even bothered to create a state public university system before the war). World War II changed all of that. The federal government and a number of state governments (including New York's) decided that they needed to quickly expand state-based public higher education in the postwar era. Driven largely by concerns about potential economic and political unrest — especially given the 16 million returning GIs who would be demanding jobs, education and decent housing — federal and state policymakers determined that higher education opportunities needed to be made more broadly available as a public good, underwritten almost entirely by taxes. One key outcome of this determination, which cut across party and ideological lines, was passage of the 1944 GI Bill. The bill provided tuition and housing support grants from the federal government to almost eight million demobilized soldiers and sailors who poured into public and private colleges, universities and training centers all over the country after 1945.

State legislators across the country, prodded by politically ambitious governors, had begun developing long-range plans as early as 1943 and committed significant levels of public funding to expand their state-level public higher education institutions to meet the

anticipated "tidal wave of returning veterans." Many states focused increased public funding in the postwar years on building community colleges, perhaps the most important expansion of public higher education in the 20th century.

The ideology that helped justify this dramatic expansion of public higher education in the postwar era included an uneasy mix of politically pragmatic (sometimes opportunistic) and visionary, even progressive beliefs. A dominant ideological orientation was utilitarian, articulating the need to prepare a new and rapidly growing generation for the technical and service jobs essential to the transformation and expansion of American capitalism in the postwar era. A second rationale was the need to "do right" by the millions of servicemen (and a far smaller number of women) by giving them access to publicly funded higher education and job training. A third ideological justification for public university expansion focused on enduring democratic ideals and values that had come to the fore in the war against Nazism and fascism. All three rationales — offered by national and state-level political and business leaders, university officials, trade union leaders and pundits — also underscored the need to create an informed democratic citizenry to face the challenges of the postwar era.

New York State had lagged badly behind public higher education pioneers like California (which already had a robust, three-tier, tuition-free public higher education system by 1945) and even New York City, whose municipal higher education system already numbered four senior colleges by the outbreak of the war. New York State finally agreed to create the State University of New York (SUNY) in 1948, though it did little to expand that system over the next ten years. All of that changed with Nelson Rockefeller's election as governor in 1958. Rockefeller, who was keenly aware of the dramatic expansion of state universities all over the country (especially California's), launched a massive expansion of New York State's public university system. New York (State and City) and California entered a kind of planning race to design and rationalize their public university systems after 1958, anticipating the first wave of baby boomers who would be entering state colleges and universities beginning in the early 1960s. Each state (and the city) developed a "master plan" for such public higher education expansion, mixing substantial state investment of capital funds to build many new campuses, free or extremely low-cost tuition paid by state residents who would be attending those campuses, and dramatic growth in the size and function of the teaching and research faculty. This state-level commitment (and, in the unique case of New York State, New York City's as

well) was predicated on a fundamental belief in state and city universities as a public good, essentially tuition free and supported by state and city tax dollars. That state and city commitment to higher education as a public good would be expanded dramatically after the mid-1960s with large infusions of federal support in the form of heavily subsidized student loans.

The decade of the 1960s witnessed the single largest expansion of public higher education in U.S. history, with expenditures more than tripling. College enrollments more than doubled to 8.6 million students (of which two in five were women and many of whom were children of poor and working class parents who would otherwise never would have been able to attend college without free or very low tuition); instructional staff also doubled in the decade to almost 600,000. Millions of baby boomers (including this author) were the greatest beneficiaries of this public investment in free public higher education. New York's and California's public higher education systems and the students who flooded into them especially benefited from this massive expansion, resulting in the three largest public university systems (SUNY, California State University

BABY BOOMERS ATTENDED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES THAT COST LITTLE OR NOTHING.

and CUNY) in the country by the 1970s.

This "golden age" of public higher education would not last indefinitely, however. What followed in the last quarter of the 20th century was a fundamental neoliberal reshaping of public higher education. The ideology and practice of neoliberalism, resulting in rising inequality and the imposition of austerity policies, brings us to the national debate about whether it is appropriate for public funds to underwrite the costs of public higher education or whether higher education is essentially to be seen as a private good and an individual (or familial) responsibility. The legions of young people flocking to support Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party primaries are in large part motivated by his arguments in support of free public higher education, harkening back to the postwar era of the GI Bill and the rapid growth of state university systems like those in New York and California. It is disheartening, given the fractious nature of our politics, that many of my fellow baby boomers seem far too quick to dismiss this embrace of free public higher education as an unrealistic pursuit of "free stuff." As we consider the merits of this crucial question, it is important to re-

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ELKE REVA SUIDIN

HILLARY CLINTON IS THE CANDIDATE OF THE WAR MACHINE



SMITH/NOGINSHVASH/HC/S309B GREG

BY JEFFREY SACHS

There's no doubt that Hillary is the candidate of Wall Street. Even more dangerous, though, is that she is the candidate of the military-industrial complex. The idea that she is bad on the corporate issues but good on national security has it wrong. Her so-called foreign policy "experience" has been to support every war demanded by the U.S. deep security state run by the military and the CIA.

