

BERNIE SEEDS A MOVEMENT, P6 • ORLANDO & HETERO-TERRORISM, P14 • BEAT THE SURVEILLANCE STATE, P16

THE INDYPENDENT

#215: JULY 2016



LONG JOURNEY HOME

FREE AFTER 33 YEARS BEHIND BARS, MUJAHID FARID IS NOW FIGHTING TO CHANGE HOW NEW YORK'S PAROLE BOARD TREATS ELDERLY PRISONERS. BY RENÉE FELTZ, P10.



THE INDYPENDENT

THE INDYPENDENT, INC.

388 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217

212-904-1282

www.indypendent.org

Twitter: @TheIndypendent

facebook.com/TheIndypendent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ellen Davidson, Anna Gold,
Alina Mogilyanskaya,
Ann Schneider, John Tarleton

EDITOR:

John Tarleton

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Ellen Davidson,
Alina Mogilyanskaya,
Nicholas Powers
Steven Wishnia

ILLUSTRATION DIRECTOR:

Frank Reynoso

DESIGN DIRECTOR:

Mikael Tarkela

DESIGNERS:

Steven Arnerich, Anna Gold

CALENDAR EDITOR:

Seamus Creighton

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:

Elia Gran

INTERN

Nicole Rothwell

GENERAL INQUIRIES:

contact@indypendent.org

SUBMISSIONS AND NEWS TIPS:

contact@indypendent.org

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:

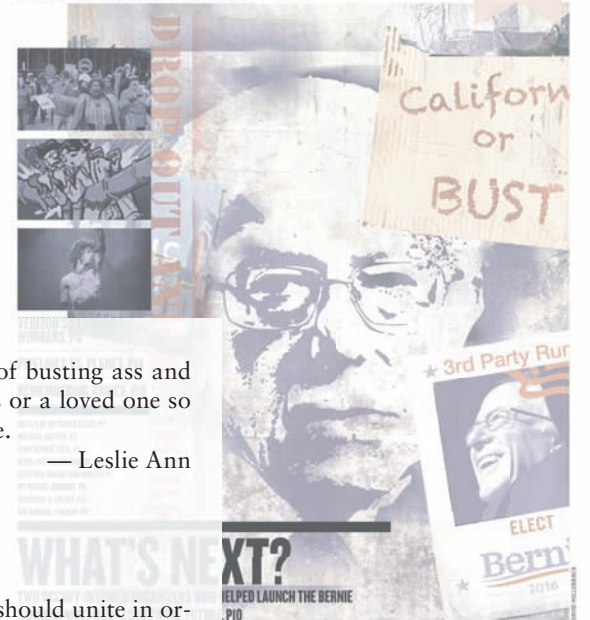
contact@indypendent.org

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS: Sam Alcott, Linda Martín Alcott, Bennett Baumer, Devika Bilimoria, Duane Bruton, José Carmona, Hye Jin Chung, Annette Elizabeth, Renée Feltz, Ersellia Ferron, Daniel Fishel, Lynne Foster, Michael Grant, Michael Hirsch, David Hollenbach, Dondi J, Margarita Kruchinskaya, Rob LaQuinta, Beatrix Lockwood, Gary Martin, Erik McGregor, David Meadow, Mike Newton, Jackie O'Brien, Maya Peraza-Baker, Robert Pluma, Anna Polonyi, Andy Pugh, Conor Tomás Reed, Jim Secula, Matt Shuham, Andrew Stern, Lisa Taylor, Leanne Tory-Murphy, Cindy Trinh, Solange Uwimana, Maria Vassileva, Matthew Wasserman, Beth Whitney, and Amy Wolf.

READER'S VOICE

#214: MAY 2016

THE INDYPENDENT 15 YEARS
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



3RD DEGREE BERN

What I love about Nicholas Powers' essay ("My Third-Degree Bern: Hope in a Time of Crisis," May *Indypendent*) is how well it captures the confusion of American political identity. So much unnecessary misery, suffering, oppression and we are so used to it. But we still want some hope. And cynicism tempts. Who wants to be left holding the empty bag of hope? But we push on ... Great essay and thank you for articulating that struggle to push on.

— OZMA

GREEN WITH ENVY?

In your interview with Charles Lenchner ("They Lit the Bern: What Comes Next, May *Indypendent*) he states that Bernie supporters could "create the electoral machine that isn't built around specific candidates."

That's what the Green Party has tried to be for the last 20-odd years. The structure is already there. People just need to join it.

— MUDGE

TALKING ABOUT A REVOLUTION

Reading "Meet the Party of Upper-Middle-Class Liberals," (May *Indypendent*) reminds me how Occupy Wall Street wasn't even the beginning, but it might have been the beginning of the end game. Bernie is no fluke. Neither is Elizabeth Warren. The people will rise up eventually, because it can't keep going like this. I just hope we can do it with ballots, and not bullets.

— TODD LOCKWOOD

COULD RUSH BE RIGHT? (FOR ONCE)

Ironic that Rush Limbaugh actually has a point when he rails against "rich liberals." ("Meet the Party of Upper-Middle-Class Liberals")

— STEPHAN F.

NOT AGAIN

Don't even start with "if you don't support Hillary it's a vote for Trump." ("Meet the Party of Upper-Middle-Class Liberals"). There are more choices than voting, wait till the authority figure gives us results and then deal with it as long as you're safe and

warm crap. Some of us are tired of busting ass and hoping nothing bad happens to us or a loved one so we don't end up homeless or worse.

— LESLIE ANN

CLASS CARD

Playing the "class" card when we should unite in order to defeat Trump. Right now is not the time to be self-righteous.

— ELLEN R.

KICK DE BLASIO OFF THE PROGRESSIVE HONOR ROLL

Decent review, Mr. Sherman ("Meet the Party of Upper Middle Class Liberals"), but one thing was glaringly incorrect: you listed Billy de Blasio during that progressive roll call in mid-article. De Blasio is a Progressive in Name Only (PINO). He was never progressive as a councilman for the eight years he served or as Public Advocate or even during this first term as mayor. He got his start via the Clintons and via Andy Cuomo and is in fact, a hardcore, true blue, centrist neo-liberal, cloaked in the progressive garb and appropriating the brand in exchange for votes. He was always very chummy with Bruce Ratner, any real estate tycoons, and most corporate-grade bank accounts.

— MICHAEL

REMEMBERING MICHAEL RATNER

I considered Michael Ratner a friend ("Towards a Revolutionary Transformation of Society," May *Indypendent*). What an easy-going guy to have been so intensely involved in such pressing issues. We've met at restaurants and drove together from New Haven after speaking about Haiti's crisis in the 90s. I looked up to him. Don't know how he did it all with such cool.

— RONALD HOWELL

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

GET EVERY ISSUE OF THE INDYPENDENT DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR HOME.

12 ISSUES / \$25 • 24 ISSUES / \$48

PURCHASE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION ONLINE AT WWW.INDYPENDENT.ORG/SUBSCRIBE

OR, SEND A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO THE INDYPENDENT/388 ATLANTIC AVE., 2ND FL./BROOKLYN, NY/11217

THRU SUN JUL 31

12 PM–6 PM, Wed–Sun • Free
EXHIBIT: OF THE PEOPLE
 Artists from across the U.S. showcase works that create space for public participation in a broken election system. Includes video, drawing, photography, painting and sculpture as well as socially engaged projects and site-specific installations.
 92 Plymouth St. • SmackMellon.org

MON JUL 4

3 PM
RALLY IN SOLIDARITY WITH RIKERS INMATES
 On a day when Americans celebrate freedom join the Campaign to Shut Down Rikers, the Anarchist Black Cross and other anti-mass incarceration groups for a rally in solidarity with those locked up inside the city's notorious jail. Message facebook.com/iwocnyc/ for more info. Metropolitan Detention Center 80 29th St., Brklyn

SAT JUL 9

11:00 AM–4:00 PM • Free
14TH ANNUAL ARAB-AMERICAN & NORTH AFRICAN STREET FESTIVAL
 Celebration of Arab and North African cultures. Live Music, delicious food.
 Great Jones St. btw Broadway and Lafayette St.

SUN JUL 10

11 AM–4 PM
2ND ANNUAL DISABILITY PRIDE PARADE
 Promoting inclusion, awareness, and visibility of people with disabilities, and redefine public perception of disability. Parade goes up Broadway from 14th St until Madison Park where there will be a celebration. Union Square Park • disabilitypride-nyc.org

THU JULY 14–17

CLASS: MARXIST INTENSIVE
 The rich get richer and cost of everything seems to go up while wages remain stagnant. Marxism is a method for understanding more deeply why we live in a "rigged system" and how we can ultimately replace it with something better. You can attend the full four-day intensive or single sessions. See website for more information on how to register marxproject.org Brooklyn Commons * 388 Atlantic Ave.

SAT JUL 16

10 AM–4 PM • FREE
CITY OF WATER DAY
 Now in its ninth year, this event has grown into the region's biggest harbor festival. Held on Governors Island, New York; Maxwell Place Park, Hoboken, New Jersey; and dozens of locations around New York Harbor, the event draws thousands of people to the water for a day of fun. More at waterfrontalliance.org.

SUN JUL 17

5 PM
PROTEST: BACK TO THE STREETS FOR ERIC GARNER
 Two years after Eric Garner was placed in a fatal chokehold by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo, his family and supporters continue to mobilize for justice. Join them in Staten Island as they mark the passing of a man whose last words, "I can't breathe," helped ignite the Black Lives Matter movement.
 1 Bay St.

SUN JUL 17–WED AUG 3

\$7–\$14
FILM: FOUR MORE YEARS; AN ELECTION SPECIAL
 Juicy scandals, outsized egos, and Machiavellian backroom deals: the high-stakes blood sport of the American electoral process makes for irresistible cinema. Take a break from the 24/7 news cycle chatter with some of the all-time best films about the good, the bad, and the ugly of democracy in action. Films include *The Best Man*, *All the President's Men*, *Wag the Dog*, and *Bulworth*. Showtimes at BAM.org. Brooklyn Academy of Music • 30 Lafayette Ave

WED JUL 20

7 PM–9:30 PM
DISCUSSION: HOW LGBT ATHLETES ARE CLAIMING THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SPORTS
 Join Cyd Zeigler for the release of his new book, *Fair Play: How LGBT Athletes Are Claiming Their Rightful Place in Sports*. Cyd Zeigler will appear in conversation with political sportswriter and *Edge of Sports* imprint curator Dave Zirin. Bluestockings 172 Allen St. 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

WED JUL 20

7:30 PM • Free
PERFORMANCE: WORDS AND MUSIC WITH PATTI SMITH AND

MARIACHI FLOR DE TOLOACHE
 Smith, the punk pioneer and writer behind the celebrated memoirs *Just Kids* and *M Train* presents an evening of poetry, prose, and acoustic music. The all-female, Latin Grammy-nominated group Mariachi Flor de Toloache will also be on hand with ranchera interpretations of traditional Mexican songs, Latin dance tunes, jazz standards, and pop hits, sung in English and Spanish. Damrosch Park W 62nd St. btw Columbus and Amsterdam • lcoutdoors.org

WED JUL 20

7:30 PM • Free
FILM: SONITA
 Sonita tells the story of Sonita Alizadeh, an 18-year-old Afghan refugee in Iran, who dreams of becoming a big-name rapper. Her family has a very different future planned for her: as a bride she's worth \$9,000. Iranian director Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami poignantly shifts from observer to participant altering expectations, as Sonita's story unfolds in an intimate and joyful documentary. 32-01 Vernon Boulevard (Long Island City) rooftopfilms.com

SAT JUL 23

11 AM–12:30 PM • \$20
WALK THE GOWANUS CANAL WITH A LOCAL AUTHOR
 Joseph Alexiou, author of *Gowanus: Brooklyn's Curious Canal*, will lead a walking tour of one of the most important post-industrial waterways in America. Highlights will include: the natural origins of the Gowanus, particularly the tidal estuary and salt marshes; discussion of iconic Gowanus architecture; the key role the waterway has played in history and cleanup of its present-day pollution! Sign up at BrooklynBrainery.com. Gowanus Souvenir Shop 567 Union St, Brooklyn, NY 11215

SAT JUL 23

6 PM–8:30 PM • FREE
LIVE MUSIC: GARDEN GROOVES
 Enjoy the soothing sounds of live music from local musicians in the comfort of a community garden. This event is hosted by New York Restoration Project. Since its founding in 1995, NYRP has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks, and transformed open space for communities throughout New York City's five boroughs.

Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Garden
 95 Malcolm X Blvd.

SAT JUL 30

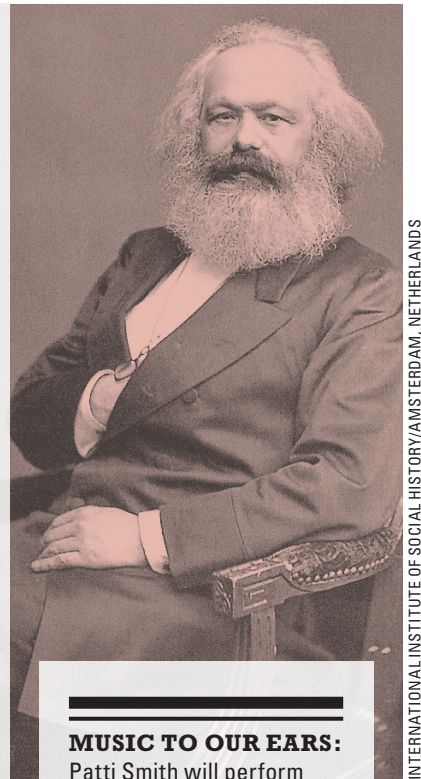
12 PM–3 PM
FLEA MARKET
 Profits from the market support the Bronx Social Center, a radical community space operated by Take Back the Bronx. When you shop at this market you help fund grassroots, community power building initiatives like the Community Action Summer program which allows young people to build leadership skills by fighting for racial, gender, environmental and economic justice in the South Bronx.
 970 Prospect Ave • bronxsocial-center.org

SAT JUL 30–SUN JUL 31

11 AM–5 PM • FREE
6TH ANNUAL NEW YORK CITY POETRY FESTIVAL
 The purpose of the NYC Poetry Fest is to bring together as many NYC poets as possible, in the bright light of day, to meet, mingle, and collaborate. The event features over 75 poetry organizations and 250 poets, including headliners Jericho Brown, Matthew Yeager and Camille Rankine, on three main stages. Food, booze and book vendors on hand as well. Governor's Island • NewYorkCityPoetryFestival.com

THURSDAYS

7 PM–9 PM • FREE
FIGHT TRAINING FOR WOMEN, TRANS FOLKS, AND THE NON-BINARY AND GENDER NONCONFORMING
 Fight training skillshare. An instructor trained in Muay Thai will be present to facilitate. Participants will exchange skills and knowledge and practice together. Beginners are welcome and encouraged! Come ready to do calisthenics, other exercises and to practice fight techniques. Wear something comfortable to workout in.
 The Base
 1302 Myrtle Ave • thebasebk.org

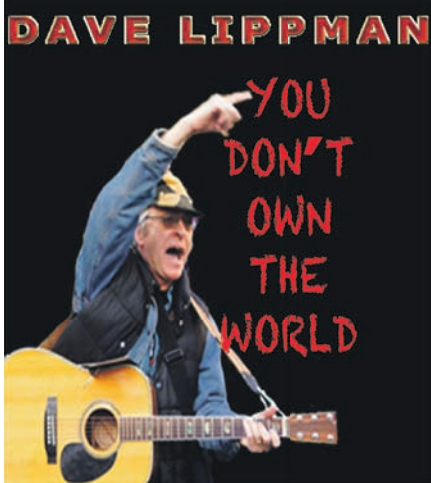


MUSIC TO OUR EARS:

Patti Smith will perform a free evening of poetry, prose and acoustic music on July 20 at Damrosch Park near the Lincoln Center. She will be joined by Mariachi Flor de Toloche, a Latin Grammy-nominated all-female group.