Hillary and Bill Clinton's close relations with Wall Street helped to stoke two financial bubbles (1999-2000 and 2005-8) and the Great Recession that followed the collapse of Lehman Brothers. In the 1990s they pushed financial deregulation for their campaign backers that in turn let loose the worst demons of financial manipulation, toxic assets, financial fraud and eventually collapse. In the process they won elections and got mighty rich.

Yet Hillary's connections with the military-industrial complex are also alarming. It is often believed that the Republicans are the neocons and the Democrats act as restraints on the warmongering. This is not correct. Both parties are divided between neocon hawks and cautious realists who don't want the United States in unending war. Hillary is a staunch neocon whose record of favoring U.S. war adventures explains much of our current security danger.

By 2003, Hillary was a senator and a staunch supporter of the Iraq War, which has cost the United States trillions of dollars and thousands of lives and done more to create ISIS and Middle East instability than any other single decision of modern foreign policy. In defending her vote, Hillary parroted the phony propaganda of the CIA:

"In the four years since the inspectors left, intelligence reports show that Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile delivery capability, and his nuclear program. He has also given aid, comfort and sanctuary to terrorists, including Al Qaeda members..."

Hillary's record as secretary of state is among the most militaristic, and disastrous, of modern U.S. history. Some experience. Hillary was a staunch defender of the military-industrial-intelligence complex at every turn, helping to spread the Iraq mayhem over a swath of violence that now stretches from Mali to Afghanistan. Two disasters loom largest: Libya and Syria.

Hillary has been much attacked for the deaths of U.S. diplomats in Benghazi, but her tireless promotion of the overthrow Muammar Qaddafi by NATO

bombing is the far graver disaster. Hillary strongly promoted NATO-led regime change in Libya, not only in violation of international law but counter to the most basic good judgment. After the NATO bombing, Libya descended into civil war while the paramilitaries and unsecured arms stashes in Libya quickly spread west across the African Sahel and east to Syria. The Libyan disaster has spawned war in Mali, fed weapons to Boko Haram in Nigeria and fueled ISIS in Syria and Iraq. In the meantime, Hillary found it hilarious to declare of Qaddafi: "We came, we saw, he died."

Perhaps the crowning disaster of this long list of disasters has been Hillary's relentless promotion of CIA-led regime change in Syria. Once again Hillary bought into the CIA propaganda that regime change to remove Bashar al-Assad would be quick, costless, and surely successful. In August 2011, Hillary led the United States into disaster with her declaration that Assad must "get out of the way," backed by secret CIA operations.

Five years later, no place on the planet is more ravaged by unending war, and no place poses a greater threat to U.S. security. More than 10 million Syrians are displaced, and the refugees are drowning in the Mediterranean or undermining the political stability of Greece, Turkey and the European Union. Amid the chaos created by the secret CIA-Saudi operations to overthrow Assad, ISIS has filled the vacuum, and has used Syria as the base for worldwide terrorist attacks.

The list of her incompetence and warmongering goes on. Hillary's support at every turn for NATO expansion, including even into Ukraine and Georgia against all common sense, was a trip wire that violated the post-Cold War settlement in Europe in 1991 and that led to Russia's violent counter-reactions in both Georgia and Ukraine. As Senator in 2008, Hillary co-sponsored 2008-SR439, to include Ukraine and Georgia in NATO. As secretary of state, she then presided over the restart of the Cold War with Russia.

It is hard to know the roots of this record of disaster. Is it chronically bad judgment? Is it her preternatural faith in the lying machine of the CIA? Is it a repeated attempt to show that as a Democrat she would

be more hawkish than the Republicans? Is it to satisfy her hardline campaign financiers? Who knows? Maybe it's all of the above. But whatever the reasons, hers is a record of disaster. Perhaps more than any other person, Hillary can lay claim to having stoked the violence that stretches from West Africa to Central Asia and that threatens U.S. security.

Jeffrey D. Sachs is the Director of The Earth Institute and Professor of Sustainable Development at Columbia University. An earlier version of this article appeared at commondreams.org.

THE FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE HAS HELPED TO SPREAD THE IRAQ MAYHEM OVER A SWATH OF VIOLENCE THAT NOW STRETCHES FROM MALI TO AFGHANISTAN.

FREE COLLEGE

Continued from previous page

member that an entire generation once enjoyed the fruits of a broad political and

ideological consensus that state-supported higher education was a public good very much worth embracing and fighting for. How can we deny the same opportunity to the youth of today?

Stephen Brier is a historian and a professor of urban education at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is co-author, with Michael Fabricant, of Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education (forthcoming from Johns Hopkins

University Press in fall 2016), from which this article is drawn.

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FIRST PERSON

LOVE TRUMPS HATE

THE DONALD'S DEMAGOGUERY STIRS MEMORIES OF MY MUSLIM AND ARAB FRIENDS

BY H. PATRICIA HYNES

In my living room, I have two cream-colored pillows nestled into the corners of the chairs. They are embossed with arabesque designs on their borders, and silver filigree threading runs along the edges. Twenty-five years ago I received them as a gift from Ali, a Muslim student whom I taught at MIT.