WHAT'S OLD IS

NEW: Since the 2008 economic crash, Marxism has acquired a newfound popularity as a method for understanding how capitalism works. Come by the Brooklyn Commons between July 14-17 and find out why.



New

DAVE LIPPMAN
CD
Hands Up Don't Shoot
Ciao, Inequality

19 songs

When We Stand Up for 15
This Brand's Not Your Brand
Alberta Tarbillies

13 dollars

Gaza's Ark

shipping included

[davelippman.com/
music/world](http://davelippman.com/music/world)

bluestockings
radical bookstore | activist center | fair trade cafe
 172 ALLEN ST • 212-777-6028
bluestockings.com

FRI. JULY 8 • 7-9:30PM
SPEAK-OUT: Shout Your Abortion NYC allows women to share their abortion stories, talk about current events and laws concerning abortion and discuss women's rights and health. It's also a zine release event for Shout Your Abortion NYC, Vol. 2.

TUE. JULY 12 • 7-9PM
BOOK RELEASE: Sabrina Jones uses bold artwork to blend her experiences alongside those of legendary birth-control activist Margaret Sanger in a new graphic novel that effortlessly connects a hot-button topic of today with the history of the issue itself.

WED JULY 20 • 7-9:30PM
BOOK RELEASE: Cyd Zeigler will appear in conversation with political sportswriter and Edge of Sports imprint curator Dave Zirin to discuss his new book, *Fair Play: How LGBT Athletes Are Claiming Their Rightful Place in Sports*.

LABOR

ADULT TOY STORE WORKERS UNIONIZE

BY PETER RUGH

“People that work at Zara don’t have to deal with customers asking to fuck them for a discount on a weekly basis,” Octavia Wheeler explained, detailing the difference between her job at Babeland and one at the ubiquitous Spanish clothing outlet—or any other retail gig, for that matter.

Wheeler, 24, not only performs the duties of a sales associate, like restocking shelves, taking inventory, ringing up customers; she doubles as a sex educator at the adult toy store chain. It’s work Babeland employees say they often find rewarding, helping shoppers feel more comfortable about sex, their bodies, and themselves — but it comes with perils of its own.

When Wheeler and her coworkers at the chain’s three New York City locations voted 21-4 to join the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) last month, it made headlines as the first time adult toy store workers have elected to unionize. But for Wheeler and her colleagues, joining a union is not just about receiving respect for the important work they do. It’s also about increased safety at a job where customers routinely make unwanted sexual advances—or worse.

“The emotional and physical labor involved in working at Babeland is something I have never encountered before, and I’ve been working retail jobs since I was 16,” said Wheeler. “Customers are overtly sexual with us in a way that is boundary-crossing. It’s not every customer, but once a day a situation will happen.”

In one instance, she recounted, a man entered the Babeland store on the Lower East Side and began following customers around the shop. When an employee confronted him, he became aggressive and spat in her face. “We weren’t trained on that,” said Wheeler. “We didn’t really know what to do. We just kind of tried peacefully diffusing the situation, and when that wasn’t working, we just waited until he got tired and left.”

Calling the cops wasn’t an option Wheeler considered. “A lot of us are poor, queer, people of color — people that don’t have the best relationship with the police,” she said, adding that as a transgender individual she is routinely harassed by law enforcement.

Claire Cavanah, who has co-owned Babeland since 1993, when the company opened its first shop in Seattle (the only Babeland store outside of New York), acknowledged the unique difficulties her employees face.

“Selling sex toys the way we do — with encouragement and attention to each customer and a positive message about sex — comes with its specific challenges and rewards,” Cavanah told *The Independent* via email. “Employees need more training than they would in most retail businesses, including training on sexual anatomy and sexual response, as well as how to talk to every kind of customer in a sex negative world.”

Babeland workers want the company to reward the special skills the job requires with higher pay — they currently earn \$14 an hour, up recently from \$12 — and by providing full-time hours. It’s not unusual for Babeland employees to hold additional jobs, and some are on food stamps, according to RWDSU organizer Stephanie Basile. The company declined to

disclose its profits, citing “competitor sensitivity,” but the market research firm IBIS World notes that yearly revenue in the adult toy industry exceeds \$1 billion with an annual growth rate of .7 percent.

Cavanah said Babeland “had been working with staff to attend to their needs” prior to the union vote and the company is currently “building out a more comprehensive training program,” but, she conceded, “I guess we were all too far apart or change was too slow.”

Now the RWDSU and its members are fighting for a contract that they hope will raise their incomes as well as provide protections against and clear guidelines for addressing demeaning, threatening or abusive situations at the stores. Babeland’s transgender employees also want greater respect and acknowledgement of their identities from management. Babeland worker Massima Desire told *The New York Times*, for instance, that she “cringes” every time she logs on to the company’s computer system, which displays her legal name.

“The broader context is important here,” said Stephanie Basile. “You have low-wage workers standing up and building a movement for higher wages and, at the same time, trans issues are in the news now. Trans people are one of the most oppressed sectors of the workforce.”

Basile pointed to a survey published in December by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in which 74 percent of transgender respondents reported “experiencing harassment or mistreatment on the job.” Twenty percent of respondents said they were fired, 20 percent said they were denied advancement and 37 percent said they were not hired because of their gender identity.

“It’s about time that the labor movement starts focusing on that,” said Basile. “A lot of times trans people are so desperate for a job they’ll put up with anything. Trans people, like everyone else, need a union, and they need a collective voice. It’s not an accident that these different things are converging.”

There are laws on the books, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in particular, that hold employers liable for sexual discrimination and harassment, even when such offenses are committed by customers. A union, however, helps employees raise their concerns and defends against retaliation.

Contract negotiations will begin in the coming weeks. Cavanah said she looks “forward to maintaining a positive, fruitful working relationship” with the union. Octavia Wheeler remains skeptical but optimistic.

“I really hope they begin these contract negotiations in good faith,” said Wheeler. She wants customers to know they can show solidarity by dropping by the shop, contacting the owners and letting them know they back a fair contract, and by taking part in the social media campaign Wheeler and her colleagues have launched using the hashtags #FistingForBabeland and #DildosUnited.


COLLECTIVE ACTION:

Workers at three Toys in Babeland stores are looking to win their first union contract.

BDS TARGETED

PRO-PALESTINE GROUP VOWS TO BEAT BACK CUOMO'S BLACKLIST

BY JESSE RUBIN

On June 5, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued a first-in-the-nation executive order that requires all state agencies under his jurisdiction to cease their dealings with companies and institutions that back the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel.

Flanked by pro-Israel politicians and activists — and not a single Palestinian — Cuomo signed the order at Manhattan's Harvard Club before marching down Fifth Avenue in the Israel Day Parade.

Cuomo's order tasks one of his commissioners with assembling a list of institutions that support a boycott, both directly and through a parent or subsidiary. This public list will be available online, and although affected companies will have 90 days to appeal, the order shifts the burden of proof onto the accused.

The list will also discourage allies and future allies from supporting the call for BDS—or less perceptibly, deter intergroup solidarity among Palestine activists and other human rights organizations.

Activists worry that human rights groups who would ordinarily support Palestinian rights—and therefore BDS—will keep a distance for fear of jeopardizing their own successes. It is conceivable that under Cuomo's order, an already financially strained organization focused on domestic issues would shy away from Palestine solidarity groups, in order to avoid what may be a costly and lengthy legal battle.

Legal experts have called the mandatory blacklist “McCarthyite” and activists fear that the vague language of the order will have far-reaching implications for the ability of human rights groups to operate.

The order comes after two separate anti-BDS bills failed to pass the state legislature this year. Cuomo circumvented the legal process with the order, calling BDS a “hateful, intolerant campaign,” at the signing.

“It's very simple: If you boycott against Israel, New York will boycott you,” Cuomo said when announcing the order.

Twenty-one states have taken up anti-BDS legislation, although New York's is the most far-reaching. New York Senator Chuck Schumer has vowed to model national anti-BDS legislation after Cuomo's order. Congress already authorizes \$3.1 billion per year in military and economic assistance to Israel, by far the most foreign aid any country receives from the United States.

NOT INTIMIDATED

The order has galvanized BDS supporters and free speech advocates more broadly, inspiring a quickly organized yet well-attended demonstration outside Cuomo's midtown Manhattan office on June 9 and subsequent rally at the State Capitol in Albany on June 15. During the Albany rally, a coalition of groups delivered a petition with 13,000 signatures to Cuomo's office in the State Capitol.

Primary among activists' complaints has been Cuomo's “selective solidarity” when it comes to the use of boycotts. The governor issued a ban — or boycott

— on all non-essential state travel to North Carolina in response to that state's discriminatory laws against transgender individuals, but has banned New Yorkers from utilizing the same collective power against Israel.

Legal experts doubt the order will survive scrutiny in the courts, as there are multiple Supreme Court cases solidifying boycott as protected First Amendment speech.

Kathy Manley, vice president of the Capitol Region chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union cited the landmark civil rights case *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co* in which the Supreme Court ruled the local NAACP chapter's boycott of white merchants in Claiborne County, Miss., as a means to pressure politicians into adopting racial justice measures was a “political form of expression” and thus protected under the First Amendment.

“There's a long history of boycotts being part of social movements and this is an attack on that tradition,” Manley added.

Under the belief Cuomo has been working closely with the pro-Israel lobby — or even the Israeli foreign ministry, as some Israeli media have reported — on June 21 the Center for Constitutional Rights, Palestine Legal, and Jewish Voice for Peace filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request seeking to “understand the origins of Cuomo's order and who may be behind it.”

“This FOIL seeks to expose the forces behind this executive order so that the public can understand the extent to which Cuomo is subverting our constitutional rights in order to shield Israel from accountability,” wrote Palestine Legal Executive Director Dima Khalidi in a statement.

AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

BDS is an international movement that calls for boycotting and divesting from Israel until it complies with international law. Its three principles are: ending the nearly five-decade long military occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, recognizing the rights and full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel and granting the right of return to more than five million displaced Palestinian refugees, as inscribed in U.N. Resolution 194.

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, in 2005 Palestinian

civil society issued the call for BDS to achieve their demands through nonviolent means. It is headed by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC).

The effectiveness of BDS is contested among activists, scholars and human rights groups, with proponents pointing to companies like Soda Stream — forced to close its factory in the illegal West Bank settlement of Maale Adumim — or the European transportation infrastructure company Veolia, which sold off much of its business in Israel under international boycott pressure.

Continued on page 15



ALL MY LOVE TO PALESTINE: A BDS supporter at a June 9 demonstration outside of Gov. Cuomo's midtown Manhattan office.

JAKE RATNER

BROADCAST ON MORE THAN 1,300 PUBLIC TV AND RADIO STATIONS WORLDWIDE

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

DEMOCRACY
NOW!

DEMOCRACYNOW.ORG
Tune In Live Every Weekday 8-9am ET

- Audio, Video, Transcripts, Podcasts
- Los titulares de Hoy (*headlines in Spanish*)
- Find your local broadcast station and schedule
- **Subscribe to the Daily News Digest**

Follow Us @ DEMOCRACYNOW



LET A THOUSAND FLOWERS BLOOM

SANDERS SUPPORTERS LOOK TO BUILD A LONG-TERM MOVEMENT

TEXT & PHOTOS BY JOHN TARLETON

CHICAGO — Three thousand Bernie Sanders supporters gathered at a lakeside convention center in Chicago on the weekend of June 17–19. The People's Summit, as the event was called, provided a space for activists to celebrate the Sanders campaign's meteoric rise, lament how it narrowly missed upending the Clinton machine in the race for the Democratic nomination and most of all to plot the future of a "political revolution" that will have to continue on after the Sanders 2016 campaign officially expires.

The People's Summit opened one day after Sanders appealed via livestream to supporters across the country to mount thousands of campaigns for local, state and federal offices and transform the Democratic Party from within. A similar message was on offer at the People's Summit.

"Heroes aren't made. They're cornered," said RoseAnn DeMoro, executive director of National Nurses United, the union that played a leading role in organizing the event.

During one breakout session called "The Down Ballot Movement Strategy for Political Revolution," a facilitator asked a packed room of 180 people "How many people here will run for elective office in your community within the next few years?"

Thirty to forty people stood up.

When asked who would help work on a campaign where they live, almost everyone else in the room was on their feet.

The next wave of a populist insurgency that Sanders has been the face of for the past year was declaring itself.

Questions abound.

Will an over-emphasis on electoral politics diminish the upsurge in social movement activity (Occupy, Black Lives Matter, climate justice, \$15 minimum wage, etc.) of the past five years that helped fuel the Sanders campaign? Will the necessary small donor support materialize for myriad down-ballot campaigns in the way it did for Sanders' high-profile run for the presidency?

To the extent there are local breakthroughs, will the pragmatic concerns of governance diminish the aspirational vision of a better world that made the Sanders campaign such a vital force? And regardless of local victories, is it truly possible to transform a national party that remains firmly in the grip the 1 percent?

Sanders and his supporters have disproven so many naysayers during the past year so who is to say what are the limits of the possible?

In much of the country the Democratic Party is an empty shell. Its pretends to be "the party of the little person." Yet, it caters to the interests of its wealthy donors, outraging many of its rank-and-file members. Given this, the thinking goes, why not try to "occupy the party" while keeping up the pressure for change from outside the electoral process as well?

It's what the New Right did in successive waves after the defeats of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Ronald Reagan in his first White House run in 1976. By 1980 the New Right was not only in position to take over the Republican Party but gained sway over the country for the next 30 years.

Whether such an approach can be successful for the Millennial Left remains to be seen. Still, thousands of ordinary people inspired by the Sanders campaign are determined to try and make the political revolution where they live. Here are stories of five such individuals this reporter spoke with at the People's Summit. Their accounts were condensed and edited for length and clarity.



Moumita Ahmed

ONLINE ORGANIZER
NEW YORK, NY

I WAS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE. My family fled a civil war in Bangladesh. Right after the invasion of Iraq when I was 12, my father was racially profiled and arrested and my family who were living in Texas got death threats and had their houses egged.

In 2014 I was doing climate justice work and was a part of Flood Wall Street. I was also involved with the Black Lives Matter movement and was a part of shutting down bridges and the Black Friday event where we shut down the Macy's on 34th Street.

When you're in the streets participating in these movements, you can see how disgusting the establishment can be and feel like there's no way to influence them. Charles Lenchner and Winnie Wong of People for Bernie showed me you can do direct action protests and have a really good strategy and theory of change when it comes to electoral politics.

I co-founded the Millennials for Bernie Facebook page and started incorporating my story and other young people's stories who are getting involved. Our page reaches 6.7 million people per day and we get thousands of shares. I'm also an admin for the Bernie Sanders dank meme stash, which has a half-million young followers.

We coordinated online campaigns and also got people to start meeting and doing more things offline. In Bushwick we did a t-shirt screening party where you could bring a t-shirt and have a Bernie logo put on it. We did a voter appreciation day where we got in touch with bars that agreed to give a discount to people who had their voter sticker on, or if they had a Bernie sticker on.

I will be going to the Democratic National Convention as a Sanders delegate from New York. I'm looking forward to it and really nervous. Everybody keeps talking about Chicago 1968 and I'm googling that and like, "Is that what's going to happen?" Whatever happens, I hope it's something good for our movement like getting our issues in the platform and setting the tone of the general election.

I'm a huge supporter of getting involved locally, which I don't think most people have done. I would really like to see more communities of people of color become involved in the progressive movement. I think it's really important for children of immigrant parents to start being involved. I think our work should be with those communities. We need to go knocking door-to-door with our values and bring these people into our movement.



Darryl Holloman

SMALL BUSINESS OWNER
DUPAGE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

I'M A BUSINESS OWNER AND A SOCIALIST. I run a small carpet cleaning business that cleans restaurants. My mom was an activist in the atheist movement and my grandfather was the mayor of Lombard, Illinois. Both of them installed in me a deep sense of humanitarian responsibility. But it wasn't until Bernie Sanders' run for president that I took a leadership role in my community.

DuPage County for Bernie Sanders began organizing in August 2015. At first it was a handful of us putting flyers on people's doors about Bernie. DuPage County encompasses the northwest suburbs of Chicago and has more than 900,000 residents. We have grown to become a regional network with 10-15 core organizers and hundreds of active volunteers down to the precinct level that has basically gained leverage over the local Democratic Party.

We have barely spent a dime. We are a word-of-mouth group. We go door to door. We make phone calls. We show up at festivals, parades, the train station. We have our meetings at the College of Dupage cafeteria, which is open to the public 24/7. The local Democratic Party just had a golf outing at the country club. That's not us.

Bernie won in DuPage with 52% of the vote and candidates are starting to realize they not only have to go to the township meetings of their local Democratic Parties, they need to go to our meetings and reach out to us.

Some people in the Democratic Party want us to collect signatures, knock on doors, make phone calls for all their candidates. But if a candidate doesn't have a truly progressive platform — \$15 minimum wage, universal health care, racial justice, immigration reform, serious action on climate change — then we can't support them as a group. And if we can't endorse anybody for a position, then so be it. We will run somebody from our group next cycle.

This year we will have Bernie-crat candidates running for county auditor, county recorder and forest preserve commissioner. Me and a colleague of mine have been discussing lately running for State House and State Senate in 2018 but will consult with our group first.

I believe the Sanders movement will make the most headway in red states and counties like ours where the Democratic Party is weaker, there's room to grow and they need us more than we need them. It's an excellent opportunity to take over your local Democratic Party at the county level so that you can then exert influence over state-level Democrats, then move up the chain. A lot of people are upset our guy isn't going to win the presidency. But they have to understand it's a long game. It's going to come in waves. But we have to keep the momentum going.



Jennifer Holm

NURSE
WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA

I HAVE WORKED AS A NURSE at the Watsonville Community Hospital for 11 years. We are an agricultural community and the majority of our patients speak Spanish only. I have been involved in my union at the hospital advocating for patient and worker rights but wasn't particularly active before this campaign.

I first got to hear Bernie Sanders speak when my union endorsed him last August. What stood out to me the most was that he answered the questions that people asked him. I was like, "This is my guy. This is the politician I've been wanting to have happen."

I did most of my door-to-door canvassing for Bernie in Watsonville. Talking to people in the community, it was less about me telling them about the issues but hearing what was important to them about what was going on in their lives. They were worried about their jobs and if I mentioned that I was a nurse they were like, "I don't know how to afford health care."

It was through my union that I ran as a delegate candidate and was elected to be a delegate from California's 20th congressional district. It means I can be a voice for all the people I work with and the people I represent in my community. If Bernie can win the nomination, great. But I'm pretty clear on how things are looking right now so my hope is that we can have a civil discourse and come out with a platform that actually includes the needs of the people of this country.

I've always felt connected to my community. When I go shopping at Target, I run into people I've cared for there. But now I feel so much more invested and connected to the individuals in the community. I've been to their homes, I've talked to them, I've seen their kids play out in the front yard. I have this feeling of these are my people and I'm theirs.

I don't think I will be stepping back after this. I'm looking at our city council and county supervisors and realizing how ignorant I've been about local politics. I want to support the people who consistently come out and help us and when it's necessary call to account those officeholders who aren't doing what they promised.

Our local politicians are people just like us. Some of them may have more advantages than others. But they're still human beings. And if they're human beings, that means any other human being within their constituency could step forward as well. It could be me. That's kind of an eye-opening realization.

Mindy Rosier

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER
NEW YORK, NY

I WORK AT THE MICKEY MANTLE SCHOOL in Harlem. My life changed three years ago when Eva Moskowitz tried to use her political clout to throw us out of the building that we shared with one of her Success Academy charter schools.

That was my enough-is-enough moment. I got a crash course in organizing: who to call, what to do, what to say at a press conference. Before that, I had been this quiet, politically apathetic teacher who went home and had her miserable life. That changed everything for me. I got divorced, have amazing new friends, totally different circles.

As someone who took out student loans and has a hefty debt, I started following Elizabeth Warren and her fight in Congress over student loan debt. I helped MoveOn organize a couple of events in New York for Warren and did a pretty good job and was later invited to join the group that became People for Bernie. I started doing social media for them. I did the first Brooklyn meet-up where new volunteers had a chance to meet up and begin networking. I later organized another one at Union Square that drew a little over 300 people.

I helped organize a march and rally at the end of January and a large one in April that drew 15,000 people. It was a beautiful thing. I will be in Philadelphia as an alternate delegate. I will be on the floor of the convention and if another female Sanders delegate from New York drops out or has to leave the floor for more than 10 minutes, I will fill their position.

I want to see true democracy in action. I want us to have the opportunity to vote on measures like going to open primaries and know if we lose it's because more people voted "No," not because the powers that be decided the matter. And I'm glad Bernie is taking the fight all the way to the convention. He made a promise to people that he was going to see this through and not back down.

I've filled out the online questionnaire for people who are interested in running for office in the future. Nothing ever happens if you stay quiet. It's a matter of timing and when a seat opens up. Between different advocacy groups and the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club I am a member of, they all want me to run for office at some point so we'll see.

Kenneth Mejia

RECENTLY QUIT JOB AT HEDGE FUND
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

I GREW UP IN A NEIGHBORHOOD in Los Angeles where most of my friends and neighbors didn't have a lot but had enough to get by. I was raised by a single mother who took care of myself and my siblings and made sure we went through school and found good jobs.

I used to work for a hedge fund but I quit my job in May because in Bernie Sanders I saw for the first time in my life a politician who truly cares about working and middle class people and especially the poor which is what I see everyday in LA. I volunteer to feed the homeless. I buy families food, I give coats to the homeless. But this was the time I decided to say, "Enough is enough" and run for Congress on Bernie's platform.

I started in April and had to enter as a write-in candidate. It's difficult when you're not on the ballot, but I had a team of 100 people volunteering every day on my campaign phone banking, texting, doing door-to-door canvassing, greeting people outside the subway. I raised almost \$4,000 in small donations. The incumbent Xavier Becarra raised \$13,000 in small donations and \$1.2 million from Super PACs, lobbyists and other special interests.

I won't know my vote tally until the counting is finished in July. I don't think I made it to the top two in the primary and thus won't be on the ballot in November which is how it's done in California. Right now I'm taking time to enjoy being with my family. I'm looking to use my knowledge in finance to go to work for a nonprofit or maybe for Los Angeles County overseeing budget spending.

I had a chance to ask Bernie a question during a televised town hall meeting about what advice he would give someone like me who is just starting to run for office. He looked me in the eye and told me I should go out and feel the pain in my community and then have the guts to stand up to people in power.

I'm definitely running for Congress again in 2018. I will be very well-organized and will be on the ballot. I think I can win. I have had kids who haven't even finished high school who want to help and they want to run for Congress someday too. I think it's going to become a trend in the next couple of years with people stepping up to the plate, especially young people. I wouldn't say it's the cool new thing to do. It's the thing that needs to happen in order for this country to move forward.

DID IDENTITY POLITICS DESTROY SANDERS' CHANCE OF WINNING?

BY LINDA MARTÍN ALCOFF

This election season has been a game changer for left strategies in the United States. Suddenly, radicals who had dismissed the electoral arena entirely as forever compromised by corporate power are rethinking the possibilities a national platform can provide. Despite facing down formidable odds, Bernie Sanders, an avowed socialist running a left-populist campaign, nearly closed the gap with his primary opponent, Hillary Clinton. Starting out more than 55 points behind Clinton just over a year ago, Sanders ended the primary season receiving 43 percent of the Democratic Party vote and 45 percent of the delegates and winning 22 states hands down. He had no trouble raising money, even without super PACs. Despite his age, his Jewish identity, his relative obscurity on the national stage before the campaign, his criticism of Israel and support for Palestinians and his persistent drumbeat of charges against the American religion of profit, Sanders came damned close to winning the nomination.

Sanders' surge is a watershed moment that legitimized the concept of socialism in electoral politics. He boldly characterized capitalism and capitalists as the problem. The challenges facing the U.S. economy and the global climate would not be met by allying with Wall Street or corporations, he avowed, but by cutting back their power and influence. With this message, Sanders won the youth vote by overwhelming margins among youth of all colors.

But Sanders' achievement cannot be entirely credited to the popularity of his message. The unpopularity of Clinton, his major Democratic opponent, undoubtedly played a part. Clinton's pro-war, pro-prison and neoliberal economic voting record created a clear contrast with Sanders. Clinton represented continuation, not change; conservative foreign policy and inadequate economic reform.

Yet Clinton also represented a subversion of the status quo just by being a woman running seriously for the job of president. We might reasonably blame Sanders' loss primarily on media bias and the party machinery, but the persistent theme of worry throughout the primary season was whether the old white guy from Vermont could stop the historic train of gender progress that Clinton's election would symbolize.

When I knocked on doors in my Brooklyn neighborhood for Bernie, the problem for some people of color was not just that he was white, but that he was old: they had little positive experience with that generation of white people. And this was among mostly poor folks.

'TWILIGHT OF COMMON DREAMS'

It seemed that identity politics was trumping class politics.

There once was a popular fairy tale about the demise of the last serious political revolution during the 1960s. In this story, the cause of failure was not sectarian bickering, or ultra-leftism, or the racism, sexism and heterosexism that undermined coalitions, or even the government's eventual retreat from Vietnam. Rather, the real reason for defeat was (drumroll): identity politics. Todd Gitlin memorialized this as "the twilight of common dreams": when separatism based on group identities defeated the New Left's hope to inspire "an interracial movement of the poor." Instead of keeping their eyes on the prize of class struggle, feminists, LGBT activists and varied constituencies of color split off and devolved into a reformist politics of representation.

The primary season we have just witnessed seems to be a repetition of Gitlin's nightmare. Clinton's campaign generated passionate support from many women of diverse races and classes. Pro-feminist men insisted on interpreting every overheated gesture of Sanders' as a form of male privilege. Clinton's "experience" was enough, they argued. It was time for a woman to win.

This is a feature of electoral politics the left needs to under-

stand. There are two tracks, not one, that are worked on the stage of a major election. Track One is the agenda and policy proposals of the candidate, and these should be scoured to assess who they help, who they hurt and how much they challenge the 1 percent. Sanders won on this track hands down. But there is another track that motivates and animates voters. Track Two concerns the identity of the candidate. Are they a soccer mom or a rich industrialist, a mixed-race brainiac or a boot-wearing Texan? This is not just about veneers, but about trust, connection and the cultural politics of credibility and identification. It is the way we choose our partners, assess our doctors and respond to our teachers. It is the infrastructure of everyday interactions.

Leftists of Gitlin's persuasion need to understand that identity matters. Candidates for high office are more than policymakers; they are also avatars, symbols of possibility, role models, punching bags and lightning rods who must negotiate public responses that sometimes have little to do with what they actually say or stand for.

Hillary's passionate female (and male feminist) supporters are speaking with sincerity about their hopes for a gender revolution. The reality is that women work for less pay; do more childcare; are often single parents; must weather sexual harassment, abuse, and assault throughout their lives, and then are still demeaned if they wear more than a size 6.