Ali was older than the other students. He was the chief of police in Karachi, Pakistan, on a yearlong fellowship in the United States, and my lasting memory of him is his quiet, solid respect when we spoke — it came in startling contrast to my expectations of a chief of police. But I was his professor, and as I found with future international Muslim students, they view their teachers with a regard rarely found in U.S. students.

Ali is only one of the many Muslim and Arab students and friends I've had over the years. They have each been invaluable to my life: they've taught and enriched me, provided friendship and care and expanded my sense of being a citizen of the world. And so it is with a heavy heart that I heard Donald Trump's odious pledge to prohibit Muslims from entering the United States, and watched cheers and support for his views pour in from around the country. We cannot possibly accept the bigotry and racism at the core of his message, which distorts the truth about Muslim and Arab people beyond recognition.

For many years, I was a professor of environmental health at Boston University, where I worked on issues of environmental justice in public housing, asthma, lead poisoning and community gardening. I have many long-cherished memories of my Muslim and Arab students there. One of them, Yared, was a public health officer in rural Ethiopia who came to Boston University in the late 1990s for a master's degree in environmental health. He spoke little in class, yet listened with pensive intensity, extrapolating all that he learned about urban poverty, food deserts in inner cities and poor housing conditions to the issues he worked with at home: water safety, pesticide use, sanitation and malaria. I will always remember the image of this quietly dignified man when he entered my office at the end of semester to thank me for what he had learned: he put his hands together and bowed slightly, a gesture and gift of respect.

Another one of my students, Rana, energized our department with her passion for learning. She was from Lebanon, and with iron-willed insistence, she overcame every obstacle put in her way to gain entry into the department's doctoral program. During her five years at Boston University, I watched her weave her unique interests in society and environment — merging social and economic dimensions of community health with environ-

mental health science — into an original, compelling dissertation. Rana also observed Ramadan with discipline and nary a complaint of hunger, in contrast to Catholic students I had known in college in the 1960s who sought exemptions from fasting during Lent, myself included. I will always treasure the high compliment she paid me when she said there was a Sufi — one who lives the inner mystical dimension of Islam — within me.

Apart from my students, my Muslim and Arab friends have been irreplaceable.

In my own student days, I spent a lot of time with Christine, a Syrian Catholic whom I met when we were students in Brussels, Belgium, in the early 1970s. Often she would brew dark, thick coffee in a copper pot and invite me to share it with her as we studied. The image of her raising her head and exclaiming of la belle Syrie — “beautiful Syria” — as she relayed stories of her life in Damascus has never left me. It's been many years since we've spoken, but I still keep the small china cup, embossed with gold leaf and desert flowers, that she gave me as a gift, and it holds those absorbing morning conversations rich in images of the country she loved.

Then there is Siti, an Indonesian lawyer I met when she picked me up at the Yogyakarta airport in Indonesia. My partner and I were there for a working session on the health effects of prostitution. Siti's small stature belied her sizable achievements, including founding a center for battered women and creating a course on gender and Islam at the Institute of Islamic Studies where she taught. A Muslim feminist to her core, before marrying her husband she insisted on an agreement that she be able to make her own decisions and have her own career. Together they were raising a daughter, who at that time was 7 and spirited, curious, bright and brimming with promise. She adopted us immediately as her “aunties,” a nickname for friends who are considered family.

These memories are only a few sketches of the immeasurable positivity that Muslims and Arabs have brought to me and to the United States. Thomas Paine once wrote, “The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.” His is wisdom for our insular country and especially for all the would-be presidents consumed with bigotry toward immigrants and foreigners.

H. Patricia Hynes is a former professor of environmental health at Boston University and directs the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice in western Massachusetts. For more, see traprock.org.

STAND TOGETHER:

Rose Hamid, a 56-year-old Muslim flight attendant, stands in silent protest along with her colleague Marty Rosenbluth (to her left) during a Donald Trump rally in Rock Hill, South Carolina.



“DID YOUR DAD TAKE YOUR MOM HOSTAGE?”

PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN COMEDIANS USE HUMOR TO COMBAT STEREOTYPES

BY JESSE RUBIN

“**W**hat the fuck is funny about a hunger strike?” As a comedian, Amer Zahr isn’t afraid to take on controversy. He is, after all, Palestinian.

He poses the question to me in a crowded café in Midtown Manhattan, only a few blocks from the famed Carnegie Hall, where Zahr and three fellow comedians were to perform the following night. On February 5, they became the first Palestinian-American comedians to grace that stage.

The hunger striker in question is Palestinian journalist Muhammad al-Qiq, who had refused food since November 25 to protest his administrative detention by Israel. Al-Qiq is one of over 600 Palestinians in Israeli custody who have yet to be charged with a crime.

Zahr hits the punch line: “I mean if you want to get the guy to eat, put some grape leaves in front of him. I don’t know what you’re putting in front of him, mansaf, maqluba, something. Yeah, it’s not hard to get an Arab to eat. It is not difficult. So, I’m supposed to be scared of these people when they can’t even do that?”

Zahr’s style of social commentary comes from a long tradition of political comedians à la Lenny Bruce, George Carlin and Dave Chappelle. But what makes him unique is that he showcases social realities not often covered by comedians or the media — namely, living under occupation and growing up as an Arab-American. More than that, he conveys an honesty that comes from knowing his cause is just.

Zahr was born in Jordan, but moved as a child to a predominately white suburb southwest of Philadelphia. Growing up with a sense of otherness led him to embrace his Palestinian heritage, a connection he maintains to this day by traveling to Palestine regularly.

Zahr’s father was forced to flee Jaffa with his family after the 1948 war that led to the founding of the Israeli state. His mother is from Nazareth, and the two met in the United States. The former is Christian, the latter Muslim. Amer calls this “the haram combination” — the Arabic word refers to something that is forbidden, a vice.

“People ask me, ‘where are you from, from ...’ That’s what white people say when they want to find out where you’re really from.”

“From, from?” Zahr responds caustically. “I’m from Palestine.”

Zahr started out like most comedians, driving long distances to play small rooms for little or no money. His first jokes were about easily relatable subjects like immigrant parents, but his tone quickly became more political. The Second Intifada erupted while Zahr was a student at the University of Michigan; the campus Hillel responded by bringing in Israeli army brass to give talks to hundreds of students. Zahr and a group of counter-protesters, meanwhile, would show up, ask tough questions and consistently get booed.

To Zahr, the most appropriate response to oppression is comedy. “Yeah protest, yeah whatever, but really the most appropriate moral response is ridiculing them. And that’s what comedy does. Comedy in its purest form is protest.”

Zahr’s work traverses the uncomfortable political realities of living in Palestine, Islamophobia and the double standards applied to Arab-Americans by the media and law enforcement. When he wrote the joke about Muhammad al-Qiq, he asked himself, “Would it be funny if I told that joke to the hunger striker? Because it’s not funny otherwise.”

We don’t have al-Qiq’s opinion, but the audience in Carnegie’s nearly sold-out Zankel Hall thought the joke was hilarious. And the Arab-American community came out to support. There were Palestinians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Yemenis, Saudis and Egyptians. Even Oday Aboushi, one of the first Palestinians to play in the NFL, was there.

But getting to the most prominent stage in America wasn’t without its

difficulties. As producer, Amer collected funds via a Kickstarter campaign and financed the remainder with personal money. Even so, he told me that in the days leading up to the show there were “people calling up Carnegie Hall saying, ‘Why are you letting these people perform [here]?’”

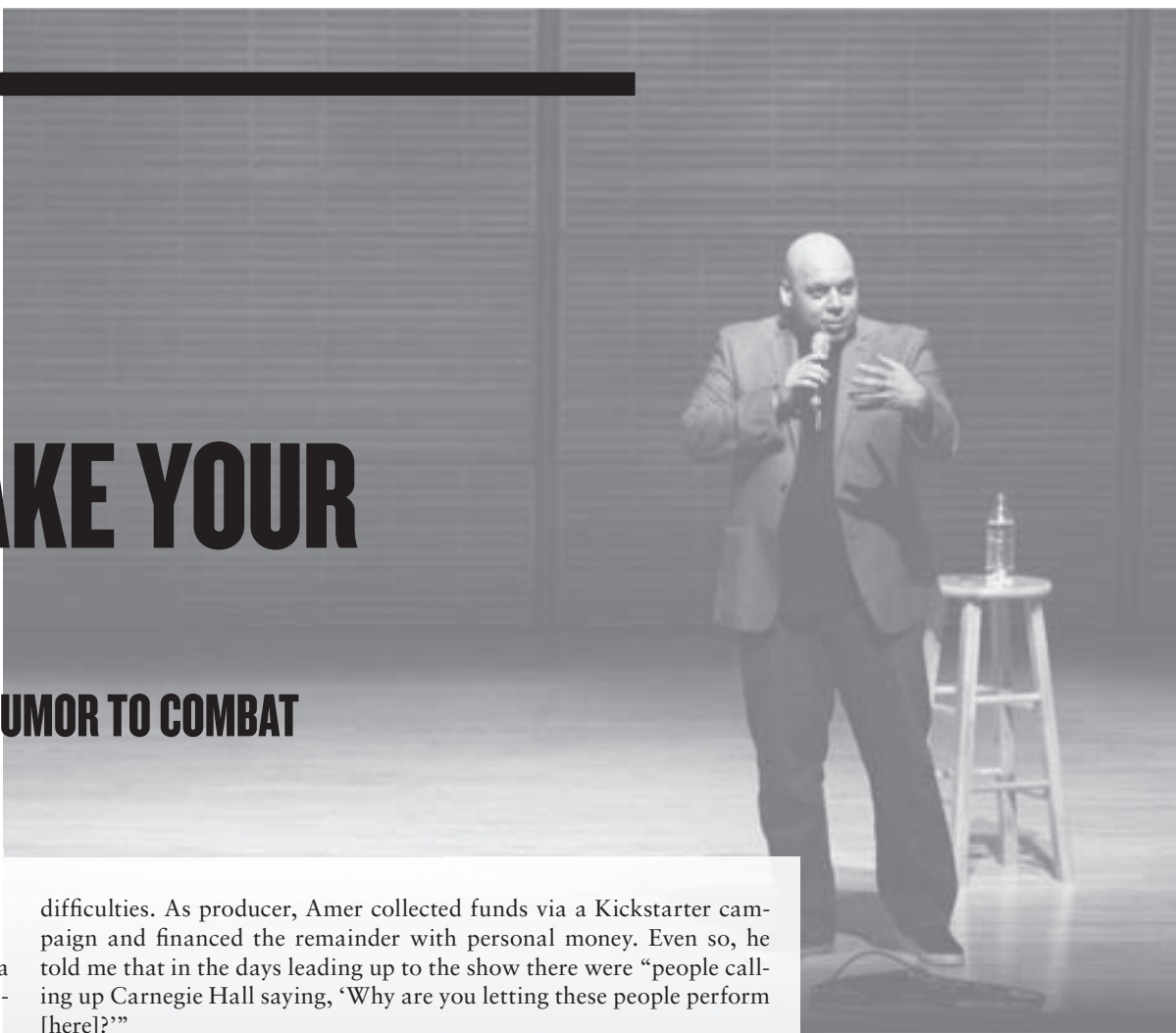
Oppression did not make Zahr and fellow Palestinian-American comedians Mona Aburmishan, Said Durrah and Mike Easmeil, with whom he shared the Carnegie stage, funny. Rather, they continue to be funny in spite of it. Their show, “Being Palestinian Makes Me Smile,” which expands on themes covered in Zahr’s 2014 book of the same name, is the embodiment of this resilience.