Women are bullied and regularly threatened with rape on the internet, marginalized on late-night TV, cited less frequently in academia and put out to pasture in Hollywood at an age when male stars have decades of sex scenes to go. And we still have to contend with offensive stereotypes like the Sofia Vergara character on primetime TV and the *Real Housewives* franchise. Our graphic rape, murder and dismemberment is the normative plot line for "entertainment." The visual culture in the United States skews skinny, light-skinned, attractive and young unless you are a white man with power, in which case neither your neck nor your waistline are issues.

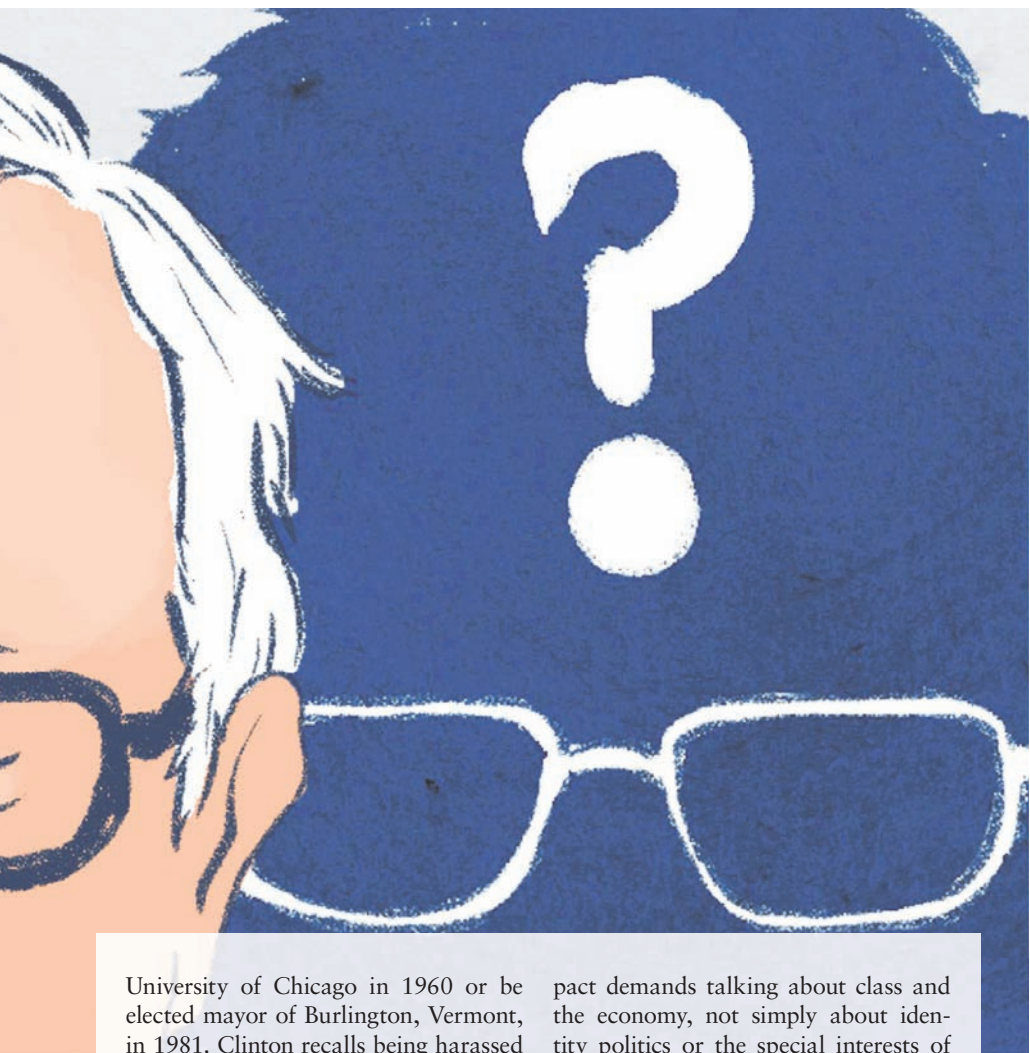
Yet the track of identity needs to be applied to all aspects of a candidate. All white men are not the same in our current public culture. Sanders' identity as a very specific sort of white guy, definitely non-elite, played well with his populist message. He's old, but that generates less negatives for men than for women and inspires a certain amount of respect. He is also very visibly (and audibly) Jewish, and his type of Brooklyn accent is rarely associated with the rich. Bernie is not a bland Midwesterner or Ivy League Northeasterner, but a working-class Polish Jew who grew up in a small rent-controlled apartment in Flatbush. He went to public schools, including CUNY, before he "made it" to the University of Chicago. And his longevity in politics established that this was no put-on: he has been wearing the same ruffled suits and talking vividly with his hands for 40 years of political life. Sanders' identity generated credibility and connection for lots of people who feel marginalized by the style pages.

Meanwhile, Clinton's unfavorability rating has stayed greater than 50 percent for the length of the campaign. (Sexism undoubtedly plays a role: 20 percent of voters still say they "are not ready" to vote for a woman, no matter how qualified.) Leftists who support Sanders should not toss her rating off as the result of a rational evaluation of Clinton's policy and agenda, nor should they take advantage of the culture's sexism to maneuver a class-based agenda into a better position.

Most important, Sanders supporters need to understand that identity makes a difference on the effects of class. A woman, a person of color, would not have been as likely to get into the



CANDIDATES FOR HIGH OFFICE ARE MORE THAN POLICYMAKERS. THEY ARE AVATARS, ROLE MODELS, SYMBOLS OF POSSIBILITY.



MICHAEL GRANT

University of Chicago in 1960 or be elected mayor of Burlington, Vermont, in 1981. Clinton recalls being harassed in the early 1970s as she was taking her LSATs, with guys asking her “who she thought she was.”

In this election, Clinton has depicted her campaign as a historic advance that will diminish the double standards by which female candidates are judged. Its promise is to help reduce the sexism that besets the lives, both public and private, of all women. This promise is not just tied to her policy proposals — though some of those do address gender issues — but to her ability to navigate gender-loaded criticisms of having “ruthless ambition” or a “bellowing laugh” or being “shrill.” The *Ms. Blog*, while not exactly an unbiased source on the election, offers a helpful set of questions to determine if your opposition to Hillary is sexist. Basically, if you hated Hillary first, and then looked for policy reasons to justify your dislike, you are probably sexist.

Clinton openly mobilizes via Track Two of identity and tries to revise its conventional mechanisms. She puts her pro-war militarism in the service of being a good grandmother and portrays herself as just a female version of the familiar underdog we should all root for. She knows that establishing her feminist credentials is not just about her policy agenda: Voters want to know if she is the kind of candidate who will go to the mat for these proposals, and understand fully what is at stake in getting them passed.

One of the main proposals Clinton has emphasized is paid family leave. Instead of unpaid leave for giving birth and the other work of caregiving that arises in family life, she says we should all have the right to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave. This, while keeping the United States well below the standards of most industrialized countries, would be a paradigm shift. She has also argued that no family should have to pay more than 10 percent of its income on childcare expenses, which is again a modest proposal, yet one that would put hundreds of dollars a week into parents’ hands.

Clinton’s proposals are not better than Sanders’. But discussing their im-

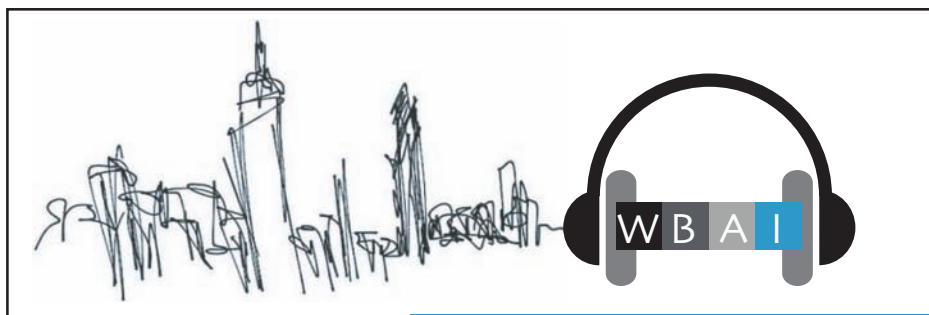
pact demands talking about class and the economy, not simply about identity politics or the special interests of separate groups. That is vital to the ability of working-class people to stay afloat. Mayor Bill de Blasio’s universal free pre-K program has made the year before kindergarten a vastly reduced economic burden on working parents. It has provided an economic stimulus for the city, improved the likelihood of poor children’s later school success and helped parents avoid wage loss and attain better paying jobs.

Yet if family leave is a class issue, it is also true that war is an identity issue, decimating poor families here and abroad and hijacking the feminist agitation around gender justice for an imperial cause. Leftists have to come to a better understanding of the interpenetration of issues and tracks. It is not the case that an “interracial movement of the poor” can ignore our separate challenges.

Hillary’s continued support for her husband’s decision to dismantle welfare as we knew it belies the sincerity of her promises to work hard for working-class women. For the first 15 years after welfare was razed, the rates of extreme poverty doubled, mostly on the backs of single mothers.

This is what happens when you make a budget proposal — such as paid family leave — without addressing the causes of our increasing rates of poverty. Here is where the difference between Sanders and Clinton becomes clear: more than policy, it’s about political orientation. The next time around, the left needs to push the plan to curb capitalism with a better understanding of the ways in which identity intersects with class. A broad, interracial movement for justice depends on it.

Linda Martín Alcoff is a professor of philosophy at the City University of New York and is the author of The Future of Whiteness (POLITY PRESS, 2015).



NOT JUST YOUR DAD’S
(OR GRANDDAD’S)
RADIO STATION ANYMORE...



PROGRESSIVE + INDEPENDENT
NEWS, ARTS + MUSIC @ 99.5 fm
Streaming online: wbai.org
#wbai



Poster by Micah Bazant and the JVP Artist Council
JewishVoiceForPeace.org

We say
“Refugees
Are
Welcome
Here”
because
it’s the right
thing to do
and
because
our country
bears much
responsibility
for the
current crisis.

More at bit.ly/2016bfp

Help us to put up posters
at stores in the community
Email bfp@brooklynpeace.org to get involved!



Brooklyn For Peace

brooklynpeace.org // bfp@brooklynpeace.org // 718-624-5921

brooklyn4peace

brooklynforpeace

brooklynforpeace

brooklynforpeace

IF THE RISK IS LOW, LET THEM GO

HOW A MAN WHO SERVED 33 YEARS ON A 15-TO-LIFE SENTENCE IS PUSHING NEW YORK'S INTRANSIGENT PAROLE BOARD TO RELEASE VIOLENT OFFENDERS WHO HAVE AGED OUT OF CRIME, THE FASTEST GROWING SEGMENT OF THE PRISON POPULATION.

BY RENÉE FELTZ

Back in 1978, Mujahid Farid had already decided to turn his life around when he entered the New York prison system to begin a 15-year-to-life sentence for attempted murder of an NYPD officer.

Held in Rikers Island while his trial was pending, Farid studied for — and passed — a high school equivalency exam. Over the next decade and a half “behind the walls” he earned four college degrees, including a master’s in sociology from SUNY New Paltz and another in ministry from New York Theological Seminary.

In the late 1980s he helped establish an HIV/AIDS peer education project that grew into the acclaimed program known as PACE, Prisoners for AIDS Counseling and Education, and began teaching sociology courses to people seeking their alcohol and substance abuse counseling certification.

By 1993, Farid had served his minimum sentence and was eligible for a hearing before the New York Parole Board. Given how hard he had worked to redeem himself, no one could blame him for being optimistic that they would agree to his release.

Instead, they spent five minutes asking him curt questions focused entirely on his original offense. Then the hearing ended.

“Not one bit of my progress and rehabilitative efforts mattered,” Farid recalls. “I was denied parole because of something that was immutable, that could never change.”

AVERAGE TIME SPENT PER HEARING

AVERAGE NUMBER OF NEW YORK PAROLE BOARD HEARINGS PER MONTH:

1,133

ESTIMATED MINUTES BOARD WORKS PER MONTH (10 DAYS/MONTH):

4,800

AVERAGE TIME SPENT FOR EACH HEARING:

4.2 MINUTES

He was denied parole “again and again,” until his 10th attempt in 2011, when he was 61 years old.

“Over the years, the process breaks a lot of people down,” he says. “Many take it personally. I realized it was common parole board practice.”

NOW AGED 66, FARID recently met me at 8:30 am on a Monday morning at his office in Harlem, where he had been at work since the building opened hours earlier. In a firm and encouraging tone, tinged with polite impatience, he explained how upon his release from prison, he couldn’t forget “the broken parole system I had dealt with” and the men he left behind.

New York’s prison population has grayed rapidly in the last 15 years. Even as the number of people locked up fell by 23 percent, those aged 50 or older ballooned nearly 85 percent, reaching 9,200 people. This echoes a national trend of the elderly being the fastest growing part of the prison population. By 2030, they will number 400,000, or nearly one-third of the U.S. prison population.

While 50 may not seem that old, most medical experts agree that incarcerated people age much faster than those on the outside. They suffer higher rates of chronic illness and conditions related to drug and alcohol abuse, such as liver disease and hepatitis. Data from the New York Department of Corrections show prisoners aged 51 to 60 have the highest rate of mortality due to illness of any age group behind bars.

Most of these older prisoners are serving long sentences for committing violent crimes. Their first hurdle to release is a parole board that refuses to provide them with fair and objective hearings because of their original offense, even though they have not posed a threat to society in years.

“The parole board is co-opted by the punishment paradigm,” Farid says. “Even though elderly have the lowest risk of committing a crime upon release, they are being denied similarly to everyone else.”

Meanwhile, this public health and humanitarian crisis has gone unaddressed despite a renewed interest in criminal justice reform that has focused narrowly on nonviolent offenders.

So in 2013, Farid founded a group called Release Aging People in Prison, or RAPP.

“We realized we had to change the narrative from talking about long termers and lifers — which people in the community couldn’t really connect with — to talking about the elderly,” he says.

RAPP’s slogan— “If the Risk is Low, Let Them Go” — draws on the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision’s own data.

According to the state’s most recently avail-

able report on recidivism by age, those released after the age of 65 return for new commitment at a rate of just 1 percent, compared to a 40-60 percent return rate for the general prison population

IN 2011, THE SAME YEAR Farid was released, New York actually passed a law that requires the parole board to adopt a more forward-looking approach when deciding whether to release someone. Tacked onto the budget bill as an amendment, it instructed the board to “establish written guidelines” that include rational standards that measure a potential parolee’s current risk to society, in addition to noting their initial crime.