And the comedians fearlessly worked the politics into their acts. Zahr joked about the “VIP room” in Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion airport, familiar to many Palestinians who have been stopped and interrogated there. Durrah warned the audience that Palestinians get nervous when Egyptians are sitting by the exits — a reference to Egypt’s nearly decade-long upholding of the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Aburmishan, meanwhile, took aim at Islamophobic tropes, satirizing the post-9/11 American clash of civilizations narrative. “When you’re mixed,” Aburmishan said, referring to her English mother and Palestinian father, “Americans always want to know, how did your parents meet?”

She then slipped into her Valley Girl character: “Oh my god, how did your mom and dad meet? Did your dad take your mom hostage?”

During our café chat on February 4, she was more serious, reflecting on the political and social power of such jokes. “Why is standup comedy a threat?” Aburmishan asked. “Because it’s one person, a microphone and their thoughts, in front of a mass. That’s a sign of tyranny in some countries.”



HOUSAM MCHALEMCH



HOUSAM MCHALEMCH

LAUGHTER IS MEDICINE:

Amer Zahr performs at Carnegie Hall on Feb. 5.

MAKING HISTORY:

Mona Aburmishan also got the crowd laughing at Carnegie Hall on Feb. 5. Aburmishan, Zahr and two others who took the stage that night became the first Palestinian-American comedians to perform at the historic venue.

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BOOKS

WHEN MUSIC WENT GLOBAL

Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Revolution

BY MICHAEL DENNING
VERSO BOOKS, 2015

By Beatrix Lockwood

The usual stories about the early record industry rarely venture beyond U.S. borders. They are set in the Appalachian coal mines, where producers from Victor and Okeh recorded the first country music records, and in the Mississippi Delta, where folklorists collected the raw sounds of the blues.

They take place in New Orleans, where the spirit of jazz was etched onto the early "race records," and in Camden, New Jersey, where the Victor Talking Machine Company introduced the first electric phonograph in 1925. As the recording industry developed and regional sounds spread across the country on discs, vernacular musical traditions such as jazz and folk were incorporated into mainstream popular culture.

As it turns out, this story goes far beyond the boundaries of the United States. A similar musical process was taking place around the world at nearly the same time. In *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Revolution*, Michael Denning explores how this process played out in cities across the globe, focusing in particular on the port cities of the black Atlantic, the gypsy Mediterranean and the Polynesian Pacific. In these cities, commercial record companies, mostly from Europe and the United States, brought local musicians from nightclubs, cafés and the streets into hotel rooms and makeshift studios to record their unique sounds. The products of these recording sessions were thousands cheap shellac discs that were then disseminated across the globe, catalyzing a "world musical revolution." It was in these sessions, many of which took place in the latter half of the 1920s, that musical styles such as samba, rumba, hula, son, calypso, flamenco, fado, tango, marabi, rembetika, kronkog, hula and tzigane were first recorded for a commercial audience.

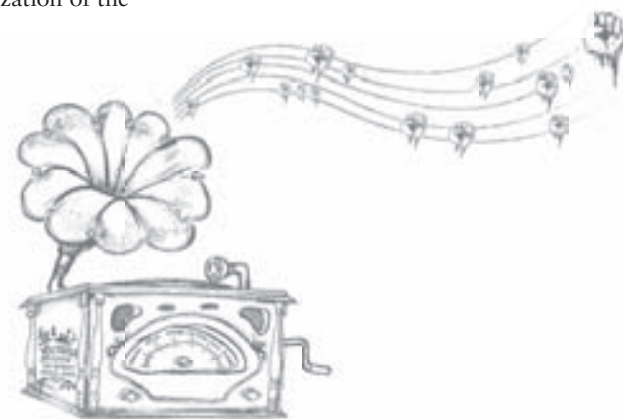
Denning's history touches on each of these musical styles, arguing that however distinct their sounds, they were all part of a single, global turning point — what he calls the "decolonization of the

ear." In other words, the development of new musical technology in the first half of the 20th century — which popularized new vernacular musical idioms — created conditions for the development of new

nations in the latter half.

The idea that decolonization was a cultural as well as a political process is certainly not new, and the influence of cultural figures, including musicians, on anti-colonial movements has been widely studied. But *Noise Uprising* does not dwell on individual musicians, or even on individual songs and lyrics. Instead, Denning is concerned primarily with how the transformation of sound and the introduction of new genres and musical forms contributed to "the remaking of the musical ear." He reframes the common narrative of the record company as a colonial force that appropriated indigenous sounds for commercial profit, focusing instead on what happened when vernacular sounds spread across the globe and eventually returned to local markets, where working-class consumers were able to play them in their own homes as alternatives to European and North American musical imports. Denning does not deny that exploitation and appropriation were present in the early music industry, but his focus is less on the process of collecting sounds and more on the power of the sounds themselves.

This book is not written with a popular audience in mind — the language is dense and academic and Denning's arguments rely heavily on critical theory. As one might expect of a study with such a wide scope, the pages of *Noise Uprising* are often crowded and the narrative frenetic, rarely dwelling on one genre or musician for more than a few pages at a time. This approach can be disorienting but also exhilarating, taking us through an "archipelago" of music scenes at breakneck speed. Denning's description of the fiddles and flutes filling a Dublin hotel just pages away from his discussion of the cafés of working-class Lisbon, where sex workers and thieves developed the fado, reminds us that these musical events reverberated side by side and, despite their structural differences, were part of the same revolution.



HOW TO STAGE AN UPRISING

This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century

BY MARK ENGLER AND PAUL ENGLER
NATION BOOKS, 2016

By Matt Wasserman

There are few highs like the moment when anything feels possible. Social movements and their participants tend to chase this moment of exultation, seeking to recreate the experience. Tactics get confused with strategy, and repeated. After the shutdown of the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle came years of unsuccessful attempts to shut down other global economic summits. And after the occupation of Zucotti Park were the attempts to occupy other public spaces, each faltering in turn with the onset of cold weather and police repression.

With *This Is an Uprising*, Mark and Paul Engler attempt to put together a field guide for “momentum-driven organizing.” Those engaged in the slow, patient work of community organizing and building coalitions over bread-and-butter issues have long looked to the Alinskyite tradition for guidance. But, to my knowledge, this is the first organizing guide that lays out strategies for how to build on moments of what the authors dub “the whirlwind,” rather than simply waiting for lightning to strike.

The major contribution of *This Is an Uprising* is the Englers’ insistence that organizing matters — and we can learn from our forebears. Drawing on the work of Gene Sharp and a smattering of academics such as Frances Fox Piven to frame their analysis, the Englers look at uprisings from Otpor! (“Resistance!”) in Serbia and civil rights organizing in the South to the civil disobedience campaign against British rule in India to describe the habits of highly effective social movements.

While the notion that organizing matters may seem elementary, it runs contrary to the lifestyle radicalism and subcultural posturing that sometimes passes for politics on the left. There’s nothing wrong with personal expression, but confusing it with political action is effectively surrendering to the forces of the status quo. The great, interconnected problems of our age — from racial justice and economic inequality to climate change — require a collective response, not just individual actions as (non-)consumers.



MAGNUS STANHOJORD/JOURNALS.ORG

This means organizing, thinking strategically and exercising the power of civil disobedience. Unlike me, however, the Englers make this point not with a tendentious lecture but with historical examples.

Nonetheless, despite arriving on a wave of lavish praise from left luminaries, *This Is an Uprising* is ultimately unlikely to take a place next to Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* as an activist classic. Although compellingly readable and quite timely, it suffers from several key deficits.

The first issue is the lack of methodological rigor. Although the book is chock-full of case studies, the Englers deploy them as cherry-picked examples of the points they’re making about successful movements, rather than undertaking truly comparative analysis. Their superficial engagement with the academic field of “social-movement theory,” which represents 30 years of scholarly attempts to try to understand social movements, likely contributes to this issue. The absence of academic jargon is welcome, but it comes at a high cost.

A related issue is the short shrift the Englers give to structural factors in analyzing what makes social movements successful. It would be unfair to blame them for not having a grand unifying theory of why certain moments are much more propitious for social movements than others. No one completely understands this. While those on the left can learn to tend to the embers of social unrest and try to read which way the wind is blowing, they still can’t predict with certainty when the fire will catch. The problem is instead that the Englers’ focus on what successful movements do — i.e., strategy, messaging and mobilization — at times seems to erase larger questions of social structure from the picture.