New York is one of at least 23 other states that measures those standards with a risk and assessment tool called COMPAS, which has proven to be more accurate than human intuition in predicting the likelihood that a prisoner will break the law again if freed.

“Even though COMPAS isn’t perfect, it gives us an advantage,” Farid notes, “because the aging population we are focused on scores low risk.”

It seemed like a victory. But even after COMPAS was adopted, the parole board waited until December of 2014 to issue formal rules on how to use the tool in its decisions. Afterwards, most of its denials remained focused on the criminal history of potential parolees.

This was the case for Dempsey Hawkins, who had been denied parole since he became eligible in 2000. Hawkins murdered his teenage girlfriend in 1976 when he was 16 years old. He had spent his entire adult life in prison and made extensive efforts to rehabilitate in the other areas the parole board would consider: he completed counseling programs and educational courses and had an excellent behavior record.

But in 2002, the board said Hawkins had “demonstrated no remorse nor compassion for her family,” even though he had written a long letter of apology to the family taking full responsibility for his crime with an extended discussion of shame, remorse and consideration of the family’s pain and suffering.

Then in 2004, all but two words of the board’s written decision were about the teenager who committed the crime, not the man before them: “We note your positive programming but find more compelling your total disregard for human life.”

During the hearing, Hawkins asked if there was anything he could do to “increase my chances for my next hearing.” A commissioner responded, “You’ve done many of the right things. You’ve continued to program well, and stayed out of trouble. Clearly, there’s no, you know, 14-year-old girls here to kill in prison, so we have to consider the crime.”

After the 2011 reform, Hawkins continued to be denied parole. In 2012, the board refused his release but noted that “[c]onsideration has been given to the assessment of your risks and needs for success on parole, any program completion, and any satisfactory behavior.”



In 2014, board members spent most of his brief hearing asking about the crime he had committed more than 35 years earlier and denied him again.

AT THIS POINT, FARID’S LEGAL instincts kicked in from his days as a jailhouse lawyer.

“I always knew the parole board was contemptuous,” he recalls.

He suspected board members were now violating state law by failing to consider all factors in a person’s record when deciding whether or not to release them. So he began advising prisoners to file what is called an “Article 78” with the state Supreme Court, which is basically a request for a judge to review a decision made by a New York State agency.

Some judges responded positively and ordered the board to hold a new hearing — called a de novo hearing. Farid realized the parole board would likely issue similar denials. But this would allow a prisoner to then file a contempt of court motion.

“It is not common, especially for someone behind the walls, to get a contempt order in their favor against government authorities,” Farid says. “But the dynamics at play now are that the courts feel they are being disrespected by the parole board.”

“One of the real positive things about a contempt petition is it allows the person to escape an onerous process called exhaustion,” he adds, pausing. “I don’t want to lose you on this.”

Before a prisoner can even ask a court to review the parole board’s decision, they have to complete every other means of appeal. While this process can take as long as a year, he notes, “a judge can review a contempt petition within a month.”

In May of 2015, Judge Sandra Sciortino issued the first contempt of court decision for the parole board’s “failure to have complied” with her order to give a prisoner named Michael Cassidy a de novo hearing “consistent with the law.”

Cassidy was convicted in 1984 of killing his girlfriend and had covered up the murder until her body was discovered. Over the past three decades in prison he had worked hard to redeem himself, and his favorable COMPAS ratings predicted a low risk for violence, re-arrest, absconding or criminal involvement. But after his new hearing, the board again said his release “would be incompatible with the welfare of society and would so deprecate the serious nature of the crime as to undermine respect for the law.”

Judge Sciortino responded that while “the Parole Board retains substantial discretion, and need not enunciate every factor considered, a denial that focused almost exclusively on the inmate’s crime while failing to take into account other relevant statutory factors, or merely giving them a ‘passing mention’ [is] inadequate, arbitrary and capricious.”

The state appealed. Then about a year later, a second judge held the board in contempt. This time the case involved John Mackenzie, an older prisoner who sought Farid’s advice after reading instructions in a packet distributed by RAPP that includes boilerplate samples of how to file a contempt motion.

“It’s not a lot of paperwork,” he says. “I explain some of the complications a person may encounter so they don’t get summarily dismissed.” Mackenzie’s motion succeeded.

“It is undisputed that it is unlawful for the parole board to deny parole solely on the basis of the underlying conviction,” an exasperated New York

Supreme Court Judge Maria Rosa wrote in her May 24 response to the board’s denial of parole to Mackenzie. “Yet the court can reach no other conclusion but that this is exactly what the parole board did in this case.”

Mackenzie was convicted of murdering a Long Island police officer in 1975, and went on to turn his life around, earning degrees and even establishing a victims impact program. The board has denied him parole eight times since he became eligible in 2000. He is now 69 years old.

“This petitioner has a perfect institutional record for the past 35 years,” Judge Rosa wrote in her order, as she demanded to know: “If parole isn’t granted to this petitioner, when and under what circumstances would it be granted?”

She ordered the state to pay a \$500-per-day fine for each day it delayed giving him another de novo hearing. Again, the state appealed.

In June a higher court dealt reformers a setback when it reversed the Cassidy decision. It said the board had recognized factors other than his original crime when it noted he “had serious alcohol problems since he was a teenager,” and concluding he had “a high probability of a return to substance abuse upon his reentry into society” even though he had been sober since 1997.

Cassidy’s lawyer Alan Lewis plans to ask the Court of Appeals to reinstate the lower court’s contempt finding.

“Every litigant has an obligation to abide by a court’s order, government agencies included,” Lewis told *The Independent*.

EVEN THOUGH ELDERLY PRISONERS HAVE THE LOWEST OF RISK OF COMMITTING A CRIME UPON RELEASE, THEY ARE BEING DENIED PAROLE SIMILARLY TO EVERYONE ELSE.

He praised RAPP’s work on similar cases, saying, “It raises awareness of the plight of aging inmates and the injustices sometimes suffered by them.”

“Judges are starting to realize there is this huge problem,” agrees MacKenzie’s lawyer, Kathy Manley. She says other attorneys have sought her advice and are filing additional contempt motions.

AS THESE CONTEMPT cases wind through the legal system, no judge has taken the next step to override the parole board and release a prisoner who has been denied a fair hearing, out of deference to separation of powers. But Manley notes this concept can be applied in another way.

Continued on next page

AGING PRISONERS

Continued from previous page

“If the original judge sentences a person to 30-years-to-life, then once they reach the minimum point there is an expectation they should be released if they’ve done well,” Manley explains. “But in my client’s case the judge said the board is applying its own penal philosophy.”

The former chair of the state’s parole board, Edward Hammock, made a similar point in an essay titled, “A Perspective on Some Procedures That Unfairly Delay Prisoner Release.”

“Some of these determinations fly in the face of judicial sentencing and sentences that flow from plea agreements between the court, counsel for the defendant, and the prosecutor,” Hammock observed.

Ultimately, the parole board falls under the authority of the executive branch. Its members are appointed by the governor for 6-year terms. But beyond backing the reform in 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo has done little to address the problem, and cut the board down from 19 to 14 members during his first year in office and appointed as its chair Tina Stanford, former Director of the state’s Office of Victim Services. She has been Chairwoman of the Crime Victims Board since 2007 and before that was an Assistant District Attorney and prosecutor.

Advocates note New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman’s office could also decline to file appeals as it represents the board in the contempt of court cases. RAPP is currently approaching state lawmakers to ask them to request that Schneiderman issue an advisory to the board in response to the contempt rulings.

Meanwhile these lawmakers continue to consider additional legislative reform, such as the SAFE Parole Act, which would require parole hearings to take place in person instead of via video stream. It would also record the hearings, which are currently closed to the public. But this is the second year it failed to reach a vote.

• • •

AS THE LEGISLATURE’S 2016 session ends and advocates wait to hear from the attorney general whether he plans to reign in the state’s parole board, RAPP continues its community outreach. When the group’s older members meet with policy makers and the public, their very presence helps give a face to elders who are still behind bars and could be included in the push to end mass incarceration.

At a recent RAPP meeting, 71-year-old Abdul Rahman, who served 45 years in prison, apologized for being late, noting he was suffering from a cold that had “slowed me down.” At the same time, he pulled out a stack of business cards he collected after speaking to advocates for the elderly in Brooklyn.

“Many of them approached me afterwards with great interest,” he said.

The meeting was a mix of people over age 60 who had been released from prison in recent years or had loved ones still inside, and interns in their twenties. One asked for advice on discussing the needs of elders during an upcoming exchange with the city’s Department for the Aging or DFTA.

“They should be ready for more people getting out that before,” Farid responded.

“Emphasize their post-prison potential and the contri-

butions they can make to society,” added Laura Whitehorn. “People should be judged on who they are now.”

Whitehorn spent 14 years behind bars for a conspiracy to blow up symbols of domestic racism and U.S. foreign policy, and has helped ensure aging political prisoners and their analysis are included in RAPP’s efforts.

This comes across in the lineup of a July 9 event RAPP is hosting with the Senior Citizen & Health Committee of Community Board 12 in Queens, an area that is home to 10 senior centers and where many former inmates are being released. The event includes a workshop titled “Breaking the Cycle of Permanent Punishment,” and one of the speakers is Sekou Odinga, a former member of the Black Liberation Army who spent 33 years in federal prison.

“We incorporate the political prisoner issue in our work because we are dealing with the punishment paradigm as the root of what we have to get at,” Farid notes.

In early June, the board denied parole two former Black Panthers locked up on charges related to their activities more than three decades ago: Robert Seth Hayes and Maliki Shakur Latine, who both have at exemplary records, and COMPAS scores that show them to be at low risk of reoffending. Hayes suffers from Hepatitis C and Type II diabetes.

“These are the people who I consider to have been the canaries in the coal mine,” Farid says. “I don’t think we’re going to really see anything substantive take place unless we see it happen with them.”

It is another example of how RAPP is making sure that no one is left behind.

“It’s not about getting handrails in the prisons,” Farid says of RAPP’s strategy. “It’s about getting people out.”

Then he turns to answer the phone call of a prisoner who says he’s been denied parole, again.



END OF LIFE: Former prisoner Mohaman Koti at a Staten Island nursing home two months before he died.

SUSAN TIPOGRAPH

PAROLED IN A WHEELCHAIR

Expenses from medical and geriatric care for elderly prisoners mean they cost two to four times as much as others. But there is a human cost to delaying their release as well.

In May, RAPP member Mohaman Koti died just two months after he was released to a nursing home in Staten Island. His birth certificate says he was born in 1928, though his mother insisted the year was 1926.

“We’ve got too many old people in wheelchairs like I am locked up,” Koti said just weeks before he died.

He was convicted in 1978 of attempted murder of an NYPD officer who he said “tried to shake me down for money and I wouldn’t give it to him, so we got to fighting.” The officer recovered, and Koti was offered a plea deal of seven and a half years. He insisted on a trial, and got 25 years to life.

In the decades that followed, Koti gained respect from both inmates and guards for counseling young men who found themselves sent upstate to some of the most violent prisons in the country. He became eligible for parole in 2003, but like so many others, he got the usual denials.

When he appeared before the board for a sixth time in 2013, he was so hard of hearing that commissioners had to keep repeating their questions to him. By then he was also suffering from several long-term illnesses. But the board decided he was still at risk of committing another crime, citing the nature of his offense.

After a judge ruled the denials were irrational, he was given a new hearing, and commissioners granted Koti parole in September 2014. But he was then ordered to serve an additional year in prison at a federal medical center in North Carolina because of a pending charge from the time of his arrest nearly four decades ago.

On March 16 of this year Koti was finally released. It was a pyrrhic victory.

“The kind of life Koti lived when he got out — confined to a nursing home because he was not able to care for himself — shows that it was ludicrous to think he would have posed a threat to society all these years,” said his longtime lawyer, Susan Tipograph.

— RENÉE FELTZ

CATCH THE RAPP

The Release Aging People from Prison presents speakers and workshops on Saturday, July 9 from 9-3pm at the Queens Educational Opportunity Center, located at 158-29 Archer Avenue. The theme will be “Elders in Prison: Bringing Them Home & Rebuilding Our Communities.” Details: RAPPcampaign.com



NEW HOPE FOR RIKERS REFORM

BY HEIDI BOGHOSIAN

Norman Seabrook, president of New York's Corrections Officers Benevolent Association, was arrested by the FBI at his Bronx home early in the morning of June 7. Leader of the union representing guards at Rikers Island and other city jails for 21 years, he faces federal fraud charges.

The charges stem from one of several corruption investigations by U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara. Seabrook is accused of illegitimately investing approximately \$15 million from the union's welfare fund, along with \$5 million in dues, in the high-risk hedge fund Platinum Partners. He allegedly received a \$60,000 kickback from Platinum executive Murray Huberfeld in exchange. The \$81 million welfare fund provides corrections officers with annuities upon retirement, or post-employment payments; the city contributes about \$1,400 per year per officer. Decisions about how the fund is managed are supposed to be made by a five-member board of COBA officers. Yet, according to *Crain's New York Business*, even advisors and attorneys failed to persist in objecting to Seabrook's plan to put nearly 20 percent of the fund's assets into a high-risk hedge fund. They were all afraid of being fired.

In the language of the landmark 1972 Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption, Seabrook would be a "meat eater." The commission defined "grass eaters" as officers who succumb to low-level corruption, such as accepting free meals or small payoffs when offered. "Meat eaters," on the other hand, were those who actively and consciously sought out ways to collect more money, such as shaking down drug dealers and gambling operations, or systematically taking bribes to protect them.

SUPER BOWL TRIP VS. BLACK LIFE

One might be forgiven for thinking that in the eyes of the law taking kickbacks is a worse offense than killing an unarmed black man.

What began as an investigation into New York Mayor Bill de Blasio's campaign financing grew into a far-reaching bribery scandal in June, so far exempting the mayor, but wrapping several city officials and political power players in its tendrils.

The latest to be ensnared: Deputy Chief Michael Harrington and Deputy Inspector James Grant of the NYPD. The two were arraigned on corruption charges on June 20 for accepting lavish gifts — including a trip to the Super Bowl and a vacation in the company of a prostitute — from two Brooklyn businessmen and de Blasio donors, Jeremiah Reichberg and Jona Rechnitz. In return, the businessmen "got cops on call," as Preet Bharara, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, put it. Highway lanes were closed at their behest and they were chauffeured about town in police cruisers.

Meanwhile, July 17 will mark the second anniversary of Eric Garner's killing. A Staten Island grand jury declined to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who a bystander filmed choking the 43-year-old African-American father of six. The NYPD has yet to release the results of its internal review of Pantaleo's conduct, and there has been no announcement from the Justice Department regarding its civil rights investigation of the incident either.

Deputy Chief Harrington and Deputy Inspector Grant are staring down the barrel at 20 years in prison for accepting bribes. Officer Pantaleo remains free.

Seabrook, however, might be worse. His abuse was systemic and exploited the vulnerable. He used the power of his position for personal gain, and put into jeopardy his 9,000 union members' benefits. Bucking the trend of improving conditions of confinement to make all involved safer, he thwarted much-needed reforms to the conditions in which thousands of prisoners, many of them young, are held. To further his agenda, he engaged in fear-mongering rhetoric and ugly caricatures. When Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed respected prison reformer Joseph Ponte as corrections commissioner, Seabrook held a news conference where he called Ponte's approach "hug a thug."

FEARMONGERING

COBA ousted Seabrook as president on June 10, three days after his arrest. He had survived previous allegations of misconduct, including sexual impropriety, as well as accusations that he perpetuated a culture in which corrections officers went unpunished for brutal assaults on inmates.

His tactics in opposing reforms paralleled those used by the police over the last 50 years. Fifty years ago this July, Mayor John Lindsay restructured the city Civilian Complaint Review Board, which reviewed complaints about police brutality and corruption, to give civilians a 4-3 majority on it. The Patrolmen's Benevolent Association organized to place a referendum to abolish the board on the November 1966 ballot.

The cops hired a high-level public relations firm to develop their ideological media campaign. Billboards and advertisements were plastered throughout the city, with images of looted stores and ruined streets depicting the apocalyptic New York that would result if civilian-review proponents prevailed. One ad featured black and Latino youths with chains and switchblades standing by a subway exit while a white woman emerged. The initiative succeeded. Voters in all boroughs except Manhattan overwhelmingly favored ending civilian review. Two decades would go by before Mayor Ed Koch created a 12-member review board evenly divided between civilians and police representatives.

COBA under Seabrook used similar tactics. He publicized the slogan "Safer Jails Matter," a play on "Black Lives Matter," below graphic images of injured corrections officers and inmates. When reform efforts were proposed, he contended that violence against guards wasn't taken seriously. In 2013, when prosecutors charged 10 of-

ficers in a beating that fractured an inmate's nose and eye sockets, Seabrook zealously defended them.

According to a *New York Times* investigation, Seabrook's influence yielded great benefits for his members while fostering a culture of corruption and violence at Rikers. Current and former city officials repeatedly described him as the biggest obstacle to efforts to curb brutality and malfeasance on the island. He resisted increased penalties for excessive force by guards and stronger screening measures designed to stop corrections officers from bringing contraband into the jails. Regarded as a bully, he wielded formidable influence within the department based largely on fear, that he may ruin reputations or put officers' safety at risk on the job.

POWER PLAYS

Seabrook has pulled a number of overt power plays to shut down reformers. He launched a two-year campaign to oust Florence Finkle, former chief investigator for the city Department of Correction, after she announced plans to send more cases to prosecutors. After calling for her resignation and interfering with her investigations, Seabrook replaced her with one of his childhood friends, a former senior New York Police Dept. official.

He also used Chris Christie-type tactics to sabotage opponents' transportation. On November 18, 2013, when Rikers inmate Dapree Peterson was to testify against two corrections officers in a brutality case, Seabrook refused to let workers transport inmates to and from court. Hundreds missed court dates, including Peterson, whose beating had been investigated and referred for prosecution by Finkle.

In November 2012, when then-Commissioner Donna Schiro was leading several dozen women to Rikers Island for a tour, Seabrook dispatched an officer dressed as the children's cartoon character Dora the Explorer to dance on the side of the one road leading to the island. Drivers stopped to gawk and the commissioner's bus was stuck in traffic that backed up for miles, according to several officials who were there. The delay required the city to pay overtime when officers on the next shift could not get to work on time.

Correction Commissioner Ponte has proposed a comprehensive long-term plan for reform at Rikers, including increased use of surveillance cameras, recruitment of better-qualified corrections officers, improved health services, new rules on how force is used to restrain inmates, the creation of a new separate housing unit for younger detainees and limits on punitive segregation, also known as solitary confinement.

If Norman Seabrook is convicted, a key impediment to implementing these much-needed reforms at Rikers Island will be gone.

INDICTED: Norman Seabrook was ousted as president of the Corrections Officers Benevolent Association in June after he was hit with federal fraud charges.

FLICKR.COM/DONIMICCARTERNY

— PETER RUGH

HETERO-TERRORISM

THE BACKLASH AGAINST GAY LIBERATION

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

Violence. It hovers over gay life like a dark cloud. Police cars and armored vehicles sped by. We watched their bright alarms echoing down the street. It was Sunday morning in LA, I woke to news of a mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando. In California, police caught a young man with explosives and guns on his way to the LA Pride March. My best friend was planning to go. I was planning to go. We could have been killed.

Violence. It hovers over queer life like a dark cloud. Freedom. LGTB people have more rights in the West than ever. These opposing poles are connected by a deep dynamic of counter-reaction. In order to hold power, corrupt elites and conservatives have channeled populist anxiety into sexual and gender fundamentalism. They have framed homosexuality as perversion or decadence and promoted tradition as a container for resentment. The result is the bloodbath of hetero-terrorism.

LIFE UNDER SIEGE

Every. Single. Day. Queer people are killed, beaten, fired, insulted, raped and threatened. Many victims don't feel safe reporting crimes to the police. Will they be believed? Will they be laughed at or dismissed? A few do and those numbers, scanty and sporadic, paint a horrifying picture.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs tallied roughly 2,000 hate crimes against LGTB people a year from 2011 to 2013 in the United States alone. It averaged five a day until 2015, when it dipped to a little under four a day. Even so, the hardest hit were people of color, transgender women and, tragically, the point where targets of hate overlap, transgender women of color, who were killed most and often brutally.

On June 6, days before the Orlando Massacre, a transgender woman in Houston was lured into an apartment by a man and beaten. He broke her nose and eye socket. She barely escaped. On June 15, three days after the Orlando massacre, a man shouted, "fuck you faggots" inside a gay bar in Bushwick, N.Y. He threatened to come back, "Orlando style."

When Omar Mateen fired his AR-15 rifle into the Pulse nightclub, killing 49 people and injuring 53, his spectacle of violence made visible how dangerous everyday life is for the 9 million gay people in America. Of course, Mateen, born in Queens, raised in the United States derived part of his identity from extremist Islam, even while being a self-hating gay man who frequented the nightclub he terrorized. When we pull the lens back to include not just the Middle East but whole swaths of the world, we see millions of gay people are afraid — living in literal states of terror.

In Saudi Arabia, homosexuality is punishable by death. In Iran, homosexuality is punishable by death. In Jamaica, mobs, whipped into a frenzy by fanatic Christians, chase and kill LGTB youth. In the Sudan, homosexuality is punishable by death. In Zimbabwe, the president has publicly threatened to behead gays. In Russia, anti-gay laws are written and violence stoked by politicians.

RECLOSETING QUEERS

Hetero-terrorism: the use of violence by straight people to achieve the recloseting of queers. Why reframe terrorism? To highlight sexuality- and gender-based violence that rips lives apart. To show the top-down dynamic of religious and secular authorities who send agents of the state or wink at



DAVID HOLLENBACH

informal, street-level brutality. And the use of force to shape a social order, so the full spectrum of desire is violently sublimated into a thin bandwidth of heterosexuality. Hetero-terrorism cuts across religious and national lines so that enemies like the Christian Right and Jihadists show deep commonalities. And finally, the target is the body and its ability to feel directionless pleasure, its unpredictable, often quirky, attachment to fetish objects and how it loves without boundaries.

Post-9/11, our media show terrorists as members of shadowy groups plotting to kill innocent civilians. Al Qaeda. ISIS. So when Mateen wrote on Facebook that he wanted us to taste "Islamic State Vengeance" and condemned the "filthy ways of the West," he fit into this narrative. And he is in the tradition of the founder of Islamist ideology, Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian author, who wrote a travelogue of his 1948 trip to the United States, *The America I Have Seen*. He condemned our open sexuality, saying, "The American girl is well acquainted with her body's seductive capacity... she knows all this and does not hide it."

Again the disgust with the body. Again the creating of a moral self in contrast to the Other. Again the evidence of an inverted desire in the meticulous detailing of sin in Qutb's text and the surveillance of gay life by Mateen, two men obsessed with the very behavior that was supposed to be abhorrent.

But there's also American hetero-terrorism, reflected in police raids on queer bars, culminating in 1969's Stonewall riots. It's the anti-sodomy laws. It's the 1973 arson attack that killed 32 patrons of the Upstairs Lounge and homophobic churches that refused to bury the dead. It's Christian extremist, Eric Rudolph, bombing the lesbian club, The Otherside, in 1997, injuring five. Alongside attacks on queer spaces were beatings, insults, job firings, "corrective rapes" and unseen murders. All of it justified by a theological disgust of the free body, spoken of by conservative Brian Fischer, who wrote on the 2015 legalization of gay marriage, "The Supreme Court became moral jihadists who blasted the twin pillars of truth and righteousness ... by imposing sodomy-based marriage on the United States."

Hetero-terrorism, the use of violence by straight people to re-closet queers. Cutting across religious and national lines, empowered by power structures searching for a scapegoat. In the face of poverty or ethnic tension or technological change or cultural innovation, it gives anxious people a stable identity by invoking sexual and gender fundamentalism. Hate the gay. Ban transgender people. Fire the bi-sexual. Curse the transvestite.

The terror comes as it grants informal deputy powers to anyone and everyone to uphold the moral order. It begins with the erotic closure of the body. It ends with the sadistic pleasure of the mob. Or the lone wolf killer

HOW TO MISREAD A MASSACRE

As bodies were carried out of Pulse, some Christian extremists thought not enough gays were killed. "The tragedy is that more of them didn't die," said Pastor Roger Jimenez of Verity Baptist Church "these people are predators."

He is not alone. Just the most vocal among those who believe homosexuality is a vector for infectious sin.

The Right saw the massacre a part of the War on Terrorism. In the *National Review*, gays were chided for not seeing that the real enemy is Islam. In the article, "Killing Muslims is not ISIS Law, it is Muslim Law," readers were reminded that in Sharia law, homosexuals must be put to death. The argument creates an implicit bridge to Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims. Modern conservatism sees the world through a mix of ethnic essentialism, religious End Times fanaticism and the Hobbesian state of nature, where man is in a constant war against man.

Looking at the same mass shooting, liberals called for a ban on assault weapons and more gun control in general. We see it in *The Guardian* publishing America's mass shooting statistics and in the staid *New York Times* editors. The call was repeated in the mournful openings on latenight TV by Conan O'Brien or the enraged Samantha Bee. Implicit here is that the nation has been mismanaged and allowed to be flooded with guns. But with sound policy, the social contract can be repaired.

The Left, which is closer to the victims because it is the vehicle of protest for minority rights, quickly called out the Right's hypocrisy. It cited how most mass shootings in America are done by angry, white men. And how conservatives fought gay liberation every step of the way. The Left shields Muslims from the bigoted, broad-brush attack of the Right because they see the world through lens of social con-

struction, in which people are more complex than any one social role.

Ideology breaks an event apart, magnifies one narrative over the other. What remains invisible is the deeper relationship between those political positions. When liberals call for gun control, they do so in terms of public health. They miss how the gun is an American fetish. It is the required accessory for the performance of American machismo, whose primal scene is the colonial settler, looking at the New World horizon, looking for savages.

So when Mateen posed for a selfie in the mirror, smug and wearing an NYPD shirt, he may have dedicated himself to Islam but he was acting a very American, colonial masculinity. Except the "savages" were not Native peoples nor he a settler. Now they were criminals and he was the cop. Now they were "filthy" gays and he was the God-fearing straight

man. They were disorder and he was the law.

The gun is the fetish object in the overlapping world of religious, conservative, colonial masculinity. The liberal call for gun control may or may not result in new law. But America's romance with the gun won't end until the mirror is turned around and conservatives are forced to see that they are the threat. They are the savages. They are the terrorists.



DELIVERING A MESSAGE: BDS activists rally in the State Capitol in Albany on June 15.

ELLEN DAVIDSON

BDS

Continued from page 5

Hani Ghazi of Adalah-NY, the New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel, noted that the recent attempts to outlaw BDS reveal the movement's effectiveness and politicians' fears of the powerful pro-Israel lobby.

"Over the past couple of weeks, we have noticed a pushback on a governmental and a political level against BDS, and that just shows that it is effective," Ghazi told *The Independent* at the June 9 rally outside Cuomo's office.

BDS proponents are currently pursuing an array of initiatives including Adalah-NY's call on cultural workers to support the cultural boycott; Jewish Voice for Peace's campaign to stop Hewlett Packard from providing its technologies to military checkpoints and settlements in the occupied West Bank; CODEPINK's call on Airbnb to stop listing rental properties in the occupied West Bank; and various Students for Justice in Palestine groups efforts to combat the powerful pro-Israel narrative on U.S. college campuses.

At the same time Palestine solidarity groups on college campuses face constant threats of defunding and intimidation, and academics who openly sympathize with the Palestinians face severe consequences.

The University of Illinois withdrew

its offer of employment to American scholar and professor Steven Salaita over tweets critical of Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, which left 2,200 Palestinians dead, more than half of them civilians.

In 2007, DePaul University denied political scientist and professor Norman Finkelstein tenure over his views on the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Noting the reach of pro-Israel groups in college administrations, Finkelstein told *The Independent* that the reason for his denial of tenure was due mostly to "the university's fear of a powerful Jewish community in Chicago."

But according to Finkelstein, the Israel lobby is on the defensive. "Having lost a battle for public opinion," he told *The Independent*, "the only other option if you want to prevail is to use strong-arm tactics."

Finkelstein cautioned that Israel's anti-BDS narrative is a part of the state's "siege mentality," adding that "when you play the victim you enjoy some kind of immunity from criticism."