This gap could have perhaps been remedied if the Englers had spent as much time studying social movement failures as successes — there are certainly more of them. Given that it is impossible to conduct laboratory experiments with social movements, studying failure is perhaps the best way to determine which elements are crucial to success. Yet only once, in discussing the civil rights organizing of Dr. King and his comrades, do the Englers even briefly contrast a successful campaign with an unsuccessful one to try to figure out what was different. The conclusions they draw from this con-

trast seem right, but are rather underwhelming: choose your enemies wisely — the more vicious they are, the better for publicity purposes; community organizing matters; be prepared to strategically escalate; and so on.

On the other hand, their contention that social movements are adept at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory is novel and compelling. They deftly argue that organizers can define the terms of their own victory — media coverage will mostly focus on whether they meet their self-proclaimed goals, so attracting 500,000 people to a “Million Man March” becomes a failure. And movements often fail to recognize victories when they achieve them. Anti-nuclear activists effectively put a stop to construction of new nuclear power plants, but they saw the failure to stop the use of nuclear power altogether as a demoralizing defeat. Nonetheless, while total regime change may be the ideal, changing the terms of the debate can be a victory, too.



STEVE KAISER

UNSTOPPABLE: Martin Luther King Jr. and his fellow civil rights activists during the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights.

HOLDING THEIR GROUND: Thousands of anti-corporate protesters peacefully surrounded and shut down a World Trade Organization summit meeting in downtown Seattle on Nov. 30, 1999. They succeeded despite a barrage of pepper spray and tear gas from overwhelmed police.