"BDS is being used and exploited by Israel's supporters to try to delegitimize the significant change in public opinion up to and including young American Jews and also to try to reverse the tendency that has been at play over the past couple of decades — mainly, increasingly not only sharp criticism of Israel, but increasingly credible criticism of Israel," the scholar noted.

While Finkelstein is critical of BDS' effectiveness, he supports the right of BDS activists to express their politics through boycott.

However, BDS victories have been "wildly exaggerated" Finkelstein cautioned. "Although I deeply respect them, they're very minimal."

BDS'S DILEMMA

According to Finkelstein, the problem stems from the lack of an organized resistance movement on the ground in Palestine, and therefore a lack of response to the BDS movement in the rest of the world.

He used the common comparison of BDS to the boycott of apartheid South Africa, claiming that the movements diverge in their ability to respond to boycott gains on the ground.

"Each time there was a qualitative uptick of the resistance movement in South Africa, there was an uptick in the anti-apartheid sanctions campaign. The two perfectly correlated." But, Finkelstein noted, "so long as nothing is happening in the Occupied Palestinian territories ... the Palestine Solidarity movement abroad inevitably is going to be a sideshow."

In an emailed statement to *The Independent*, Riham Barghouti, a founding member of the Palestinian Campaign

for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, conceded that "there is a lack of vision and collective strategy among the Palestinian people," but added that "there is clarity and agreement regarding the three demands of the BDS movement."

Where Finkelstein's argument criticizes the lack of an organized on-the-ground movement to build on any BDS gains, Barghouti notes that the BDS movement is the organized response.

"Rather than wait until the Palestinian leadership has created a clear national agenda for us to begin organizing," Barghouti added, "the BDS movement is providing a strong signifier for our liberation movement, of the parameters for our political struggle, the strength of the commitment of those standing in solidarity and a way forward through action."

Law and
Disorder
radio

WBAI
99.5 FM

Mondays
at 9am

DOWNLOAD PODCASTS
at lawanddisorder.org

“Our basic constitutional rights are in jeopardy. ‘Law and Disorder’ is an excellent magazine format radio show, hosted by progressive lawyers who analyze the state of civil rights in this post-9/11 period. From attacks on Muslims at home to torture abroad, ‘Law and Disorder’ puts these constitutional attacks into perspective.”

—AMY GOODMAN,
HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!

Hosted by movement lawyers Heidi Boghosian, Executive Director, National Lawyers Guild; Michael Ratner, President, Center for Constitutional Rights; Michael Smith, New York City attorney and author

Now on Facebook.com

I design the Indy.
I design for change.
I can design for you.

MIKAEL TARKELA

CREATIVE DESIGN

M.TARKELA@GMAIL.COM

CARGOCOLLECTIVE.COM/MTARKELA

SPIRITOF.BANDCAMP.COM

VIMEO.COM/TARKELA

TECHNOLOGY

IN AN AGE OF MASS SURVEILLANCE, ENCRYPTION GIVES US AN EDGE

BY JONATHAN STRIBLING-USS

As legal showdowns go, Apple v. FBI came in like a lion and left like a lamb. In February, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) won a federal court order to compel Apple to build a new operating system that would allow agents to hack into the iPhone 5 used by the San Bernardino mass shooter. When Apple refused to comply, some commentators claimed it was the biggest showdown over surveillance in the last decade.

While this legal showdown was still grabbing headlines, National Security Agency (NSA) whistleblower and cyber security expert Edward Snowden called Apple's refusal to cooperate important on principle. But he correctly asserted the FBI's claim it was unable to access the iPhone due to Apple's encryption was “bullshit.” On March 28, the FBI dropped the legal action after an unnamed contractor helped the Bureau bypass the encryption.

Nonetheless, encryption, is still a key privacy tool. As Snowden himself put it during an online Q & A hosted by *The Guardian* in 2013: “Encryption works. Properly implemented strong crypto systems are one of the few things that you can rely on [to protect your privacy].”

This is a broad statement, however, because there are different types of encryption for different types of functions. The most secure forms are made with open source software, which make it possible for technicians to see how the programs work and also makes them free for individuals to download and use. Although there are free tools that can secure information from even the most well resourced attackers, like the NSA, few organizations use encryption, let alone worry much about what types of encryption to use.

Case in point: Mossack Fonseca, the self-described “legal services firm” that was the source of the Panama Papers. A whistleblower concerned with the unethical and illegal nature of the company's business provided 2.6 terabytes of data from its internal network to International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which began publishing the material through various news outlets in April.

The term “Legal services firm” in Mossack Fonseca's case is a nice way of saying “money laundry.” As the Panama Papers reveal the firm set up shell companies and provided tax havens to the

globe's wealthiest individuals. When the Panama Papers hit front pages worldwide, the company's offices were raided by the police forces of four governments.

Mossack Fonseca's behavior was not simply unethical and illegal, it was also stupid. As its own leaked internal emails show, the firm didn't use modern, end-to-end open source encryption tools; didn't effectively educate its staff about what it was doing with digital security; and consistently undermined its security by creating anonymous and unlogged access points to its network. These types of practices make it easy for hackers, governments, or whistleblowers, for that matter, to access information systems that lack end-to-end, open source encryption.

Unfortunately, US government policy has made open source, end-to-end encryption important even for everyday people who are not engaged in nefarious activities. Mass surveillance is current government practice and it has made it necessary to defend our privacy in what many observers have begun referring to as the Golden Age of Surveillance.

Governments globally are working to ensure they can have access to all digital information all the time. Domestic law enforcement groups like the FBI have access to more and more information from massive government databases collected directly from the servers of all the major email providers. Here is how it works: the NSA collects information on Americans on a massive scale under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and Executive Order 12333, the FBI receives access to this data collected by the NSA through a partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration's Special Operations Division, which gives them information from all major US service providers — Google, Apple, Yahoo, Facebook. This enables domestic law enforcement to utilize the NSA's Bluffdale Utah data facility, which has the capacity to hold 1000 times more data than the entire internet, a yottabyte of data.

In a 2015 report, United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, David Kaye, argued that due to this type of widespread, warrantless surveillance of internet communications, anonymity and encryption must now be considered human rights. Kaye cites Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and



Political Rights, ratified by the US in 1993, which affirms the universal “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.”

Those of us wanting to uphold our rights should use open source, end-to-end encryption and demand the same of lawyers, businesses and others handling our personal data.

Jonathan Stribling-Uss is an attorney and Director of Constitutional Communications (concomms.org), a not-for-profit organization that trains lawyers, journalists and civil society leaders in maintaining secure communications.

6 TOOLS TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

1) Signal by Open whisper systems (in App Stores)

Signal is the easiest and most secure encrypted text and calling program, with more than one million users. The app is free and takes 3-5 minutes to get started. It can now be used with both your phone and computer.

2) Jitsi (Jitsi.org)

A free service, requiring no account, that allows for multiparty, end-to-end encrypted video calls and chats. For more usability you can install a download, but it is not necessary to get started calling friends around the globe.

3) Tor (www.torproject.org)

A free browser that uses encryption and a random series of open routing computers to separate your actions online from your IP (internet protocol) address, providing anonymity.

4) Make a longer passphrase with memorable words

With robust symmetric encryption, when you lose your password, you lose your data. This means that you have to create passphrases, not just words, that are easy for humans to remember but hard for machines to guess. The simplest way to do this is to use at least four random words, and a number or given name. For example; “correcthorsebatterystaplenatturmer”.

5) PGP/GPG (www.gnupg.org)

A free, open source, end-to-end encryption system that has been used and tested for over 25 years. It is designed to supplement your current email address, so you don't need a new email, you can just add this asymmetric encryption system over the top of your current provider.

6) Tails OS (tails.boum.org)

A free, open source operating system that can be run on most computer hardware and secures your traffic and data on an encrypted USB. It is based on one of the most used operating systems, Debian, and it is packaged with a full set of office and encryption tools.

— JONATHAN STRIBLING-USS

HOW MUHAMMAD ALI TRANSFORMED THE SPORTS WORLD

BY VERNON ANDREWS

This might come as a surprise:

Many sports fans in 1964, both white and Black, despised Muhammad Ali after he announced that he had become a Muslim and had joined the Nation of Islam. White codes about Black athletes' behavior were well entrenched. Jackie Robinson and Joe Louis had both learned the lessons of the bad-ass Jack Johnson, the first Black heavyweight boxing champion, from the early 20th century: Speak quietly and do nothing to upset the racial status quo. Or leave the country.

The Nation of Islam represented Allah and not Jesus. For Black Christians, Cassius Clay's conversion to Muhammad Ali was sacrilegious and made the race look bad. "Why hast thou forsaken us?" Black people seemed to ask. He was speaking the language of The Nation, which was unfamiliar to them. He sent many Black folks running in the other direction. He was considered by many to be ruining the chances for social equality for everyone else. Not that this was Ali's burden to change on his own.

THE 'BIG BANG' FOR BLACK SPORTING EXPRESSION

What Ali did was push the boundaries of social behavior by Black athletes. And thus the die was cast for Black athletes to mimic and live up to the Ali persona of self-love, Black love, religious freedom, ego-centered self-expression, celebration, psychological warfare (described by the media as the more negative "taunting"), self-promotion and norm-crashing individual style. About the only thing he didn't engage in was shaving his head, preferring instead the Afro hairstyle that was itself a political statement in the 1960s.

His continued resistance to social power as embodied in the white-run institutions of the penal system, the military establishment, the draft board, the boxing syndicates and the federal government — at the expense of his career for several years — was a bold expression of Black power that ultimately sent a shock wave throughout the Black community. Black folks had to question their own commitment to larger social causes, the Black Power movement and how far we would go to fight for social justice. Most were in no way prepared to sacrifice as much as Ali was for the race, their jobs or their families.

Some things were more important than racial pride. Eating, for one. You can't eat unless you have a job.

With the advent of the Black Panther Party and the other social upheavals of the last half of the 1960s, many Blacks began to see Ali as a hero and a leader. He was just a bit ahead of his time. Even the Black military servicemen fighting in Vietnam, who at first chastised and disliked Ali for his stance against the war, began to see him as a social prophet of sorts.

In truth, that is what Ali represented to Black people — a modern-day prophet living by a religious and social code

none of us knew anything about. He was willing to sacrifice everything for a higher purpose.

We are not supposed to whisper that, the prophet thing, but that's what we felt. He lived in a time of other prophets named King and X, and he was the only one who survived.

Slowly but surely, with Ali setting the example, other athletes didn't feel so constrained by the tight rules, codes and restrictions on their behavior. San Jose State University Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos protested at the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968 wearing black sunglasses and black socks with no shoes — and raising clenched fists. Sports protest, aided in 1968 by Black Panther imagery, was now okay; Ali had set the bar high. Athletes across college campuses began to protest — with beards, mustaches, Afro haircuts, dashikis and Afrocentric jewelry. Campuses and power structures began fighting back by instituting rules that forbade facial hair and long hair.

These rules, of course, were for all athletes, not just African-Americans. White athletes were upset because they had to cut long hair that protested the older, more conventional system. Hippies and the hippie lifestyle, exemplified by people like UCLA basketball star Bill Walton, promoted freedom of expression, devalued money and challenged bodily conventions such as crew-cut hair and no facial hair.

White athletes, just like Black athletes, were caught in the middle of a social revolution and had to make tough social choices. Compromise and cut your hair — or challenge the system? Many athletes, both Black and white, challenged the status quo and lost. Many were kicked off teams, thus ending their careers, and others were blacklisted. Athletes — both Black and white — were learning the high price of living up to the ideals of justice in sport and society that were set in motion by Muhammad Ali.

End-zone celebrations in professional and collegiate football followed soon after, in the early 1970s. No, end-zone dances were not political in the traditional sense. There were no raised fists or black gloves after touchdowns. Ali broke the door down, but people ran into the house and did what suited their individual fancy. Thus, the freedom of cultural expression for Black folks in integrated sport had its birth with the man we now celebrate as "The Greatest."

Vernon Andrews teaches history of sport and physical education in the Kinesiology Department at San Jose State University. This article is excerpted from a chapter in his Kindle eBook The Control of Black Expression in American Sport and Society.

MARCY BRANCH

5th
**Anniversary
Celebration!**

**VITO
MARCANTONIO
FORUM**

**Sunday
July 17
12-4pm**

**Gaetana's
Cucina Italiana
143 CHRISTOPHER ST.**

**TICKETS:
\$20 in advance
\$25 door
\$100 benefactor**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, GO TO
VITOMARCANTONIOFORUM.ORG

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency
By DOUG HENWOOD
O/R BOOKS, 2016

By Michael Hirsch

In introducing his 1959 novel *Naked Lunch*, William Burroughs wrote that its title “means exactly what the words say: naked lunch, a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork.”

Doug Henwood’s *My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency* (O/R Books), published in late 2015 when it seemed like she’d take the Democratic presidential nomination without a significant challenge, does a masterly job of exposing the unappetizing corporate-Democratic slop on the end of Clinton’s fork. Hillary Clinton talks a populist game now, but throughout her career, she has acted as a neoliberal warrior-cum-austerity-freak, not a genuine force for social change. Feeding off corporate money, she is certainly not a liberal, a progressive, or a populist.

Assaying her deficits is where Henwood shines. Reminding readers “the U.S. president is essentially the chief executive of the global elite,” he charts Clinton’s rise from “the Rose Law firm, which represented the moneyed interests of Arkansas.” In that job, she was the architect of a legal challenge to a Little Rock ballot measure that had significantly shifted electricity rates from residential to commercial customers. She argued that the rate change was an unconstitutional “taking of property” from corporations.

Could Donald Trump, Paul Ryan or Rand Paul have put it worse?

In defending her husband’s welfare “reform” initiatives, which gutted public assistance to the poor, Clinton declared that the plan “would motivate and equip women to obtain a better life for themselves and their children,” when, as Henwood notes, “the whole point of welfare reform was disciplining the poor, not helping them.” She has repeatedly promoted “personal responsibility” over government-aided social solutions, and her record on economic issues includes her embrace (until recently) of free trade over fair trade, six years on the Walmart board, and spearheading and crashing what Henwood calls an “impossibly complex” health-insur-

ance scheme in 1993-94.

When covering her 2000 Senate race, *The New York Times* wrote that “she went out of her way to note her support for the death penalty, welfare restrictions and a balanced budget.”