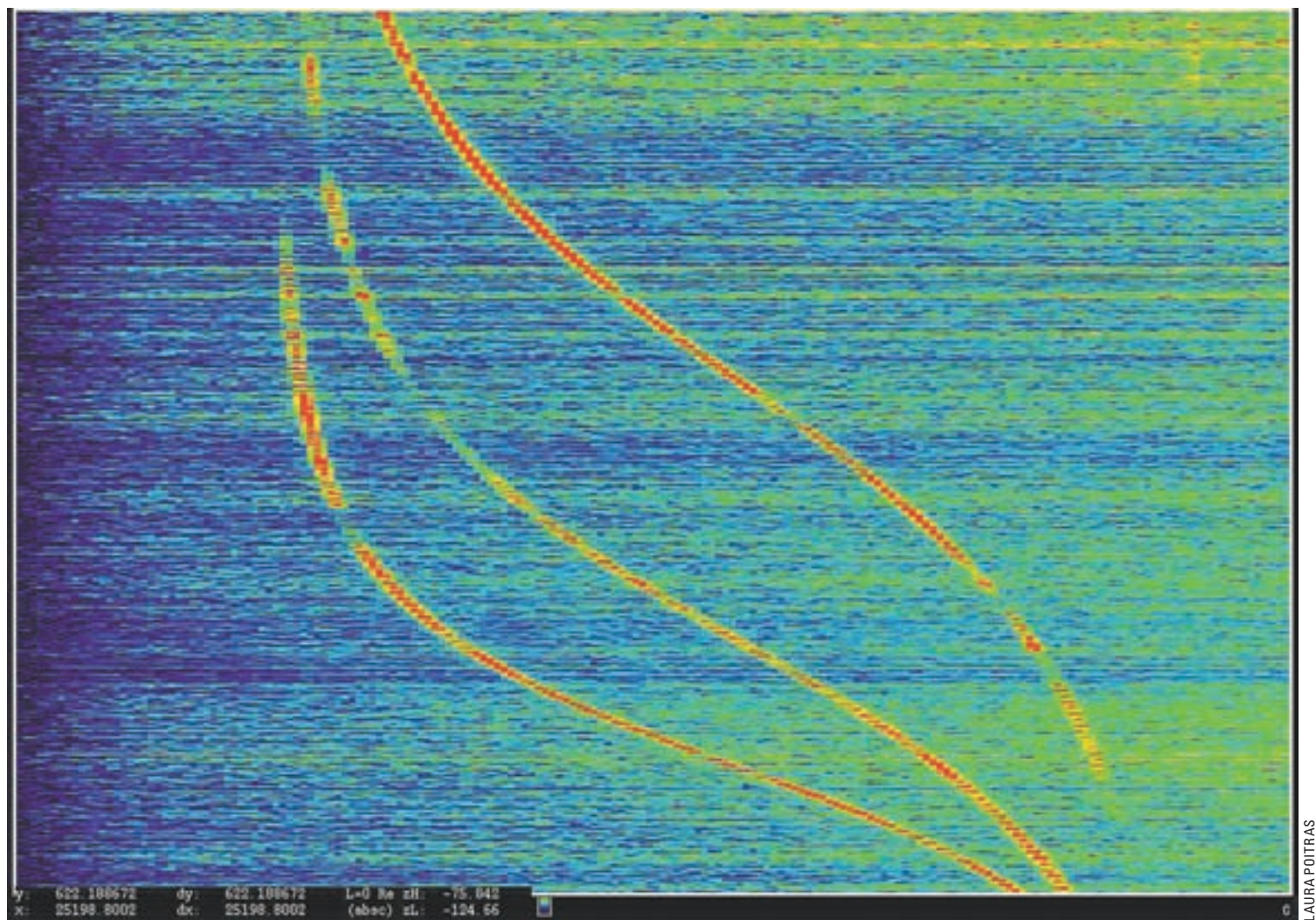
RELIVING A WAR THAT NEVER ENDS

Laura Poitras: *Astro Noise*
WHITNEY MUSEUM
THROUGH MAY 1

By Mike Newton

Laura Poitras' "Astro Noise" begins, as it must, with September 11, 2001. In her video installation *O'Say Can You See* (2001/2016), we see footage of onlookers gazing at Ground Zero in the weeks following the attacks. Many of them look horrified, but some seem awestruck, too. Projected onto the reverse side of the same screen is U.S. military footage, also made soon after the attacks, of detainees being interrogated in an Afghan prison. The men are hooded, shackled and also horrified. For anyone who lived through the Bush years, the message is clear enough: the grief, confusion and sadness of 9/11 led to even more grief, confusion and sadness, this time imposed, continuously and systematically, by the world's foremost military power. An eerie, distorted version of the U.S. national anthem plays over the whole thing.

"Astro Noise" is an exhibition of almost entirely new artwork by Poitras, installed on the top floor of the Whitney's gleaming new Meatpacking District building (admission fees are pricey, but it's pay-what-you-wish on Friday evenings). Poitras is perhaps best known as the director of *Citizenfour*, the Academy Award-winning 2014 documentary on Edward Snowden and the United States' sweeping, invasive 21st-century security infrastructure. This major-museum exhibition helps cement Poitras' status among the pre-eminent chroniclers of America's post-9/11 period, and joins the Oscar, Pulitzer and MacArthur "genius" grant on her remarkable and ever-expanding list



LAURA POITRAS

of achievements.

As an artist, Poitras shows a clear affinity for her similarly minded contemporaries, like her *Citizenfour* collaborator Trevor Paglen, video/performance artists Jill Magid and Hito Steyerl (who each contribute to the exhibition's catalogue) and the late filmmaker Harun Farocki. What sets her work apart is the attention paid to immediate, bodily experience. Indeed, it seems that her impetus to make new video installations (a form that she works in only sporadically — this is her first-ever solo exhibition) came from a desire to engage audiences directly in space and time: evoking and creating lived experience in ways that movies or texts just can't.

Bed Down Location (2016), for example, has participants lying down on a communal mattress, staring up at a screen that mimics the night skies of various embattled zones: locations in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan, where American drones have been used to carry out "targeted killings," and Nevada, where many of these drones are piloted remotely. Off to the side, you can see barbed wire, or what look like prison towers. In this way, the viewer partakes in a shared somatic experience and feels some of the immediate humanity of the men and women, soldiers, prisoners and Mideast civilians who have defined so much of 21st-century American life, often from thousands of miles away. Back in *O'Say Can You See*, she asks viewers to identify simultaneously with ashen-faced American bystanders and with the shackled captives of American military aggression — and it is easy to identify with all of them, because their emotion is so visible and so direct on-screen. But by dividing the footage in space, Poitras also marks a clear separation: a line between where America builds its cities and where our military puts its prisons.

To some degree, "Astro Noise" feels like a step back in time, or even like an art show from an alternate history: a Bush-era exhibition that would have been immediately snuffed out in those years of "terror alerts" and anthrax envelopes. Most of the video footage is from no later than 2008, there's little mention of Obama and Snowden doesn't really come up. But this work isn't about re-animating a moment in history; it's more a matter of sifting through the bedrock of our current era. More than seven years into the Obama administration, the prison at Guantánamo Bay remains open and there are still American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan — by now, most college freshmen have never known a United States that wasn't at war in the Middle East.

And, as the developing legal skirmish between Apple and the FBI helps illustrate, recent advances in communications technology have opened up all-new ways for Americans to relinquish personal privacy in the interests of vague, looming, anti-terrorist projects. Like the astonished onlookers in Poitras' video — mouths agape as they stare at a site of terrible loss — America feels stuck in a loop, endlessly reliving the wake of past tragedies and tending to wounds that never heal.



LAURA POITRAS



CONOR PROVENZANO

Laura Poitras (b. 1964), *ANARCHIST: Data Feed with Doppler Tracks from a Satellite (Intercepted May 27, 2009)*, 2016. Pigmented inkjet print mounted on aluminum, 45 x 64 3/4 in. (114.3 x 164.5 cm). Courtesy the artist.

Still. Laura Poitras, *O'Say Can You See*, 2001/2016. Two-channel digital video, color, sound. Courtesy of the artist.

Laura Poitras (b. 1964), *Laura Poitras filming the NSA Utah Data Repository construction in 2011*. Photograph by Conor Provenzano.

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