As a senator, she was uninspired. Henwood, using the upper chamber’s argot, likens her “to a workhorse, not a show horse.” She worked prodigiously long hours, but with “not much to show” for it ... other than an unwholesome friendship with the Republican leadership and the chamber’s fundamentalist prayer group. In 2003, she “cast her vote for the Iraq war without having read the full National Intelligence Estimate,” Henwood notes. That report, available to Congress uncensored, was skeptical of the Bush administration’s claims that Iraq had chemical, biological and potentially nuclear weapons, and that dictator Saddam Hussein had connections to al-Qaeda. Florida Sen. Bob Graham, a hawkish Republican, read it before voting against authorizing the war. Why didn’t Clinton?

“Other than warmongering, defending creditors and eagerly making friends with the opposition, her Senate accomplishments were minimal.” Henwood writes.

As Secretary of State, Clinton was among the most vociferous opponents in the Obama administration of reversing the 2009 coup against Honduras President Manuel Zelaya. In her ghostwritten memoir, *Hard Choices*, she admits she used her position to ensure that Zelaya would not return to office, even though he had not finished the term Honduran voters had elected him for.

The Guardian in June characterized her as “the leading champion in office to push for the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, despite Pentagon reluctance.”

She also used her position for what she loftily called “economic statecraft” — aiding corporations with financial deals abroad. Microsoft, Boeing, GE and others returned those favors with massive contributions to her family’s ostensibly philanthropic nonprofit Clinton Foundation. The foundation’s philanthropy, Henwood demonstrates, was both business-centric and hugely incompetent when it came to helping the world’s poor in job creation and disaster relief, as in its failed reconstruction efforts in Haiti.

The foundation’s deals, “like the Clinton family itself, are beautiful emblems of our political economy at its highest level: the intimate bonding of public and private through money,” Henwood concludes in one of the book’s strongest chapters. “[The Foundation’s] impact points to profound structural limitations of the philanthropic approach to social problems — a strategy promoted by the neoliberal stripping of the state of its better functioning and passing off the business of melioration to foundation program officers.”

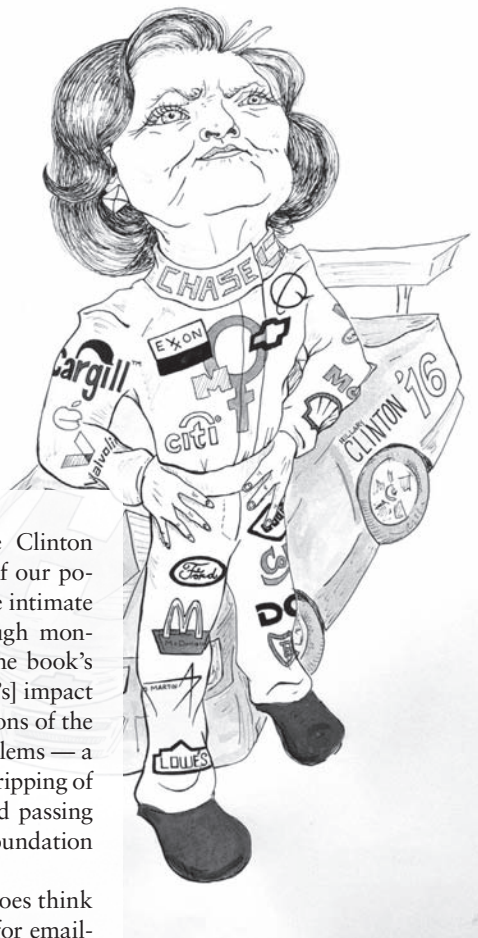
Unlike Bernie Sanders, Henwood does think that Clinton’s use of a private server for emailing was a big deal, “certainly symptomatic of her desire for secrecy and control ... To normal people, those not intoxicated by the Clinton charm, it still looks shady.”

After the valiant Sanders challenge, Clinton has again emerged as the great hope to stop a Donald Trump presidency and a Republican-dominated Congress. While the plus side of defeating Trump’s personality cult of loud-mouthed bigots is clear, the actual benefits of a Clinton administration would be meager. She wouldn’t appoint outright reactionaries to the federal courts, and there might be a modest increase in the federal minimum wage or maybe Social Security benefits if the Sanders-Warren wing of the Democratic Party can prevail upon her.

Hillary Clinton is no second coming of the New Deal. She will never say, let alone act on, what Sanders told his supporters: “We understand that our mission is more than defeating Donald Trump. It is transforming our country.”

When I catch her act, I don’t think first of enlisting in a popular antiracist front against the fascist noise of Trump and his supporters. I think of Emile Zola’s line in *Germinal*, “There’s only one thing that warms my heart, and that is the thought that we are going to sweep away these bourgeois.”

Hillary Clinton is the same person who 16 years ago launched her Senate campaign by describing herself as “a proud New Democrat.” There’s nothing proud about that. She’s the non-Trump, the default candidate. Her biggest appeal: that Donald Trump is worse. Me, I live in New York. Trump is highly unlikely to carry the state. I’m voting Green.



JESSICA PATRICK

Historians of the American Revolution have long grappled with the contradiction of an uprising carried out under the banner of “all men are created equal” being largely led by slave owners. Once free of England, the U.S. grew over 89 years to be the largest slave owning republic in history.

At the time of the conflict many thousands of enslaved persons joined the British cause inspired by the promise of freedom to all joined the British cause. In

his essay “What If the British Had Won?” Keith Brooks explores whether a British victory would have brought slavery to a quicker end and if the birth of the United States celebrated on the 4th of July was in fact a gift to the world and a milestone in the march of human progress.

www.independent.org/issue/215

EXHIBITION

IMMIGRATION IN TIME AND SPACE

Mobile Print Power: Soñamos Sentirnos Libres: Under Construction

INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE
THROUGH SEPT. 5

Bouchra Khalili: The Mapping Journey Project

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
THROUGH OCTOBER 10

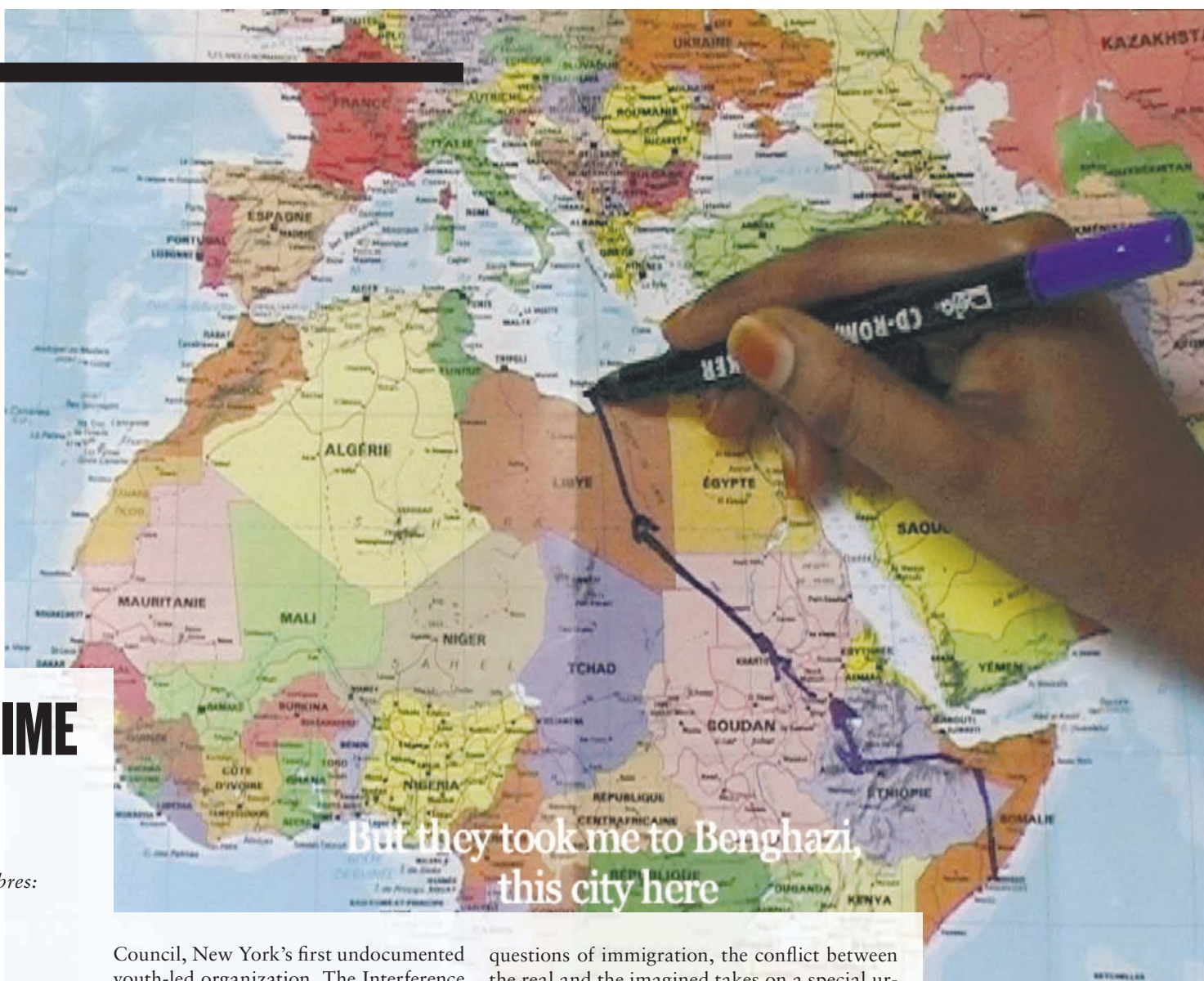
By Mike Newton

There's still something about ink and paper. In an age defined by rapid digital communication, physical mark-making records the actions of individuals in space and time in ways that digital media simply can't.

This is one of the driving forces behind Mobile Print Power (MPP), a Queens-based collective that creates portable silkscreen studios, sometimes on pushcarts (the same kind of cart you might use to sell food on a busy street corner). The relative simplicity of the silkscreen printing process allows for MPP to set up shop in public and collective spaces, providing the participants of various rallies and community meetings with self-made artifacts; t-shirts, books, posters.

Some of these unique objects can be seen now in an exhibition at the Interference Archive that makes the most of the site's relatively small space. MPP's prints range from the directly polemical — slogans like “You Are Not Illegal” and “Do You Make a Living Wage?” printed on t-shirts — to the more playful, as in bilingual cookbooks and children's books about NYC neighborhoods. MPP's designs are simple, maybe too simple, from a purely visual standpoint. It would be nice if there were more to look at. But this simplicity helps create a pervasive sense of direct engagement, with a spirit of immediacy and humanity that shapes the core of MPP's project. Unlike commercial screen-printing, most of their designs seem to have been made directly by human hands with no digital intermediary. It's perhaps telling that the first rule for participating in an MPP collective workshop is “NO CELLPHONES.”

Though they've worked with a number of different groups, the most trenchant work in the show comes from MPP's collaborations with immigrants' rights organizations, like a “Know Your Rights” poster made with the legal advocacy group UnLocal, Inc. or the ephemera made with the New York State Youth Leadership



Council, New York's first undocumented youth-led organization. The Interference Archive has chosen to specifically highlight this work by also showcasing some beautiful posters from their collection commemorating various anti-deportation rallies.

Contrasted with this mood of defiance and progress, the work of Bouchra Khalili can't help but feel a bit pessimistic, but it's a necessary sort of pessimism. To create “The Mapping Journey Project” (2008-2011), an eight-part video installation currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art, Khalili interviewed migrant workers she met by chance, men from North Africa and the Middle East, looking for work in Europe. In each video, a man traces his journey in permanent marker on a paper map, narrating as he goes. In their narratives, these men come across as both tough — weathering rough work and harrowing transit — and somehow helpless, forever caught up in the whims of fate and the strange vicissitudes of modern bureaucracy. “Some of our friends, they died here. Three persons from us,” one man says, plainly, of his boat passage from Libya to Italy.

Another man, whose journey took him from Morocco to Algeria, Libya, several Italian cities and, finally, France, says, “I hope that I can get papers to live like everyone else in Europe. To work, that's all, not to do bad things.” Another, explaining how he got from Morocco to a job selling phones in Utrecht, tells us that he went to a bus station, “asked for a ticket to anywhere in Europe,” and took a bus going to Holland.

The men in Khalili's videos don't have names or even faces; all we see of them are their arms and hands. In this way, they appear both distinct — individuals with unique stories — and anonymous, faceless men telling the same basic story again and again. The exhibition insists that this faceless storytelling is a resistant response to invasive contemporary cultures of surveillance and control. It is, but it could also be read as a nod to prevailing norms of dehumanization, in which people are reduced to just so many points of data.

In other words, “The Mapping Journey Project” enacts a struggle between abstraction and representation. These may seem like hopelessly lofty concerns, except that when it comes to

questions of immigration, the conflict between the real and the imagined takes on a special urgency. Immigration — and specifically a fear of immigrants — has grown into one of the defining issues of this current political moment.

In the United States, Donald Trump launched a hostile takeover of the Republican base by pledging to build an impossible wall on the Mexican border (a proposal that other Republican presidential nominees happily supported), while in Europe, far-right political parties have gained traction by promising to keep out Muslim refugees. What's at issue is not immigrants themselves, but the idea of immigrants. Rather than proposing sensible, practical immigration policies — policies that could take the well-being of actual immigrants into consideration — right-wing leaders invoke a vague fear of outsiders and otherness, imagining a deep, unbridgeable cultural and moral chasm between an assumed “them” and “us.”

In both exhibitions, the act of immigrants applying ink to paper becomes an assertion of individual humanity, even within a format of practical anonymity. Drawing, printing, writing and mapping become a sort of statement of purpose and presence — an acknowledgment of a human life at a single moment in history, a way of saying yes, make no mistake, we were here.

SEE MORE OF MNN THAN EVER BEFORE.

No one tells the story of New York better than New Yorkers, and now the story just got bigger. Presenting MNN's HD Community Channel: We built this channel specifically for MNN Community Producers to tell their stories. Love stories, documentary stories, action stories, BIG stories. Join us at MNN HD on Time Warner Cable channel 1993 for the biggest New York stories there are - the story of your life.

AMPLIFIED
LOCAL VOICES

**TIME WARNER CABLE
CHANNEL 1993**

HD
MNN

STREAMING WORLDWIDE ON MNN.ORG